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Our Sea of Islands

Epeli Hauʻofa

This essay raises some issues of great importance to our region, and offers a view of Oceania that is new and optimistic. What I say here is likely to disturb a number of men and women who have dedicated their lives to Oceania and for whom I hold the greatest respect and affection, and always will.

In our region, two levels of operation are pertinent to the purposes of this paper. The first is that of national governments and regional and international diplomacy, in which the present and future of Pacific island states and territories are planned and decided on. Discussions here are the preserve of politicians, bureaucrats, statutory body officials, diplomats and the military, and representatives of the financial and business communities, often in conjunction with donor and international lending organizations, and advised by academic and consultancy experts. Much that passes at this level concerns aid, concessions, trade, investment, defense and security, matters that have taken the Pacific further and further into dependency on powerful nations.

The other level is that of ordinary people, peasants and proletarians, who, because of the poor flow of benefits from the top, skepticism about stated policies and the like, tend to plan and make decisions about their lives independently, sometimes with surprising and dramatic results that go unnoticed or ignored at the top. Moreover, academic and consultancy experts tend to overlook or misinterpret grassroots activities because they do not fit with prevailing views

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about the nature of society and its development.

Views of the Pacific from the level of macroeconomics and macropolitics often differ markedly from those from the level of ordinary people. The vision of Oceania presented in this essay is based on my observations of behavior at the grass roots.

Having clarified my vantage point, I make a statement of the obvious that views held by those in dominant positions about their subordinates could have significant consequences for people's self-image and for the ways they cope with their situations. Such views, which are often derogatory and belittling, are integral to most relationships of dominance and subordination, wherein superiors behave in ways or say things that are accepted by their inferiors, who in turn behave in ways that serve to perpetuate the relationships.

In Oceania, derogatory and belittling views of indigenous cultures are traceable to the early years of interactions with Europeans. The wholesale condemnation by Christian missionaries of Oceanic cultures as savage, lascivious, and barbaric has had a lasting and negative effect on people's views of their histories and traditions. In a number of Pacific societies people still divide their history into two parts: the era of darkness associated with savagery and barbarism; and the era of light and civilization ushered in by Christianity.

In Papua New Guinea, European males were addressed and referred to as 'masters' and workers as 'boys'. Even indigenous policemen were called 'police boys'. This use of language helped to reinforce the colonially established social stratification along ethnic divisions. A direct result of colonial practices and denigration of Melanesian peoples and cultures as even more primitive and barbaric than those of Polynesia can be seen in the attempts during the immediate postcolonial years by articulate Melanesians to rehabilitate their cultural identity by cleansing it of its colonial taint and denigration. Leaders like Walter Lini of Vanuatu and Bernard Narokobi of Papua New Guinea have spent much of their energy extolling the virtues of Melanesian values as egual to if not better than those of their erstwhile colonizers.

Europeans did not invent belittlement. In many societies it was part and parcel of indigenous cultures. In the aristocratic societies of Polynesia parallel relationships of dominance and subordination with their paraphernalia of appropriate attitudes and behavior were the order of the day. In Tonga, the term for commoners is *me'a vale* 'the ignorant ones', which is a survival from an era when the aristocracy controlled all important knowledge in the society. Keeping the ordinary folk in the dark and calling them ignorant made it easier to control and subordinate them.

I would like, however, to focus on a currently prevailing notion about Islanders and their physical surroundings that, if not countered with more constructive views, could inflict lasting damage on

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people's images of themselves, and on their ability to act with relative autonomy in their endeavors to survive reasonably well within the international system in which they have found themselves. It is a belittling view that has been unwittingly propagated, mostly by social scientists who have sincere concern for the welfare of Pacific peoples.

According to this view, the small island states and territories of the Pacific, that is, all of Polynesia and Micronesia, are much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centers of economic growth for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations.

