

Dialogue

The Right to Misrepresent

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Empowering Imaginations

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Depicting past events has always been problematic, but historiography (analyzing those problems) used to be treated as a mainly technical exercise. Post-structural and postcolonial critiques (well articulated in Neumann 1992) have revived historiography's moral and political content. When historians brought up before cultural studies change gear, however, they often produce grating and clashing sounds, unlike the smooth automatic transmission of a younger generation. The ambiguities of the term *represent* compound the problems of writing *about* other people with the perception that they also claim to speak *for* them. When historians are citizens of former colonial powers, and their academic subjects were colonial subjects, academic discourse becomes emotionally supercharged (eg, Linnekin 1991). To write about other people involves sensitivity, but to speak on their behalf is to claim contestable moral rights.

I am indebted to Nicholas Thomas for advice on navigating this minefield. One of his broad-ranging critiques of academic writing concludes that

Pacific historians should continue to tell stories, repeat the stories told by indigenous urban and rural historians, document the events of contact, and discover lost texts; but these pursuits could be given a new salience to social, cultural, and political debates through a more expansive view of Pacific history as a series of local expressions of a broader colonial history. (1990, 157–158)

My story has often been told by its author, and repeated by me as gossip, before I recognized it as discourse. It is a matter of wry pride to Sailosi Atiu that one of his most creative tasks as a bureaucrat was to persuade international agencies that the Oceanic republic of Tiko was among the twenty poorest countries on earth. Governments in this category enjoyed privileged access to aid funds, so it was a highly prized condition. Tiko might seem an implausible candidate, given the fertility of its soil and people, their global opportunities for travel, employment, and enjoyment

via America and New Zealand, high rates of schooling and tertiary education, and a serious shortage of emaciated mendicants. Sailosi hurdled these barriers by sheer intellectual endeavor and divergent thinking. Ninety-eight percent literacy seemed a fatal disability until agreement was reached that literacy in the vernacular should not count. Rigorous examinations in English virtually abolished literacy. The living standards of Tikong families were bolstered by remittances from family members working abroad. This grave advantage became a priceless deficit by treating transfers as evidence of international dependency and abject domestic poverty. Conversely, an apparent handicap—the absence of statisticians to measure social and economic indices—was the decisive card in this game of asset stripping.

In this story, names have been changed to protect people whose guilt or innocence is difficult to judge. I have heard it twice as a thigh-slapping joke, during well-lubricated parties in the Tikong capital. As the elements of the narration have not changed over twenty years, I incline to believe it. I would believe it even without such evidence, because I want to believe that the periphery sometimes defeats the metropolitan center, that the villager can outwit the urban sophisticate, and that the rationalist rhetoric of econometrics can be turned to perverse advantage. I would believe it even if it were not true, such is its appeal to my partialities. And I believe it although I am not sure what it means. In miniature, my uncertainty about meanings reflects scholarship in the islands.

Kerry Howe (1977) has been the most articulate speaker for the liberal, upbeat, island-oriented history that this story may exemplify. His crusade against “fatal impact” interpretations denounced them as usually “the product of over-fertile and perhaps guilt-ridden imaginations.” Against that doom-laden perspective he championed “an active, initiative-taking savage whose way of life was not necessarily ravaged by European contact.” That works wonderfully as description but (as Howe’s critics have complained) it ignores structural constraints on individual and societal agency. Island-oriented perspectives mislead if they “down-size” Europeans (Vicki Lukere’s felicitous phrase) and the power they did and do wield. Sailosi won this trick, but the World Bank makes the rules and—as the banker—wins most of the games.

