

Indigenous Articulations

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L'indépendence, c'est de bien calculer les interdépendences.

JEAN-MARIE TJIBAOU

New Caledonia is a rather long island, about three hundred miles end to end, and never more than fifty miles wide. Its spine is mountainous, with transverse valleys running to the sea. In 1850 about thirty distinct language groups occupied these separate valleys—a classic western Pacific social ecology. A century and a half later much has changed. New Caledonia is a settler colony, once the site of a French penitentiary, now a nickel-mining center, with a long history of violent displacements of the indigenous people. Since the 1960s, there has been an intensification of resistance to French rule, in the name of a more or less unified aboriginal population who have appropriated the colonizers' name for generic natives, *canaques* (but capitalized, with a new spelling: Kanaks). The surviving language groups and custom areas on the island engage in a complex politics of alliance and competition within and outside this new political identity. French is the lingua franca. The Kanak movement, since the 1970s, has made real trouble, both for the relatively liberal French authorities, and for the more entrenched whites on the island. The result is a growing economic and political autonomy for the overwhelmingly indigenous Northern and Loyalty Islands provinces, and a very slow return of expropriated lands. I can't go into the countercurrents and future uncertainties of this simultaneously post- and neocolonial situation. I want to bring up only one aspect of the *modus vivendi*, which I'm tempted to call "indigenous commuting." (The older meanings of the word *commute*, by the way, have to do with exchanging, bartering, changing, mitigating.)

Most of New Caledonia's white and Pacific-mix populations live in

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and around the capital city, Noumea, near the rather barren southern end of the island. Most indigenous life is located elsewhere, to the north and east, in fertile mountain valleys. When I was in New Caledonia in the late 1970s, I was taken around one of these northern habitats, Hienghène, by Jean-Marie Tjibaou, who was then in the process of becoming the Kanak movement's most prominent spokesman. Tjibaou was mayor of Hienghène, and he was involved in the return of his clan to ancestral lands, which had been forcibly alienated by colonial cattle ranchers for more than a half century. Tjibaou lived in Noumea, where he had political work to do, but he was able to travel regularly to Hienghène for meetings, ceremonies, and family business, using the road system put in place by the French. It was about a six-hour drive. Tjibaou, who had spent most of his last twenty years away from the valley of his birth, was comfortable in more than one place. Yet there was no doubt in his mind where his roots were. He deeply believed that a continuous relationship with a place—its ancestors, history, and ecology—was necessary if Kanaks were to feel *à l'aise*, if they were to find breathing room in the contemporary world (Tjibaou 1996). The restoration of lost lands has always been a crucial goal of Kanak insurgency.

Among New Caledonia's Melanesians there is no mass tendency to exodus from rural villages into swelling cities, either on or off the islands. A significant Kanak urban population resides in and around Noumea, the political and commercial capital, but there's a lot of coming and going. Recent studies have confirmed that older patterns of mobility persist in the migrations and circulation linking tribe and town (Hamelin 2000; Naepels 2000). When I first noticed this mobility, I was struck by a homology of scale between pre- and postcolonial lifeways. People used to walk from village to village, from one end of a valley to the other, on various social, economic, and political errands. It took a day or two. Today, using the automotive infrastructure, it takes a day or two to traverse the length of the island, to visit and return. People still travel, circulate, and manage to be home when it matters. *Plus ça change. . . .*

All of this raises some key issues for our discussions:

First, how is "indigeneity" both rooted in and routed through particular places? How shall we begin to think about a complex dynamic of local landedness and expansive social spaces? Should we think of a continuum of indigenous and diasporic situations? Or are there specifically indigenous kinds of diasporism? Lived dialectics of urban *and* rural? On *and* off the reservation? Island *and* mainland native experiences? There are real

tensions, to be sure, along the continuum of indigenous locations. But as Murray Chapman's extensive research on "circulation" in the Solomon Islands and beyond suggests, we should be wary of binary oppositions between home and away, or a before-after progression from village life to cosmopolitan modernity (1978; 1991). As we try to grasp the full range of indigenous ways to be "modern," it is crucial to recognize patterns of visiting and return, of desire and nostalgia, of lived connections across distances and differences.

Second, relations between "edge" and "center." How should we conceive of an expansive indigenous region: a "Native Pacific"? What traditions and practices allow one to feel rooted without being localized, kept small? I always think of Black Elk, the Sioux shaman and Catholic catechist, traveling as a young man with Buffalo Bill in Paris (a stop Tjibaou would later make on a different indigenous detour). Black Elk said something like, "Harney Peak [in the North Dakota Badlands] is the center of the world. And wherever you are can be the center of the world." How do moving people take their roots with them, as "rooted cosmopolitans" in Kwame Anthony Appiah's phrase? (1998, 91). And are there specifically indigenous kinds of homes away from home?

