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Cover explanation: Niu-tupu/young coconut shoot, properly nurtured, produces fruit.

Cover photos: Edgar Pollard and Kabini Sanga

Foreword

“Vaka Pasifiki” by Seu’ula J. Fua

(For Cherie Chu and the second flortilla – Members of the Victoria University of Wellington Pacific Leadership Cluster & authors of these stories)

‘The Ocean within us’ – Hau’ofa was right. The Ocean is us. We are the Ocean. Our commonality is our Ocean; Oceania seen from Tangaloa’s seat. We are all Blue, Pacific Blue, but look closer. We, the Ocean, are of different shades – Aitutaki’s turquoise blue, Majuro’s violet blue and Malekula’s aqua blue. But we are one Ocean – we are Oceania.

Our stories of leadership. The empathy and courage of the *onu* always returning home to Porirua, Rōtuma, Philippines, to serve (albeit cups of tea) – yes I can; with hope, aspiration and faith; with responsibility and accountability; with passion and *mafana* even in cold Wellington. Our stories – moving us – the currents of our seasons.

And so I wonder about this Ocean, our Oceania. I wonder about climate change and sea levels rising and I remember my Funafuti, my Tarawa, my Gizo *kainga*. How can I forget the sandbags of Bairiki and the Maka-hoko-*valu* of ‘Uiha?

And I wonder about the Ocean that is within us; the *suka* of our bodies, once fit, robust and majestic; the cancer of our souls, once heroic, assured and fearsome; and the AIDS of our minds, once clear, strategic and visionary.

And I wonder about our source of power to keep us moving to respond to the cries of our communities; to be responsible for our development; and to make a difference for Oceania, in our time.

But our *Vaka* is yet to be a *Kalia* worthy of Oceania so that we, like our fathers who ‘bent the winds’, *Iomipeau* and *kaivai* once again. Our *vaka* is open, so that we see the stars, sun, birds and clouds – our navigational tools – that we be clear in our vision. Our *vaka* is open so that we feel the

wind – our source of power – that we *fanongo* to the silences of Oceania. Our *vaka* is open, so that we ride low, close to Oceania; so that we feel the currents – our destination; so that we serve our *Vanua* with humility, courage and respect.

And so we ask you, will you join us on this journey?

Will you envision with us an Oceania that is sustainable, flourishing, assured?

Will you join us to string more *Kakala* for Oceania?

Will you join us to honour the world with a new *salusalu*?

Will you be part of the journey to create a new paradigm – Our Oceanic Paradigm?

P.S. Remember the spider.

Explanatory Notes:

Vaka – or waka or a means of transport; such as a boat, for sea

Onu – or vonu, fonu means turtle

Mafana – a feeling or sense of uplift, joy and elation

Kaiga – family and relations

Suka – sugar in the body

Lomipeau - means to harness or push the waves

Kaivai – is literally to eat the water, often used in reference to great sea farers

Fanongo – hear or listen

Maka-hoko-valu – is a monument in Uilha at Haāpai, Tonga. It is a square made up of eight slabs of rock and it is said to have been brought over from Futuna on the famous kalia Lomipeau – only the brave were needed to carry and build the monument. The size of the rocks is similar to those of the Langi (royal terraced tombs) at Mu'a. With the rising sea level, one part of the square has already been eaten away by the ocean. It is also evident that villagers have tried to rebuild the Maka-hoko-valu – but that work has also been eaten away by the ocean. I refer to it here as our connection to our ancient past

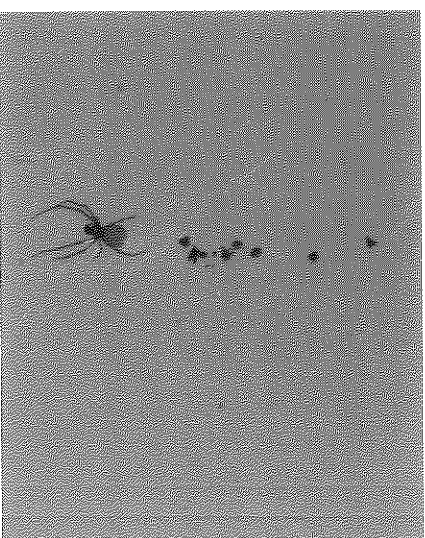
– to monumental activities that are hard to describe and understand in today's world – but were achieved by ordinary people with extraordinary dreams!

Kalia – Ocean-going vaka or sail boat

Kakala – Literally, fragrant flowers, as per the inspirations of Konai Thamān on many younger students and scholars of Oceania

Salusalu – Literally, garland of flowers in Fijian but here, *salusalu* is also referring to Suva – with the University of the South Pacific being a regional home for many contemporary Pacific scholars and leaders

Epeli Hau'ofa's poem, *Our Fathers Bent the Winds* appears in *Lali: A Pacific Anthology* (1980) edited by Albert Wendt and published by Longman Paul, Auckland.



The Spider digs deep within itself first, in facing its challenges. (Photo by Roseanne de Borsst)