On the subject of games, a digression into the contemporary labor trade suggests the limits of Islander agency. The irruption of modern entertainment capital into the “traditional” domain of rugby football

creates acute dilemmas in islands that are linked culturally to New Zealand and Australia. With pitifully few television sets, Islanders cannot influence the modalities of entertainment production or distribution. Individual players come on board for recruitment and performance fees that are prodigious by island standards—but they spend the prime of their lives in Huddersfield or Townsville. Like their plantation predecessors, most are young men, removed from their social and cultural networks, recruited for a contract period calibrated to their physique, and earning less than their white fellow-workers with traditions of unionization. More often than Sailosi, these active, “initiative-taking savages” win games, but as players they represent Wigan or the Canberra Raiders more often than their countries of origin. Media networks make the rules that govern their working lives, shape the culture of the job, and constrain their benefits.

A more recent analytical paradigm, which enjoys the acronym MIRAB, has been built from government statistics, mainly by geographers and development consultants (eg, Ogden 1994; Connell 1991). It concedes that migration does offer poor people access to international resources, yet their behavior perpetuates unequal relationships internationally, insofar as small nations depend on migration, remittances and aid to sustain a bureaucracy, and these mechanisms trap societies in dependent relations with foreign countries. In this scenario neither the football stars Noa Nadruku and Willie Ofahengaue, nor the bureaucrat Sailosi Atiu deserves more than a footnote, because they exercise agency of little consequence. They are not exceptions to dependency but its manifestation—even perhaps its sinews.

Eveli Hau'ofa, the Tikong chronicler (1988), is in real life a creative scholar, whose “Our Sea of Islands” (1993) is an explicit challenge to MIRAB, to dependency theory, and to pessimism. The essay emphasizes Islanders' historical connectedness and the disjunction between government affairs and the transnational dynamics of (some) families. He also questions the motives for representing island societies as poor, small, remote, and developmentally hopeless, and points to the damage inflicted by this portrayal on Islanders' self-esteem. A judgment implicit in this essay is spelt out in “Pasts to Remember”:

In order for us to gain greater autonomy than we have today and to maintain it within the global system, we must in addition to other measures, be able to

define and construct our pasts and present in our own ways. We cannot continue to rely heavily on others to do it for us because autonomy cannot be attained through dependence. (Hau'ofa 1994)

Because research and scholarship sustain public representation and diffusely inform public policy, real consequences flow from them. But the question is broader than the right to advise governments. The representation debate has been conducted mainly by anthropologists in the discursive terms of their discipline, but the issue affects all the humanities and social sciences.

Of many striking reflections, not least is Hau'ofa's tacit rejection of political analysis as a profession, and his insistence (echoing Eco 1986) that it is a civic obligation. History is both the most natural of popular narrative forms and the least esoteric branch of scholarship. Here professional and civic debates mingle and mangle each other. The greater part of popular history-making takes place, of course, among "indigenous urban and rural historians" beyond the hearing of academics, but there is a space to which popular and academic historians both lay claim: Islanders on the grounds of citizenship, scholars by rights and obligations that may need to be clarified. Because of the intimate links between citizenship and representation, the most passionate critics of mainstream academia are members of politically "encapsulated" societies. They publish scholarship of awesome political power, fueled by the denial of their collective sovereignty (and hence their individual citizenship). Consider for example Lili-kalā Kame'eleihiwa's review of Gananath Obeyesekere's *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*:

The noted Hawaiian scholar Haunani-Kay Trask often dismisses Cook as "a syphilitic, tubercular racist," and when I teach that part of Hawaiian history I relate to my students that he brought venereal disease, violence, and, eventually, an unrelenting wave of foreigners, once his journals had been published in Europe. (Kame'eleihiwa 1994, 111)

Indigenous participation in academic debate is uneven. In many societies—notably Hawai'i, Aotearoa, Fiji, Tonga, and Western Sāmoa—Hau'ofa is preaching to the converted. His concerns are already addressed in the normal knockabout forum of publications and reviews, but mainly as amendments and critiques of the writings of outsiders. Elsewhere noncitizens dominate academic debate more completely, despite (for example)

the best efforts of the Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific to nurture and publish Islander scholars. Not only do foreign scholars dominate by weight of tomes. By default they set agendas. Island-orientation and MIRAB are fully imported perspectives. This persistent imbalance provokes soul-searching among foreign scholars (eg, Howe 1977; Routledge 1985) and irritation among those insiders whose immediate concerns deny them the chance to publish.