Third, these questions raise another: Just how expansive can notions of indigenous or native affiliation become, before they begin to lose specificity, falling into more generalized "postcolonial" discourses of displacement? In this conference we find ourselves occupying the sometimes fraught borderland (not, I will argue, a sharp line) between "indigenous" and "diasporic" affiliations and identities. I hope we will actively inhabit and explore, not flee from, the mutually constitutive tension of indigenous and diasporist visions and experiences. We need to discover a jagged path between the seductions of a premature, postmodern pluralism and the dangerous comforts offered by exclusivist self-other definitions.

Considering a "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge," we necessarily turn our attention to indigenous dynamism, interaction, dwelling-in-travel. But it is equally important to remember that being "native" in a more than local sense does not mean sacrificing attachments to a place, or places—the grounding that helps one feel at home in a world of complex interdependences. Black Elk somehow took Harney Peak along when he went to Paris. And David Welchman Gegeo, in his symposium keynote, stressed the profound attachments to island places felt by Oceanic people, like himself, living abroad. The example of "Kanak commuting" I began with may also help remind us that the "edge" of a Native Pacific isn't

always “out there” thousands of miles from the island centers. In New Caledonia, Noumea marks the powerful “edge” of a particular Native Pacific. The city has long been a white enclave. But it’s an edge that has come to be in contact, back-and-forth, with *la tribu* (landed sites of *la coutume*, customary life). For Tjibaou and many of his compatriots it has never been a matter of choosing one *or* the other, tribe or city, tradition or modernity, but of sustaining a livable interaction as part of an ongoing struggle for power.

Being *à l’aise* with the contemporary world, *as a Kanak*, meant living and working in both villages and cities. The indigenous cultural politics Tjibaou espoused took shape in landmark events like the 1975 festival, *Mélanésie 2000*—whose name invoked a dynamic *future*. The festival operated at many levels: a revival and public intertribal exchange of traditional stories, dances, alliances; an emerging articulation of “Kanak” identity at the level of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands; a performance of an expansive “Melanesian” culture for several audiences: for European New Caledonia, for neocolonial France, for other Pacific nations, and for international bodies like the United Nations. Tjibaou insisted that the cultural center he envisaged (now, after his tragic assassination, named after him) needed to be located in the hostile settler-colonial city, Noumea. The politics of cultural and political identity, as he saw it, always worked the boundaries. And as Alban Bensa has shown, the Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou is, in its spatial design, an articulated ensemble, juxtaposing and connecting, not without tensions, *la coutume* with the transnational world of art and culture (Bensa 2000).

As we consider Native Pacific lives on the “edge,” in places like Auckland, Oakland, Los Angeles, and so on, we can remember that the edges, the traversed and guarded frontiers of a dynamic native life, are not just to be found out here in places like California (riding the rim of the Pacific plate, as Vince Diaz always reminds us). Edges and borders crosscut the region, defining different conjunctures: local, national, and regional; urban, rural, and in-between; colonial, neocolonial, postcolonial.

This brings me to my central point about “indigeneity” today—its “articulated” nature. I’ll be exploring some of the advantages and limits of articulation theory for an emergent “Native Pacific Cultural Studies,” weighing the possibilities of translating notions like articulation and diaspora from their North Atlantic locations into the spaces and histories of the Pacific. During the conference others will certainly have more to say about the specific paths, pitfalls, and detours of cultural studies in the

Pacific, unfinished routes of what, following Edward Said (1983), we can call “traveling theories.”

For clarity’s sake at the outset let me make some rather sharp distinctions, oppositions I’ll need to blur later on. The notion of *articulated sites of indigeneity* rejects two claims often made about today’s tribal movements. On the one hand, articulation approaches question the assumption that indigeneity is essentially about primordial, transhistorical attachments (ancestral “laws,” continuous traditions, spirituality, respect for Mother Earth, and the like). Such understandings tend to bypass the pragmatic, entangled, contemporary forms of indigenous cultural politics. On the other hand, articulation theory finds it equally reductive to see indigenous, or First Nations claims as the result of a post-sixties, “postmodern” identity politics (appeals to ethnicity and “heritage” by fragmented groups functioning as “invented traditions” within a late-capitalist, commodified multiculturalism). This viewpoint brushes aside long histories of indigenous survival and resistance, transformative links with roots prior to and outside the world system. We must, I think, firmly reject these simplistic explanations—while weighing the partial truth each one contains.