Initially, I agreed wholeheartedly with this perspective, and I participated actively in its propagation. It seemed to be based on irrefutable evidence, on the reality of our existence. Events of the 1970s and 1980s confirmed the correctness of this view. The hoped-for era of autonomy following political independence did not materialize. Our national leaders were in the vanguard of a rush to secure financial aid from every quarter; our economies were stagnating or declining; our environments were deteriorating or were threatened and we could do little about it; our own people were evacuating themselves to greener pastures elsewhere. Whatever remained of our resources, including our exclusive economic zones, was being hawked for the highest bid. Some of our islands had become, in the words of one social scientist, "MIRAB societies" – pitiful microstates condemned forever to depend on migration, remittances, aid, and bureaucracy, and not on any real economic productivity. Even the better resource endowed Melanesian countries were mired in dependency, indebtedness, and seemingly endless social fragmentation and political instability. What hope was there for us?

This bleak view of our existence was so relentlessly pushed that I began to be concerned about its implications. I tried to find a way out but could not. Then two years ago I began noticing the reactions of my students when I described and explained our situation of dependence. Their faces crumbled visibly, they asked for solutions, I could offer none. I was so bound to the notion of smallness that even if we improved our approaches to production, for example, the absolute size of our islands would still impose such severe limitations that we would be defeated in the end.

But the faces of my students continued to haunt me mercilessly. I began asking questions of myself. What kind of teaching is it to stand in front of young people from your own region, people you claim as your own, who have come to university with high hopes for the future, and you tell them that our countries are hopeless? Is this not what neocolonialism is all about? To make people believe that they have no choice but to depend?

Soon the realization dawned on me. In propagating a view of

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hopelessness, I was actively participating in our own belittlement. I decided to do something about it, but I thought that since any new perspective must confront some of the sharpest and most respected minds in the region, it must be well researched and thought out if it was to be taken seriously. It was a daunting task, and I hesitated.

Then came invitations for me to speak at Kona and Hilo on the Big Island of Hawai'i at the end of March 1993. The lecture at Kona, to a meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists in Oceania, was written before I left Suva. The speech at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo was forming in my mind and was to be written when I got to Hawai'i. I had decided to try out my new perspective, although it had not been properly researched. I could hold back no longer. The drive from Kona to Hilo was my 'road to Damascus'. I saw such scenes of grandeur as I had not seen before: the eerie blackness of regions covered by recent volcanic eruptions; the remote majesty of Maunaloa, long and smooth, the world's largest volcano; the awesome craters of Kdauea threatening to erupt at any moment; and the lava flow on the coast not far away. Under the aegis of Pele, and before my very eyes, the Big Island was growing, rising from the depths of a mighty sea. The world of Oceania is not small; it is huge and growing bigger every day.

The idea that the countries of Polynesia[1] and Micronesia are too small, too poor, and too isolated to develop any meaningful degree of autonomy is an economistic and geographic deterministic view of a very narrow kind that overlooks culture history and the contemporary process of what may be called world enlargement that is carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific Islanders right across the ocean-from east to west and north to south, under the very noses of academic and consultancy experts, regional and international development agencies, bureaucratic planners and their advisers, and customs and immigration officials-making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently, crisscrossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook's apotheosis.

If this very narrow, deterministic perspective is not questioned and checked, it could contribute importantly to an eventual consignment of groups of human beings to a perpetual state of wardship wherein they and their surrounding lands and seas would be at the mercy of the manipulators of the global economy and 'world orders' of one kind or another. Belittlement in whatever guise, if internalized for long, and transmitted across generations, may lead to moral paralysis, to apathy, and to the kind of fatalism that we can see among our

1 For geographic and cultural reasons I include Fiji in Polynesia. Fiji however, is much bigger and better endowed with natural resources than all tropical Polynesian entities.

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fellow human beings who have been herded and confined to reservations or internment camps. People in some of our islands are in danger of being confined to mental reservations, if not already to physical ones. I am thinking here of people in the Marsball Islands, who have been victims of atomic and missile tests by the United States.