Is it possible to identify distinguishing features of academic history written by citizens of independent island states? Some are consequences of institutional influences like place of employment and access to publishers. Otherwise a striking attribute is that Islanders commonly write on a smaller geographic scale than outsiders. I recall no Islander tackling the whole region at book length, in the manner of Spate (1979, 1983, 1988), Howe (1984), Scarr (1990), Campbell (1991), or Howe, Kiste, and Lal (1994). Hau'ofa's "Our Sea of Islands" stands alone as a regionwide essay of power and perception. John Waiko's general history of Papua New Guinea (1993) is singular as a general history that encompasses a multiethnic country, and it may be significant that it is essentially policy history, offering little scope for the insights that illuminate the narrower Binandere landscape of his doctoral thesis (Waiko 1982). August Kituai's doctoral thesis, "My Gun, My Brother" (1994), is national in focus, though limited to one key institution. Few national histories have a single author, except Sione Lātūkefu's *Church and State in Tonga* (1974). Many other national histories are composite—*Kiribati: Aspects of History* with 25 authors (Talu 1979), *Lagaga* with 13 (Meleiseā and Schoeffel 1987), *Tuvalu: A History* with 17 (Laracy 1983), or *Niue* with 12 (Hekau 1982).

Just as Oceania rouses more enthusiasm in outsiders than in Oceanians, the independent nations are difficult to anatomize for writers who locate themselves in ethnic communities. For Western Sāmoa, where ethnicity and sovereignty almost converge, island authors suffer great difficulty in focusing on a state that tends to be overshadowed by society. In his preface to *Lagaga: A Short History of Modern Samoa*, Meleiseā outlined some differences between western and Samoan views of history:

For Samoans, knowledge is power, and the most powerful knowledge is historical knowledge: treasured and guarded in people's heads, in notebooks locked in boxes and matai's briefcases or with their precious mats under mattresses. The valuable histories of families, lands, genealogies, villages and events long ago are family property. (Meleiseā and Schoeffel 1987, vii)

However, modern academic accounts, even if written by Islanders, resemble western histories in method and narrative form, because they use the same sorts of written sources. In order to write an integrated narrative, “we have little of the great, rich fund of historical information of our people. . . . We have relied extensively on facts from documentary sources.” It is difficult otherwise to find “common” threads, and arbitrary to totalize innumerable family histories into a common narrative.

Conversely for Irian Jaya, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and perhaps Vanuatu and New Caledonia, a focus on the state makes it almost impossible to embrace the experience of most of the people who lived beyond the writ of government. (Fiji is a notable exception, to which I return.) In this context it is worth remembering that the disjunction between state-focused and people-focused scholarship reflects the poor fit between island people and their colonial and postcolonial governments. Where else are there states, the majority of whose citizens live abroad? And where, except in Sāmoa, does a national community not merely tolerate but relish its partition into an independent republic and a dependent territory of the United States?

Scholarship rooted in citizenship or ethnicity is not only likely to be narrow in focus: it is almost certain to insist on the uniqueness of its subject matter, resisting general statements of the kind a cosmopolitan agenda seeks to advance. Unless historians are careful or lucky, they endorse a division of labor in which foreign scholars tackle cosmic issues, sketching the big picture and leaving to Islanders the joining up of the dots. This division of labor would perpetuate the colonial paradigm whereby the internationally recognized state is presumed to know better than its parochial subjects. The trick is not to shelve the large questions, but to ensure that the big picture is not privileged over the small-scale study.