To think of indigeneity as “articulated” is, above all, to recognize the *diversity* of cultures and histories that currently make claims under this banner. What exactly unites Hawaiians (whose history includes a monarchic state) and much smaller Amazonian, or New Guinea groups? What connects Pan-Mayan activists with US tribal gaming operations? What allies the new Inuit autonomous province of Nunavut with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land-claims (rather than with, say, the similar strong regionalisms of Catalonia, or perhaps what’s emerging in Scotland or Wales)? What do “tribal” peoples in India have in common with the Fijian Great Council of Chiefs?

I do not think we can arrive at a core list of essential “indigenous” features. The commonality is more historically contingent, though no less real for all that. Indigenous movements are positioned, and potentially but not necessarily connected, by overlapping experiences in relation to Euro-American, Russian, Japanese, and other imperialisms. They all contest the power of assimilationist nation-states, making strong claims for autonomy, or for various forms of sovereignty. In recent decades, positive discourses of indigenous commonality have emerged, drawing together this range of historical predicaments: the various pan-Indian, pan-Aboriginal, pan-Mayan, indigenous “Arctic,” movements, as well as an expanding network of fourth-world coalitions. Such discourses are also propagated

through the networks of the United Nations, nongovernment organizations, and tourists. Today, a number of expansive ideologies express positive notions of “indigenouness,” ideas that in turn feed back into local traditions.

To see such chains of equivalence (which must always downplay or silence salient differences) as articulated phenomena is not to view them as inauthentic or “merely” political, invented, or opportunistic. Articulation as I understand it evokes a deeper sense of the “political”—productive processes of consensus, exclusion, alliance, and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all societies.

HISTORIES

I will take up the strengths and limits of articulation theory a bit later. But first I want to raise some broad historical issues, identifying features that distinguish island Pacific contexts from those in which North Atlantic cultural studies tools have been hammered out. And I hasten to add that I’m not pleading “Pacific exceptionalism,” but highlighting salient differences within a connected, open-ended history of the late-twentieth century. The point is to locate Pacific experiences in relation to global forces, not outside them, historical experiences no longer defined as essentially reactive, forever playing catchup to linear progress.

The timing of decolonization (an uneven, unfinished process) in the region is critical. Changes in formal political sovereignty generally came to the Pacific in the 1970s and 1980s—a couple of decades after the clustered postwar experiences of African or South Asian independence. Decolonization is, of course, not an all-or-nothing, once-and-for-all, transition; long, ongoing histories of resistance and accommodation, of unlinking and relinking with imperial forces, need to be kept in view. But the national independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s defined an epochal moment in this process and as such have retained a certain normative status. Pacific decolonizations encounter a rather different historical situation, altered constraints and possibilities (Firth 2000). Since the 1960s, for example, the notion that political independence under the leadership of nationalizing elites would lead to liberation and social justice has been pretty definitively exploded, particularly for local or tribal peoples. In many parts of the world today nation-state affiliations no longer seem, so unambiguously, the royal road to a better future.

Moreover, the capitalist world system has been going through some

important mutations, beginning in the early 1970s and emerging as what's variously called flexible accumulation, late capitalism, post-Fordism, or postmodernity (Jameson 1984; Harvey 1990; Ong 1999). As a result, the very idea, the rallying cry, of independence seems increasingly to have quotation marks placed around it. For Jean-Marie Tjibaou independence and *interdependence* were inseparable. Thus sovereignty could never be separatist, an end in itself: "It's sovereignty that gives us the right and the power to negotiate interdependencies. For a small country like ours, independence means reckoning interdependencies well" (Tjibaou 1996, 179). The notion of sovereignty, control over borders, over culture, over economy, is complicated by the fact that today no nation, not even the most powerful, efficiently governs its economy, frontiers, and cultural symbols. You can't keep out illegal immigrants, drugs, Coke, and Michael Jordan. Or Bob Marley: the articulation of reggae with indigenous projects in the Pacific and elsewhere is a resonant, if unorganized, form of "globalization from below" (Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000). And, since movements of people across borders are dramatic and often nonlinear, experiences of identity and citizenship have come to be complexly parceled out. Families can be organized in long-distance patterns. It's not news, today, that one can live in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, or Auckland and yet be deeply connected to Hawai'i, Tonga, Samoa, or the Cook Islands (Small 1997; Kauanui 1998). Such diasporic predicaments, the remittance economies they often reflect, and the "commuting" (exchanging, changing, mitigating) they entail, are facilitated by technologies of air travel, telephones, the internet, videos, and so forth. If people in the Pacific have occupied large spaces with canoes, why can't they dwell with airplanes and the web?