Do people in most of Oceania live in tiny confined spaces? Tbe answer is yes if one believes what certain social scientists are saying. But the idea of smallness is relative; it depends on what is included and excluded in any calculation of size. When those who bail from continents, or islands adjacent to continents – and the vast majority of human beings live in these regions – when they see a Polynesian or Micronesian island they naturally pronounce it small or tiny. Their calculation is based entirely on the extent of the land surfaces they see.

But if we look at the myths, legends, and oral traditions, and the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deeds in epic proportions. One legendary Oceanic athlete was so powerful that during a competition he threw his javelin with such farce that it pierced the horizon and disappeared until that night when it was seen streaking across the sky like a meteor. Every now and then it reappears to remind people of the mighty deed. And as far as I'm concerned it is still out there, near Jupiter or somewhere. That was the first rocket ever sent into space. Islanders today still relish exaggerating things out of all proportion. Smallness is a state of mind.

There is a world of difference between viewing the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea' and as 'a sea of islands'.[2] The first emphasizes dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from the centers of power. Focusing in this way stresses the smallness and remoteness of the islands. The second is a more holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships. I return to this point later. Continental men, namely Europeans, on entering the Pacific after crossing huge expanses of ocean, introduced the view of 'islands in a far sea'. From this perspective the islands are tiny, isolated dots in a vast ocean. Later on, continental men – Europeans and Americans – drew imaginary lines across the sea, making the colonial boundaries that

2 I owe much to Eric Waddell for these terms (personal communications).

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confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces for the first time. These boundaries today define the island states and territories of the Pacific. I have just used the term *ocean peoples* because our ancestors, who had lived in the Pacific for over two thousand years, viewed their world as 'a sea of islands' rather than as 'islands in the sea'. This may be seen in a common categorization of people, as exemplified in Tonga by the inhabitants of the main, capital, island, who used to refer to their compatriots from the rest of the archipelago not so much as 'people from outer islands' as social scientists would say, but as *kakai mei tahi* or just *tahi* 'people from the sea'. This characterization reveals the underlying assumption that the sea is home to such people.

The difference between the two perspectives is reflected in the two terms used for our region: *Pacific Islands* and *Oceania*. The first term, *Pacific Islands*, is the prevailing one used everywhere; it denotes small areas of land sitting atop submerged reefs or seamounts. Hardly any anglophone economist, consultancy expert, government planner, or development banker in the region, uses the term *Oceania*, perhaps because it sounds grand and somewhat romantic, and may denote something so vast that it would compel them to a drastic review of their perspectives and policies. The French and other Europeans use the term *Oceania* to an extent that English speakers, apart from the much-maligned anthropologists and a few other sea-struck scholars, have not. It may not be coincidental that Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, anglophone all, have far greater interests in the Pacific and how it is perceived than have the distant European nations.

Oceania denotes a sea of islands with their inhabitants. The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating their waters, and the spirit to traverse even the few large gaps that separated their island groups.

Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flows of wealth. They traveled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even to fight and dominate.

Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Rotuma, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Futuna, and Uvea formed a large exchange community in which wealth and people with their skills and arts circulated endlessly. From this community people ventured to the north and west, into Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia, which formed an outer are of

less intensive exchange. Evidence of this voyaging is provided by existing settlements within Melanesia of descendants of these seafarers. (Only blind landlubbers would say that settlements like these, as well as those in New Zealand and Hawai'i, were made through accidental voyages by people who got blown off course-presumably while they were out fishing with their wives, children, pigs, dogs, and food-plant seedlings-during a hurricane). The Cook Islands and French Polynesia formed a community similar to that of their cousins to the west; hardy spirits from this community ventured southward and founded settlements in Aotearoa, while others went in the opposite direction to discover and inhabit the islands of Hawai'i. Also north of the equator is the community that was centered on Yap.