In other respects, island scholars research and write according to much the same canons that apply to everyone else: points of disagreement are limited and are not the focus of complaint. To imagine the disquiet that some feel in the present situation, suppose that the leading American and Australian history books are written in Japanese. The full texts are freely available to anyone who can read them, and they form the basis for public education and policy development. Summary versions are available in translation and modified to serve as school texts. Any scholar may freely join the debate—in Japanese. The scholarship is framed by a master narrative beginning with Amaterasu and ending with *nanshin-ron*. This

hypothetical tradition produces technically impressive scholarship and throws much surprising and lurid light on Australian experience, but it is necessarily deaf to significant areas of consciousness, and it neither commands popular acceptance nor engages the demotic narratives of everyday life. This is substantially the situation confronting Islander intellectuals, who listen with mounting exasperation while other people talk about them, whether the talk is well- or mis-informed. The problem lies largely in the institutions and structures of academic authority rather than the qualities of foreign scholars. However, until Islanders take leading parts in delineating their own experience, foreign scholars will continue to research and write in an uneasy moral and political space.

Another story: In 1995, Vilsoni Hereniko of the University of Hawai'i delivered a public lecture at the University of the South Pacific, on academic imperialism. More trenchantly than the gentle Hau'ofa, Hereniko denounced the distorting and undermining consequences that follow from "the other" delineating "the native." He illustrated this theme by contrasting a variety of westerners who misunderstood "the native," with several "natives" whose self-knowledge was exemplary. He was generous in praise of Alan Howard's archival research on Rotuma (Hereniko's birthplace), while insisting that knowledge gained in these ways must be imperfect. As short-term remedies, he proposed that Islanders should respond to or review foreigners' writings (which seems an excellent idea) and that foreign scholars should associate Islanders in their research and writing (which seems likely to blur responsibility). Something in his style of presentation—his critical references to Sahlins, Linnekin, and Dening, or the combative rhetoric of some members of the University of Hawai'i—prompted his audience to prove their personal innocence. One woman agreed that "the west" was complicit in misrepresenting Islanders, but added that the west (as an innately masculine structure) equally misrepresented women. Several other analyses were offered, all claiming shared victimhood. For me, the climax was a statement by a gentleman and scholar whose innocence was proven by his origin in the north of England (the west being manifestly a London creature). By the end of question time, aging, white, male, tenured historians of the Pacific were lost for words. I could have mentioned that I had not successfully represented anyone in recent weeks, but that seemed more likely to cloud than to clarify the issue.

This is not a personal problem, nor is it confined to the Pacific, nor

even to historians. The anthropologist Adam Kuper's plea for a "cosmopolitan anthropology" (1994) tackled precisely these issues of representation. He drew a bead on a new Greek association of social anthropologists, which debated "whether foreign anthropologists . . . could become regular members [of the association] and also whether folklorists who were originally trained in Greece but studied ethnology or anthropology abroad could also become members." This motion illustrates how a distinction between native and foreign researcher leads swiftly to privileging some natives over others, in a hierarchy of authenticity. The claim that only natives can understand natives leads to the proposition that only natives should try, then to indices of credibility, and ultimately perhaps to licenses. In Kuper's view, this is a short step beyond the "orthodoxies of the previous decades" in cultural anthropology. Its faith in innate cultural characteristics also reminded him ominously of the discredited tradition of *Volkskunde*.

Kuper's desire to revive "the enlightenment project of a science of human variation in time and space" is explicitly opposed to the thrust of cultural anthropology since Franz Boas—notably its tragic divorce from other social sciences. Anyone who endorses an enlightenment project, however, must address the likely criticism that such endeavors reek of precisely the totalizing ambition that frames and marginalizes Islanders' lives as numerically trivial and intellectually peculiar. At least three current projects illustrate this danger. A committee of distinguished British historians (albeit including one American) is editing an authoritative account of the British Empire. Australian, New Zealand, and Oceanic histories are predictably subsets, given a place, but seated even farther from the British high table than India or Africa. Meanwhile UNESCO—an organization often accused of third-worldism—is producing a multivolume history to illuminate the "impact of trends in science and cultural development primarily in the West . . . leading to indigenous responses and advances," according to its instructions to authors. Having allocated leading roles to the west, the enterprise distinguishes varieties of "cultural responses," including "efforts . . . to evolve a scientific, rationalist outlook in the context of their own cultures [and] the emergence of alternative responses." If even UNESCO is confident that the west is the fount of rational approaches, how much surer are other institutions? Blackwells is engaged in a seventeen-volume history of the world, of which Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania constitute volume 17. Clearly "a science of

human variation over time and space” could readily degenerate into another Eurocentric master narrative.