Of course, transnational dynamics have long existed. But in the 1950s and 1960s their salience for the cultural politics of decolonization was not at all clear. Then, a modernist vision of nationhood held sway, a vision of drawing lines around particular territories and building imagined communities inside. Nation-building—making "Nigerians" or "Indonesians," for example—in ethnically complex territories, involved reducing or opposing retrograde "tribalisms." The nation-state alone could be progressive. Nation-state projects are, of course, far from dead, but things are inescapably more ambiguous today. Revived, newly configured projects of the indigenous and the local pull against such modernizing attitudes. (As I write, the multiethnic nation-state edifice seems especially rickety in places like Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Indonesia.)

These developments reflect old and new “ethnic” antagonisms, traditional regional differences, as well as the pressures and opportunities of a capitalist world system. Theorists of globalization and postmodernity tend to see a newly “flexible” political economy actively making room for, and to a degree commodifying, the dynamics of localism, identity, and culture. I would insist, however, on the phrase “to a degree.” The partial entanglements of indigenous and local societies in global structures are not simply the world system’s unfinished business. They have their own roots and trajectories. As much historically minded ethnography in the Pacific has shown, the contemporary movements around identity, *kastom*, and sovereignty continue and transform long histories of conflict and interaction (for examples, see Dening 1980; White 1991; Finney 1994; Jolly 1994; Sahlins 1994; Bensa 1995; Thomas 1997).

This work converges with that of indigenous scholars (for example, Diaz 1993; Helu 1999; Hereniko 1995, 2000; Teaiwa 2001) to trace sustained experiences of cultural survival, resistance, and innovation in changing contexts of performance and alliance. Traditions articulate, selectively remember and connect pasts and presents. Indeed, as both Roy Wagner (1979, 1980) and Lilikal Kame‘eleihiwa (1992) in their different ways affirm, the “past” in indigenous epistemologies is where one looks for the “future.” The quotation marks suggest how a western commonsense view of historical development, based on the opposition of tradition and modernity, is deconstructed in translation. Moreover, as Jonathan Friedman has argued (1994), such dynamic traditions now find expanded room for political expression in the “ethnic” and “racial” spaces of a decentered west—sites of mobilization too quickly rounded up under the rubrics “multiculturalism” or “identity politics” (Clifford 2000). The increasingly strong tribal sovereignty movements of the 1980s and 1990s show, at least, that the current hegemony—call it neocolonialism, postmodernity, globalization, Americanization, or neoliberalism—is fractured, significantly open-ended. Very old cultural dispositions—historically rerouted by religious conversion, formations of race or ethnicity, communication technologies, new gender roles, capitalist pressures—are being actively remade.

Pacific decolonization struggles thus have their own temporalities and traditions. And because political decolonization comes to the Pacific when sovereignty is an increasingly compromised reality, we see the emergence of different forms of national identity, new sorts of negotiations among the local, the regional, the national, and the global. Compare the current process of “nation building” in Papua New Guinea with that in 1960s

Africa. Consider new forms of federalism, of indigenous autonomy within partially liberalized settler regimes (New Caledonia, Aotearoa New Zealand). Consider the two S moas. Or think of the different agendas proposed by advocates of Hawaiian sovereignty. Given a general loosening of the hyphen in the nation-state norm, it is revealing to compare questions of regionalism and nationalism in the Pacific with similar issues being worked out elsewhere, for example in the European Union or the former Soviet Union. Comparisons of this sort can now be made without recourse to notions of margin and center, backward and advanced, notions that have, in the western imaginary, long kept the Pacific “out there” and “back then.”

Of course today’s mobile capital and labor regimes can work through regions as well as—sometimes better than—nations. But region-making is not only a top-down process. Catalonia may make sense economically in the New Europe, but it responds also to long-standing cultural, linguistic, political aspirations for autonomy, within and separate from Spain. There’s a bottom-up or ex-centric element to regional aspirations, a history deeper than postmodern spatial structures and financial networks. We’re all familiar with Epeli Hau‘ofa’s resonant hope: that Pacific Islanders see themselves, and the spaces between their homelands, not as dots in a vast ocean but as relays in a sea of islands that they themselves create through old and new practices of travel, visiting, trade, and migration (Hau‘ofa 1993). Hau‘ofa connects old stories with modern circumstances, recognizing temporal overlays in a complexly contemporary world. Hau‘ofa’s sea of islands is not, of course, the “Pacific Rim,” a regionalization based on capital flows, with an empty center (Connery 1994). It’s a region cobbled together, articulated, from the inside out, based on everyday practices that link islands with each other and with mainland diasporas. Hau‘ofa reaches back to voyaging canoes and, at the same time, tells stories about jumbo jets—about Tongans, Samoans, and Hawaiians going back and forth to Los Angeles, Auckland, and Salt Lake City. Like Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic,” or emerging indigenous connections across the “Arctic,” the Pacific “sea of islands” helps us conceptualize practices of subaltern region-making, realities invisible to more world-systemic, center-periphery models of globalization and locality.