Melanesia is supposedly the most fragmented world of all: tiny communities isolates by terrain and at least one thousand languages. The truth is that large regions of Melanesia were integrated by trading and cultural exchange systems that were even more complex than those of Polynesia and Micronesia. Lingua francas and the fact that most Melanesians were and are multilingual (which is more than one can say about most Pacific rim countries), make utter nonsense of the notion that they were and still are babblers of Babel. lt was in the interest of imperialism and is in the interest of neocolonialism, to promote this blatant misconception of Melanesia.[3]

Evidence of the conglomerations of islands with their economies and cultures is readily available in the oral traditions of the islands, and in blood ties that are retained today. The highest chiefs of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, for example, still maintain kin connections that were forged centuries before Europeans entered the Pacific, to the days when boundaries were not imaginary lines in the ocean, but rather points of entry that were constantly negotiated and even contested. The sea was open to anyone who could navigate a way through.

This was the kind of world that bred men and women with skills and courage that took them into the unknown, to discover and populate all the habitable islands east of the 130th meridian. The great fame that they have earned posthumously may have been romanticized, but it is solidly based on real feats that could have been performed only by those born and raised with an open sea as their home.

Nineteenth-century imperialism erected boundaries that led to the con traction of Oceania, transforming a once boundless world into the Pacific Island states and territories that we know today. People were confined to their tiny spaces, isolated from each other. No

3 I use the terms 'Melanesia', 'Polynesia', and 'Micronesia' because they are already part of the cultural consciousness of the peoples of Oceania. Before the nineteenth century there was only a vast sea in which people mingled in ways that, despite the European-imposed threefold division, the boundaries today are still blurred. This important issue is, however, beyond the purview of this paper.

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longer could they travel freely to do what they had clone for centuries. They were cut off from their relatives abroad, from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment. This is the historical basis of the view that our countries are small, poor, and isolated. It is true only insofar as people are still fenced in and quarantined.

This assumption is no longer tenable as far as the countries of central and western Polynesia are concerned, and may be untenable also of Micronesia. The rapid expansion of the world economy in the years since World War II may have intensified third world dependency, as has been noted from certain vantage points at high-level academia, but it also had a liberating effect on the lives of ordinary people in Oceania, as it did in the Caribbean islands. The new economic reality made nonsense of artificial boundaries, enabling the people to shake off their confinement. They have since moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors did in earlier times: enlarging their world as they go, on a scale not possible before. Everywhere they go, to Australia, New Zealand, Hawai'i, the mainland United States, Canada, Europe, and elsewhere, they strike roots in new resource areas, securing employment and overseas family property, expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories all across their ocean, and the ocean is theirs because it has always been their home. Social scientists may write of Oceania as a Spanish Lake, a British Lake, an American Lake, and even a Japanese Lake. But we all know that only those who make the ocean their home and love it, can really claim it as their own. Conquerors come, conquerors go, the ocean remains, mother only to her children. This mother has a big heart though; she adopts any one who loves her.

The resources of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans, I-Kiribati, Fijians, Isndo-Fijians, and Tongans, are no longer confined to their national boundaries. They are located wherever these people are living, permanently or otherwise, as they were before the age of western imperialism. One can see this any day at seaports and airports throughout the central Pacific, where consignments of goods from homes abroad are unloaded as those of the homelands are loaded. Construction materials, agricultural machinery, motor vehicles, other heavy goods, and a myriad other things are sent from relatives abroad, while handcrafts, tropical fruits and root crops, dried marine creatures, kava, and other delectables are dispatched from the homelands. Although this flow of goods is generally not included in official statistics, much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of the laws of confinement and regulated mobility.