Sharing Kuper’s cosmopolitan ambition, can I allay these suspicions? Proceeding by analogy, what topics might Americans or Australians seek from Japanese scholars, in the fanciful scenario that they dominate American and Australian scholarship? A host of useful topics would demand their attention. Perhaps most important would be to unmask the hydra-headed structures of imperial authority and dissect the dynamics of unequal economic relations. Metropolitan scholars would be well placed to deconstruct the mythologies that always clothe naked colonial power, and they could go on to analyze gender relations in situations where power relations are explicitly unequal. As a matter of courtesy as well as prudence, Japanese scholars might be expected to represent other people’s perceptions tentatively, and to resist the temptation of synthesizing a “native point of view” that would preempt the full range of native narratives and critiques. In brief, they might be asked not to claim to understand the natives, nor to lump them together, and never to patronize.

If this is what Others should do unto us historians, is this how to negotiate with Others? The negotiating context is deeply disfigured by colonialism—conquest, expropriation, and alien administration, allocating to Islanders minor roles in metropolitan histories, in which their traditions are picturesque but ultimately irrational and obsolete. It is impossible to ignore that landscape, and hard to find an uncompromised stance. J W Davidson’s prescription of island-oriented approaches was, I take it, a reaction against “imperial history” (Davidson 1966). Since the 1960s however, regional relations have been transformed by the demise or reformulation of imperial structures, and the dichotomy between imperial and independent perspectives no longer accommodates all options. Many island groups have become independent nations, and others are beset by what looks like recolonization. Thomas recommends a “more expansive view of Pacific history as a series of local expressions of a broader colonial history.” Colonialism is central to this formulation, and characteristic of much current scholarship. “Subaltern historiography,” for example, would discard not only the tropes of colonial discourse but also the values and perspectives of dominant groups and classes, even if those people profess to be—and are—anticolonial nationalists (Guha 1982–1989). Increasingly sophisticated theories have yet to find an exit to the nirvana of decolonization, this side of the end of history. Perhaps more

prosaic research may find an escape route from a vision of colonialism that is so all-encompassing that it can paralyze. In brief, colonialism should be decentered, in view of sea changes in Pacific Island societies both before and after the colonial era. Here I beg questions by treating colonialism not as a state of consciousness but as a series of historical phenomena with beginnings, middles—and therefore ends. In that case, several topics stand in need of urgent—and empirical—attention.

Andrew Bushnell (1993) has argued persuasively that demographic collapse is “the most important ‘fact’ in Hawaiian history” and in the modern record of several other societies. Arguments about the causes and extent of depopulation are highly politicized. Howe (1984) concentrated on Islanders’ resilience, but David Stannard (1989) targeted him for complacency in the face of Islanders’ destruction. Stannard’s argument is morally supercharged, but its intellectual content resembles Alfred Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism* (1987), which proposed that the mere presence of Europeans with their unacknowledged allies—germs, weeds, and animals—inevitably wrought catastrophe. Stephen Kunitz (1994), insisting on human choices in explaining the variations of morbidity and mortality, was surprisingly silent on Stannard and explicitly hostile to Howe. In brief, Howe and Kunitz are *intellectual* allies, as are Stannard and Crosby, but in real life they are more deeply divided by their sense of sin than by the weight they allow to natural and unnatural causes. Their disagreements are so deeply rooted in moral as well as technical assumptions that no one alive today will have the last word. Historians can confidently seek an authoritative view, because there is no immediate risk of finding it.