Hau‘ofa’s Pacific mobilities reveal, unmistakably, a kind of indigenous cosmopolitanism (see also Thaman 1985). Yet there’s a paradox, a rich and sometimes difficult tension, here. For to recognize a specifically indigenous

dialectic of dwelling and traveling requires more than simply unmaking the exoticist or colonialist concept of the homebody native, always firmly at home, in his or her place. I've learned a lot from island-savvy graduate students at the University of California at Santa Cruz—Teresia Teaiwa, Vince Diaz, J K haulani Kauanui, Pamela Kido, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua, Heather Waldroup, and April Henderson—about different lived experiences of roots and routes. To do justice to a range of strategies for dwelling and traveling in the Native Pacific, and across its multiple edges, we need something rather different from the influential perspectives of Appadurai (1990) or Gupta and Ferguson (1992), crucial though their critiques of naturalized places, “cultures,” and “natives” have been. (For an engaged counterpoint see Teaiwa 2001.) The contrast between colonial fixity and postcolonial mobility, between indigenous roots and diasporic routes, can't be allowed to harden into an opposition or a before-after scenario in which cosmopolitan equals modern. When reckoning with traveling natives, if I can call them that, in the Pacific, this sort of categorization breaks down. We are left with a spectrum of attachments to land and place—articulated, old and new traditions of indigenous dwelling and traveling.

ARTICULATIONS

I now focus more directly on how articulation theory helps us understand all this. What are its limits? Where does it need to be adapted, customized? The politics of articulation for Stuart Hall is, of course, an updating of Gramsci (Hall 1986a, b; Slack 1996). It understands frontier effects, the lining up of friends and enemies, us and them, insiders and outsiders, on one side or another of a line, as tactical. Instead of rigid confrontations—civilized and primitive, bourgeois and proletarian, white and black, men and women, west and third world, Christian and pagan, one sees continuing struggles across a terrain, portions of which are captured by changing alliances, hooking and unhooking particular elements. There's a lot of middle ground; and crucial political and cultural positions are not firmly anchored on one side or the other but are contested and up for grabs.

The term *articulation*, of course, suggests discourse or speech—but never a self-present, “expressive” voice and subject. Meaningful discourse is a cutting up and combining of linguistic elements, always a selection from a vastly greater repertoire of semiotic possibilities. So an articulated

tradition is a kind of collective “voice,” but always in this constructed, contingent sense. In another register—not reducible to the domain of language with its orders of grammar and speech, structure and performance—articulation refers to concrete connections, joints. Stuart Hall’s favorite example is an “articulated lorry” (something that to us Americans sounds very exotic!). Something that’s articulated or hooked together (like a truck’s cab and trailer, or a sentence’s constituent parts) can also be unhooked and recombined. When you understand a social or cultural formation as an articulated ensemble it does not allow you to prefigure it on an organic model, as a living, persistent, “growing” body, continuous and developing through time. An articulated ensemble is more like a political coalition or, in its ability to conjoin disparate elements, a cyborg. While the possible elements and positions of a sociocultural ensemble are historically imposed constraints that can be quite persistent over time, there is no eternal or natural shape to their configuration.

Articulation offers a nonreductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of “traditional” forms. All-or-nothing, fatal-impact notions of change tend to assume that cultures are living bodies with organic structures. So, for example, indigenous languages, traditional religions, or kinship arrangements, may appear to be critical organs, which if lost, transformed, or combined in novel structures should logically imply the organism’s death. You can’t live without a heart or lungs. But indigenous societies have persisted with few, or no, native-language speakers, as fervent Christians, and with “modern” family structures, involvement in capitalist economies, and new social roles for women and men. “Inner” elements have, historically, been connected with, “exterior” forms, in processes of selective, syncretic transformation. When Jean-Marie Tjibaou, speaking as both a former priest and an advocate of Kanak *coutume*, said that the Bible does not belong to westerners (who seized it “passing through”) he was detaching and rearticulating European and Melanesian religious traditions (1996, 303).