The world of Oceania is neither tiny nor deficient in resources. It was so only as a condition of the colonial confinement that lasted

less than a century in a history of millennia. Human nature demands space for free movement, and the larger the space the better it is for people. Islanders have broken out of their confinement, are moving around and away from their homelands, not so much because their countries are poor, but because they were unnaturally confined and severed from many of their traditional sources of wealth, and because it is in their blood to be mobile. They are once again enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanded networks for circulation. Alliances are already being forged by an increasing number of Islanders with the *tangata whenua* of Aotearoa and will inevitably be forged with the native Hawaiians. It is not inconceivable that if Polynesians ever get together, their two largest home lands will be reclaimed in one form or another. They have already made their presence felt in these homelands, and have stamped indelible imprints on the cultural landscapes.

We cannot see the processes outlined here clearly if we confine our attention to things within national boundaries and to events at the upper levels of political economies and regional and international diplomacy. Only when we focus on what ordinary people are actually doing, rather than on what they should be doing, can we see the broader picture of reality.

The world of Oceania may no longer include the heavens and the underworld, but it certainly encompasses the great cities of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada. It is within this expanded world that the extent of the people's resources must be measured.

In general, the living standards of Oceania are higher than those of most third world societies. To attribute this merely to aid and remittances – misconstrued deliberately or otherwise as a form of dependence on rich countries' economies – is an unfortunate misreading of contemporary reality. Ordinary Pacific people depend for their daily existence much, much more on themselves and their kin, wherever they may be, than on anyone's largesse, which they believe is largely pocketed by the elite classes. The funds and goods that homes-abroad people send their home land relatives belong to no one but themselves. They earn every cent through hard physical toil in the new locations that need and pay for their labor. They also participate in the manufacture of many of the goods they send home; they keep the streets and buildings of Auckland clean, and its transportation system running smoothly; they keep the suburbs of the western United States (including Hawai'i) trimmed, neat, green, and beautiful; and they have contributed much, much more than has been acknowledged.

On the other hand Islanders in their homelands are not the parasites on their relatives abroad that misinterpreters of 'remittances' would have us believe. Economists do not take account of the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity, the core of all oceanic

cultures. They over look the fact that for everything homeland relatives receive, they reciprocate with goods they themselves produce, by maintaining ancestral roots and lands for everyone, homes with warmed hearths for travelers to return to permanently or to strengthen their bonds, their souls, and their identities before they move on again. This is not dependence but interdependence, which is purportedly the essence of the global system. To say that it is something else and less is not only erroneous, but denies people their dignity.

What I have stated so far should already have provided sufficient response to the assertion that the islands are isolated. They are clearly not. Through developments in high technology, communications and transportation systems are a vast improvement on what they were twenty years ago. These may be very costly by any standard, but they are available and used. Telecommunications companies are making fortunes out of lengthy conversations between breathless relatives thousands of miles apart.

But the islands are not connected only with regions of the Pacific rim. Within Oceania itself people are once again circulating in increasing numbers and frequency. Regional organizations-intergovernmental, educational, religious, sporting, and cultural-are responsible for much of this mobility. The University of the South Pacific, with its highly mobile staff and student bodies comprising men, women, and youth from the twelve island countries that own it and from outside the Pacific, is an excellent example. Increasingly the older movers and shakers of the islands are being replaced by younger ones; and when they meet each other in Suva, Honiara, Apia, Vila, or any other capital city of the Pacific, they meet as friends, as people who have gone through the same place of learning, who have worked and played and prayed together.

The importance of our ocean for the stability of the global environment, for meeting a significant proportion of the world's protein requirements, for the production of certain marine resources in waters that are relatively clear of pollution, for the global reserves of mineral resources, among others, has been increasingly recognized, and puts paid to the notion that Oceania is the hole in the doughnut. Together with our exclusive economic zones, the areas of the earth's surface that most of our countries occupy can no longer be called small. In this regard, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, and French Polynesia, for example, are among the largest countries in the world. The emergence of organizations such as SPACHEE (South Pacific Action Committee for Human Environment and Ecology), SPREP (South Pacific Regional Environment Pro gramme), the Forum Fisheries Agency, and SOPAC (South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission); of movements for a nuclear-free Pacific, the prevention of toxic waste disposal, and the ban on the wall-of-death fishing methods, with linkages to similar organizations and movements else