At least two kinds of consequences flowed from depopulation. The tragedy offered grist to the social Darwinist mill. It would be useful as well as interesting to account for the plausibility of catastrophe in the minds of European intellectuals of that day (and this): is *schadenfreude* peculiar to western social psychology or an innately human enthusiasm? Islanders’ responses also cry out for the investigation that Bronwen Douglas (1994) has begun for New Caledonia. The coincidence of Christian conversion and epidemic mortality is so close that it suggests eschatology. It is intriguing that some Islanders, assuming that Europeans must possess the antidote to their own toxins, explicitly denied their own agency. Given that they raised the question, it seems only courteous to comb mission and traders’ records in search of their medical ideas and pharmacopoeias.

Considering the erosion of autarky and autonomy in the nineteenth century, it is especially difficult—perhaps inappropriate—to strike a balance between outsiders' and insiders' agency. At one extreme, some imperial historians have portrayed the decay of Islanders' authority as so inevitable as to need no local explanation. What seems important in that perspective is why particular islands fell to particular empires at particular times, and these questions are pursued through inter-imperial diplomatic sources (eg, Kennedy 1974). At the other extreme stands Howe's (1984) celebration of Islander agency. Its limitations were analyzed by Meleiseā: "To underestimate the force of settler intriguing and international wrangling . . . in order to give priority of explanation to indigenous political structures is taking the argument a great deal too far" (1985, 149). Howe's optimism would deny today's Islanders the political advantage of victimhood; but neither approach offers room for explaining the very general decline of autonomy.

Given the widespread agreement that colonialism was the main game in the modern history of the islands, it is curious that metropolitan strategies have generated nothing like the voluminous debate about the sources of the "scramble for Africa." Oskar Spate's geopolitical trilogy (1979, 1983, 1988) stops short of the nineteenth century. There are persuasive explanations for specific islands, addressing the agency of Islanders as well as imperialists. Together with Scarr's dissection of the Western Pacific High Commission (1967), these volumes provide a full account of the mechanics of the loss of sovereignty. What is mystifying is the rationale for intervention. Crudely materialist explanations manifestly fail: Germany, with the greatest commercial stake, was slowest to annex; France, with the least economic involvement, was swiftest; sandalwood, bêche-de-mer, and labor trading managed very well without a colonial umbrella.

Some jigsaw pieces may be found in the metropolitan centers rather than the islands. These include the optimistic assumptions sustaining Britain's informal empire and their erosion by political and economic setbacks. The nature of Anglo-French rivalries may need to be invoked, to explain how sectarian bitterness inflamed them. The extent and unique quality of Japan's explosion into a long-abandoned arena is becoming increasingly clear; that, in turn, may help to explain the acquisitiveness of Australian and New Zealand colonists—mirrored, again, by Caldoches (Merle 1995). Beneath these strategic gambits lurks the transformation of European (and settler) worldviews, so that unequal relations came to seem not

merely acceptable but obligatory. Once European opinion makers reconciled themselves to the partition and annexation of (for example) tropical Africa, inhibitions dissolved elsewhere. Revulsion at imperial history should allow a continuing interest in the dynamics of empire. Imperial narratives need not erase the sequences of local events; rather, they sketch contexts that were nonetheless real for being invisible within oceanic horizons.

The nature of colonial power requires elucidation even more urgently than when Thomas pointed to this lacuna (1990). The World Bank's certainties about national and international economic management require no elaboration. The bank's current enthusiasm for the study of governance implies an equal certitude about policies and their implementation—and the distinct threat of enforced political restructuring to match economic restructuring. Can historians equal this confidence about government? More to the present point, I do not know how colonial governments functioned, although their nature and limitations become increasingly evident as the colonial period recedes.