The creation of unexpected political or religious ensembles, often in moments of colonial stress, is what first fascinated me about the Pacific when I worked on the linked “conversion” experiences of the missionary-ethnographer Maurice Leenhardt and Melanesian protestants (Clifford 1982). Across the Pacific, people have attached themselves and their societies to parts of Christianity while rejecting, or thoroughly transforming, other elements. (The essays collected by John Barker [1990] provide abun-

dant examples.) To a degree, it has been a matter of processing the new through dynamic traditional structures. This is the part of the story that Marshall Sahlins' pathbreaking work (for example 1985) has featured and made inescapable. But it cannot be the whole story: arguments for cultural continuity through structural transformation are most persuasive in earlier periods of commercial contact and need to be supplemented by other, more politically contingent processes, especially once regimes of colonial and now neocolonial governmentality are in place (Carrier [1992, 140] suggests a similar reservation). The "cultural" continuity of indigenous societies has frequently been uneven, not guaranteed by a persistent, transformative structure. Since local traditions during the past two centuries have been violently disrupted, and inasmuch as new modes of individualism, universalism, exchange, and communication have restructured bodies, societies, and spaces, the traditions that do persist need to be seen as particular combinations of heterogeneous elements, old and new, indigenous and foreign. James Carrier's explicit use of articulation to describe the historical relation of gift and commodity forms in Ponam Island society is exemplary in this regard (1992; see also Errington and Gewertz [1991] on colonial, evangelical, and capitalist interactions in New Britain; Jacobsen [1996] on Melanesian migration as articulated social change; and Tsing [1999] on formations of environmentalism in Malaysia and Indonesia). Indigenous women's movements weave together traditional and Christian roles, deploying the languages of "kastom" and anticolonialism to grapple with patriarchal power at local, national, and international levels (Molisa 1987; Jolly 1994). What emerges is a quite different picture from that of an authentic, ancient tradition (or structure) persisting over the centuries by selectively integrating and rejecting external pressures and temptations. (Diane Nelson's [1999] use of articulation theory in an analysis of large-scale indigenous mobilization in Guatemala offers a rich comparison with Pacific histories, as does Alcida Ramos' [1998] account of entangled indigenous and national agendas in Brazil.)

In articulation theory, the whole question of authenticity is secondary, and the process of social and cultural persistence is political all the way back. It is assumed that cultural forms will always be made, unmade, and remade. Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether, and how, they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a "we." This seems

to me a more realistic way of talking about what has been called cultural “invention.” I don’t need to remind this audience that the invention of tradition is much disputed in the Pacific. The storm around Alan Hanson’s article on Mōri traditions and Haunani-Kay Trask’s categorical rejection of anthropological authority in works by Roger Keesing and Jocelyn Linnekin are the best-known cases (Hanson 1989; Trask 1991; Keesing 1991; Linnekin 1991). The debate often came down to line-drawing between “insider” and “outsider” representations of indigenous cultures. In this it expressed an appropriate decentering (not necessarily a refutation) of non-Native expertise—a strong claim for the value of local historical accounts and oral traditions. But decolonizing struggles pitting anthropological against native authority have, at least in the short run, tended to obscure substantive historical issues.

How should differently positioned authorities (academic and nonacademic, Native and non-Native) represent a living tradition’s combined and uneven processes of continuity, rupture, transformation, and revival? My suggestions today about articulation contribute to an ongoing argument (and, I hope, a conversation) on these critical issues. I am not persuaded that “the invention of tradition” approach in the Pacific was essentially a matter of anthropologists, faced by new indigenous challenges, clinging to their professional authority to represent cultures and adjudicate authenticity (Friedman 1993; and for a nuanced account of struggles over “authenticity” see Wittersheim 1999). That is certainly part of the story. But the notion of “invention” was also getting at something important, albeit in a clumsy way. The thinking of Roy Wagner (1980), deeply influenced in its structure by New Guinea poetics and politics, is a better source for the term’s nonreductive meanings than the usual reference, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). This prescient recognition of inventive cultural *process* has tended to be lost in the flood of analyses that demystify nationalist fictions and manipulations.

At the present moment, it seems to me that the notion of invention can be usefully rethought as a politics of articulation. We are on more concrete, because more dynamic, historical grounds. The whole notion of custom looks quite different when seen this way, when what Margaret Jolly (1992) pointedly called “specters of inauthenticity” are laid to rest. The question of what is borrowed from here or there, what is lost and rediscovered in new situations, can be discussed within the realm of normal political or cultural activity.