where; and the establishment at the University of the South Pacific of the Marine Science and Ocean Resources Management programs, with link ages to fisheries and ocean resources agencies throughout the Pacific and beyond; all indicate that we could play a pivotal role in the protection and sustainable development of our ocean. There are no people on earth more suited to be guardians of the world's largest ocean than those for whom it has been home for generations. Although this is a different issue from the ones I have focused on for most of this paper, it is relevant to the concern for a far better future for us than has been prescribed and predicted. Our role in the protection and development of our ocean is no mean task; it is no less than a major contribution to the well-being of humanity. Because it could give us a sense of doing something very worthwhile and noble, we should seize the moment with dispatch.

The perpetrators of the smallness view of Oceania have pointed out quite correctly the need for each island state or territory to enter into appropriate forms of specialized production for the world market, to improve their management and marketing techniques, and so forth. But they have so focused on bounded national economies at the macrolevel that they have overlooked or understated the significance of the other processes I have outlined here, and have thereby swept aside the whole universe of Oceanic mores and just about all our potentials for autonomy. The explanation seems clear: one way or another, they or nearly all of them are involved directly or indirectly in the fields of aided development and Pacific rim geopolitics, for whose purposes it is necessary to portray our huge world in tiny, needy bits. To acknowledge the larger reality would be to undermine the prevailing view and to frustrate certain agendas and goals of powerful interests. These perpetrators are therefore participants, as I was, in the belittlement of Oceania, and in the perpetuation of the neocolonial relationships of dependency that have been and are being played out in the rarefied circles of national politicians, bureaucrats, diplomats, and assorted experts and academics, while far beneath them exists that other order, of ordinary people, who are busily and independently redefining their world in accordance with their perceptions of their own interests and of where the future lies for their children and their children's children. Those who maintain that the people of Oceania live from day to day, not really caring for the long-term benefits, are unaware of the elementary truth known by most native Islanders: that they plan for generations, for the continuity and improvement of their families and kin groups.

As I watched the Big Island of Hawai'i expanding into and rising from the depths, I saw in it the future for Oceania, our sea of islands. That future lies in the hands of our own people, not of those who would prescribe for us, get us forever dependent and indebted because they can see no way out.

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At the Honolulu Airport, while waiting for my flight back to Fiji, I met an old friend, a Tongan who is twice my size and lives in Berkeley, California. He is not an educated man. He works on people's yards, trimming hedges and trees, and laying driveways and footpaths. But every three months or so he flies to Fiji, buys eight-to-ten-thousand dollars worth of kava, takes it on the plane flying him back to California, and sells it from his home. He has never heard of dependency, and if he were told of it, it would hold no real meaning for him. He told me in Honolulu that he was bringing a cooler full of T-shirts, some for the students at the university with whom he often stays when he comes to Suva, and the rest for his relatives in Tonga, where he goes for a week or so while his kava is gathered, pounded, and bagged in Fiji. He later fills the cooler with seafoods to take back home to California, where he has two sons he wants to put through college. On one of his trips he helped me renovate a house that I had just bought. We like him because he is a good storyteller and is generous with his money and time, but mostly because he is one of us.

There are thousands like him, who are flying back and forth across national boundaries, the international dateline, and the equator, far above and completely undaunted by the deadly serious discourses below on the nature of the Pacific Century, the Asia-Pacific coprosperity sphere, and the dispositions of the post-cold war Pacific rim, cultivating their ever growing universe in their own ways, which is as it should be, for therein lies their independence. No one else would give it to them – or to us.

Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom.

I WOULD LIKE *to thank Marshall Sahlins far convincing me in the end that not all is lost, and that the world of Oceania is quite bright despite appearances. This paper is based on lectures delivered at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and the East-West Center, Honolulu, March-April, I993. Vijay Naidu and Eric Waddell read a draft of this paper and made very helpful comments. I am profoundly grateful to them for their support.*