There are at least two cogent views of colonial governance. One treats the state as a Leviathan, with a mission of modernization and development (or capitalist penetration and underdevelopment) integrating isolated communities into a global society and economy. This view emphasizes its monopoly of force, the power of its weapons, the discipline of its police, its control over lawmaking and the language and agencies of government, its formidable external relations, and its capacity to regulate access to land, to mobilize labor, and to regulate employment. Islanders may have delayed and briefly derailed these projects, but they could neither halt nor reverse them. The contrary view posits encounters between easily resistible forces and easily movable objects. In this fluid perspective, for much of the colonial era, the state was less influential than mission societies in terms of cultural and ideological change. Insofar as evangelization was a matter of negotiation, so was ideological transformation. Similarly, the state relied on grossly undercapitalized planters and miners to attempt economic transformation. Taken together, these constraints limited most colonial states for most of their existence to little more than a charade of order.

In effect there is an implicit debate about the effectiveness and agency of colonial states. Can this debate be resolved? A measure of the effectiveness of a government is its capacity to reorder the ownership and manage-

ment of land. Thanks to Ward and Kingdon (1995) this index is more visible. In the settler colonies of Hawai'i, Australia, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, the revolution was almost total; in other islands it succeeded only in formalizing communal ownership rather than individual freehold; independent Tonga created the preconditions for peasantry; and especially in the western Pacific the agrarian revolution was abandoned almost before it began. Fiji stands alone in the thoroughness of the colonial restructuring of land ownership and access, such that all other social and economic relations were affected. Serious struggles over land and other terrestrial resources broke out in Bougainville and in Irian Jaya only in the 1960s, with large-scale mineral resource exploitation. Similar conflicts occurred even later in the rest of Papua New Guinea. A colonialism that could not impose its values on land dealings can hardly be treated as the organizing principle of all modern experience.

Consider another notorious colonial phenomenon, the invention of the Native. During a strike in the New Guinea goldfields on the eve of the Pacific War, management toyed with the idea of employing New Guineans to replace Australian engine drivers who were unionized and holders of certificates, and who formed a branch of the Australian Labor Party. Management had empirical evidence that New Guinean employees could do the jobs. Some had answered correctly all but one of the qualifying questions asked of Australian engine drivers. (It is possible that New Guineans were doing these jobs already, without recognition.) But before such a revolutionary experiment could be endorsed by the Australian government, a theoretical question had to be resolved: could Natives perform responsible tasks? The governments of India, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa were solemnly consulted as experts on Native abilities (ADET 1935-1936). Natives were portrayed as an undifferentiated and homogeneous mass from Suez to Darwin. Of course some officials could tell one Native from another. Some even formulated innate tribal characteristics. Nor should the odious racism of inventing the Native be ignored. However, that ideology did inhibit the observation of colonial subjects as individuals or even as groups, and it limited the capacity of colonialism to change lives.

Because colonialism dominates the academic landscape, decolonization may have been underrated. The decentering of colonialism would suggest that political independence is more than the charade Kwame Nkrumah denounced in his influential but now unread *Neo-Colonialism: The High-*

est Stage of Imperialism. Lawyers, economists, political scientists, and others whose focus is government take independence seriously, whereas many anthropologists who adopt a village view do not. It is not for historians to side with one or the other perspective, but they should not dismiss the transformation of Natives into Citizens as legalistic flummery. On one hand, the imposition of someone else's citizenship can be deeply disempowering. When Hawaiians became citizens of the United States they lost the residue of political autonomy in exchange for status as an ethnic minority. British citizenship facilitated the dispossession of New Zealand Māori. Irianese as Indonesian citizens became a poor, undeveloped minority inhabiting a remote (and "exotic") province. Some small island communities contrive to combine independent citizenship with continuing access to the society and economy of former colonial powers. Even here, citizenship is ambivalently profound, conferring equality at home and marginality abroad. In brief, formal equality can be the badge of subordination. Citizenship may be more benign where a society—like Tiko—defines itself as a free-standing entity in the world community; for good or ill, it makes a difference.