HORIZONS

Articulation theory cannot account for everything. Pushed to extremes it can take you to a point where every cultural form, every structure or restructuration, every connection and disconnection, has a radical contingency as if, at any moment, anything were possible. That is a misreading of Stuart Hall on articulation. He is quite clear that the possible connections and disconnections are constrained at any historical moment. Certain forms and structural antagonisms persist over long periods. Yet these enduring forces—whether they be Christianity and capitalism or traditional cosmology and kinship—can be understood concretely only as they work through specific cultural symbols and political blocs. These are never guaranteed, but are actively produced and potentially challenged.

When thinking of differently articulated sites of *indigeneity*, however, one of the enduring constraints in the changing mix will always be the power of place. This is a fundamental component of all tribal, First Nation identifications. Not everyone is equally on the move. Many people live where they have always lived, even as the habitat around them goes through sometimes violent transformations. As the scale of “tribal” and “national” existence alters dramatically, people living exiled from ancestral places often sustain and revive a yearning, an active memory of land. (For island and coastal peoples a sense of material location can include a lot of water.) This “grounding” offers a sense of depth and continuity running through all the ruptures and attachments, the effects of religious conversion, state control, new technologies, commodities, schooling, tourism, and so on. Indigenous forms of dwelling cover a range of sites and intensities: there are “native” homebodies, commuters, travelers, and exiles. But a desire called “the land,” is differently, persistently active. Epeli Hau‘ofa captured this yearning in the vision of a displaced Tongan, raised in New Guinea, living in Fiji.

To deny human beings the sense of a homeland is to deny them a deep spot on Earth to anchor their roots. Most East Oceanians have Havaiki, a shared ancestral homeland that exists hazily in primordial memory. Every so often in the hills of Suva, when moon and red wine play tricks on an aging mind, I scan the horizon beyond Laucala Bay, the Rewa Plain, and the Reefs by Nukulau Island, for Vaihi, Havaiki, homeland. It is there, far into the past ahead, leading on to other memories, other realities, other homelands. (Hau‘ofa 2000, 470)

Land (*ples* in Vanuatu, *country* in Australia, *la tribu* in New Caledonia, and so on) signifies the past in the future, a continuous, changing base of political and cultural operations. Articulation theory, which sees everything as potentially realigned, cut, and mixed, has difficulty with this material nexus of continuity. When a community has been living on an island for more than a thousand years, it is not enough to say that its members' claims to identity with a place are strategies of opposition or coalition in struggles with neighbors, or reactions to colonizing or world-systemic forces. It may be true and useful to say these things. But it is not enough (see Thomas [1997, 11–15] for a discussion of these emphases and their appropriate tension). People aren't, of course, always attached to a habitat in the same old ways, consistent over the centuries. Communities change. The land alters. Men and women speak from changing roles, in new ways, on behalf of tradition and place. Senses of locale are expressed and felt through continuously renegotiated insides and outsides. And yet . . . , this historical sense of entangled, changing places doesn't capture the identity of ancestors with a mountain, for as long as anyone remembers and plausibly far beyond that. Old myths and genealogies change, connect, and reach out, but always in relation to an enduring spatial nexus. This is the indigenous *longue durée*, the precolonial space and time that tends to be lost in postcolonial projections. Thus indigenous identities must always transcend colonial disruptions (including the posts and the neos), claiming: we were here before all that; we are still here; we will make a future here. (See the exemplary statement by Alutiq elder Barbara Shangin quoted in Clifford [1997, 343; 2000, 107].)

While recognizing this fundamental claim to a distinctly rooted history, I want to argue against rigid oppositions in defining the current array of indigenous experiences. We need to distinguish, and also (carefully, partially) to connect “diasporism” and “indigenism.” What's at stake is the articulation, the cobbling together, of “big enough” worlds: concrete lives led in specific circuits *between* the global and the local. We cannot lose sight of ordinary people sustaining relational communities and cosmologies: composite “worlds” that share the planet with others, overlapping and translating. An absolutist indigenism, where each distinct “people” strives to occupy an original bit of ground, is a frightening utopia. For it imagines relocation and ethnic cleansing on an unimaginable scale: a denial of all the deep histories of movement, urbanization, habitation, re-indigenization, sinking roots, moving on, invading, mixing—the very stuff

of human history. There must be, and in practice there are, many ways to conceive of “nativeness” in less absolute terms.