In 1979 Hau'ofa was a member of an Asian Development Bank review of agriculture in the Pacific Islands. His observations led him to reflect that, no matter what governments may say,

Pacific Islanders aim not for a rise from poverty, which in general they do not have, but for a shift from one form of relative affluence to another. . . .

If the Pacific Island societies want to maintain their distinct ways of life and their cultures . . . then the capitalistic system is certainly not the right one to adopt. They have to find alternatives. But there are two problems. First, the Pacific Islanders seem, by action although not by rhetoric, to have made the choice already and opted for capitalism. By rhetoric, although much less by action, they want to maintain distinct identities. Second, not one existing model of society provides a real alternative for development in the islands; all the models have been devised for countries and populations very much larger than *the tiny islands and small scattered populations of the Pacific*. . . .

If they want a capitalist society and further westernisation, then they have to take the risks required and adjust accordingly. Otherwise, they must reduce their aspirations and devise other alternatives, for the present situation is untenable. (Hau'ofa 1980, 485–487; emphasis added)

This judgment bristles with the pessimism that "Our Sea of Islands" now seeks to exorcise. There is continuity in the contrast between government

rhetoric and policies, and people's choices and behavior; but notice that smallness and scatteredness become visible in a postcolonial environment; they were inescapable as long as Hau'ofa and his colleagues accepted the criteria required in reporting to the regional banker.

As this obscure episode implies, in many island groups it was independence, more than colonialism, that admitted large infusions of capital and initiated large-scale migration. Colonial regimes often shielded Islanders from global markets, regional financial institutions, and global cultural concerns. Independence and citizenship exposed Islanders, through elected governments, to the defining rhetoric of development. Nor is exposure always unwelcome. Elected officers and indigenous bureaucrats often woo mining capital; village leaders, with some show of popular support, enter joint ventures with foreign logging companies. Lest I paint too bleak a portrait, I should also point to the management of marine resources, despite the political and financial strength of deep-water fishing corporations. For good or ill, independence is not colonial tutelage, Citizens are not Natives, and citizenship is not just a postscript to subject-hood. Only with decolonization did the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank initiate discussions with governments on the conventions and indices for representing their economies and resources. It is the terms of this engagement that trouble Hau'ofa the scholar and Sailosi the bureaucrat.

What has this to do with misrepresentation? Remember that all representation is approximation, informed by theory, designed to introduce "order and intelligibility into data whose multiplicity and complexity make them otherwise incomprehensible." The function of disciplines is not to eliminate error but to reduce it. At the same time, insofar as history is popular as well as professional narrative, outsiders' portrayals will usually be less persuasive than insiders', independent of their scholarly quality. That consideration points foreign academics to topics that complement Islanders' scholarship. Foreign scholars might, for example, take up Hau'ofa's invitation to inquire into the nature of poverty or affluence, remoteness or centrality, and to analyze the criteria that have been deployed in making judgments. This debate elicits such a variety of opinions that no perspective ought to be dismissed for fear of misrepresenting the reality it seeks.

Outsiders will never desist from representing insiders: it is the nature of independent entities to employ specialists to represent and misrepresent each other. The role of academic historians is not the same as that of dip-

lomats whose tasks are properly prescribed by their governments. The difference is vital, and it arises from disciplinary obligations as well as juridical rights: obligations to range more broadly—and less responsibly—than public servants. Misrepresentation is a risk attending the obligation of irresponsibility. To promote Islanders' participation in national, regional, and global debates, not as Natives but as Citizens, perhaps the best encouragement is to loosen the suffocating grip of colonialism as residual institutions and as a state of mind, in order to observe and assess the extent and the limits of independence and citizenship. Quite different sensitivities will apply in representing people on whom an alien citizenship has been imposed, but in most situations, foreign scholars' obligations arise not only from the colonial past but also from the independent present and from their own disciplines. It may not be enough, but historians might start by doing unto Others as they would have Others do unto themselves.

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