Nativism, the xenophobic shadow of indigeneity, values wholeness and separation, pure blood and autochthonous land. It denies the messy, pragmatic politics of articulation. Of course there’s no shortage of violent examples in today’s ethnically divided world to remind us of this ever-present threat. But nationalist chauvinism, while a constant tendency, is not a necessary outcome of the new indigenisms. The articulated, rooted, *and* cosmopolitan practices I’ve been trying to sketch today register more complex, emergent possibilities (see also Childs 1993, 1998). Indeed, our conference is well positioned to bring into view an extended range of ways to be “native,” an expansion evident in the work of its organizers (Diaz 1993, 1994; Kauanui 1998). The movements of Native Pacific people suggest newly inventive struggles for breathing space, for relational sovereignty, in post- or neocolonial conditions of complex connectivity. They are about finding ways to exist *in* a multiplex modernity, but with a difference, a difference derived from cultural tradition, from landedness, and from ongoing histories of displacement, travel, and circulation. As Hau‘ofa has suggested, an element of “diasporism,” of movement between places, is part of escaping belittlement—of becoming big, global, enough. But he also stressed that this must not mean losing contact with specific ecologies, places, and “pasts to remember” (Hau‘ofa 1993, 2000). Since indigenism and diasporism aren’t one-size-fits-all categories, we need to work toward a more nuanced vocabulary, finding concrete ways to represent dispersed *and* connected populations.

Native Pacific conditions are importantly different from those generating North Atlantic cultural studies, a difference registered by this conference’s oxymoronic coupling of indigenous and diasporic agendas. In my own work, I’ve found that when importing Stuart Hall or Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah or Doreen Massey into the Pacific I’ve been made sharply aware of the Caribbean, South Asian, and British histories that lie behind their “worldings” (as Gayatri Spivak might put it). In these histories the “indigenous”—particularly in its stronger, autochthonous, First Nations, version—makes no persistent claim. But if Black Atlantic and South Asian diaspora theory is to travel well in the Pacific, there needs to be a significant adaptation to a different map and history. Obviously I think such a theoretical translation can only be good for the unfinished project called “cultural studies.” (Indeed, as it’s developing in Australia, Aotearoa New

Zealand, and Canada, often under indigenous pressures, we can see new forms already emerging.) The provincialization of theory as a condition for its travel is crucial for a really cross-cultural, rooted and routed, cultural studies.

This will suggest, perhaps, my personal excitement at this conference—feeling myself simultaneously displaced and recruited by an emerging Native Pacific Cultural Studies.

CONCLUSION

In closing let me return briefly to New Caledonia and Jean-Marie Tjibaou for a glimpse of an articulated, rooted and mobile, indigenous world. I've said that Tjibaou took me around Hienghène, his home in the north of the island. He had left for more than twenty years, to be trained as a Catholic priest. Now that he had quit the church and that his clan was moving to occupy expropriated ancestral lands, he returned as a Kanak activist.

Northeast New Caledonia has steep green valleys, with mountainous outcroppings—every cliff and stone holding ancestral meaning. The Kanak villages often occupy rising ground, with symbolic trees, palms, and special plants laid out in a very beautiful, orderly way.

We were in one of these villages near Hienghène, reclining on the lawn, talking and just feeling comfortable looking out through the trees. Earlier I had been inside several of the village houses, concrete structures mostly bare with perhaps a few newspaper clippings stuck haphazardly on the wall. I was puzzled and asked Tjibaou: "Look at this village, beautifully set in this valley, everything so aesthetically arranged. Yet inside the houses it's bare. . . ."

We talked it over, agreeing that here, after all, people don't spend a lot of time indoors. Then suddenly my guide made a sweep with his hand that took in the village, the valley, and the mountains: "*Mais, c'est ça la maison.*" But that's the house.

Tjibaou's sweep of the hand—including so much within his Kanak house—expressed a deep sense of being centered in a village and a valley. This feeling of belonging, of being in scale with the world, was fundamental to Tjibaou's hope that Kanaks might find ways to feel *à l'aise*, at home, in the twenty-first century.

In the intervening years, as I've read more of Tjibaou's political, ethnographic, and personal writings—now collected in a superb volume, *La*

Présence canaque—I’ve come to think his gesture was taking in even more. Beyond the Hienghène Valley he certainly included New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands where a composite “Kanak” identity was emerging in political struggle. But didn’t he also embrace the Pacific sea of islands—a wider world of cultural exchanges and alliances that were always critical for Tjibaou’s thinking about independence as interdependence? And neocolonial France—whose religion and civilization, for better and worse, still contribute to the Kanak house? And . . . in a new indigenous articulation . . . the world?

* * *

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Abstract

Taking its inspiration from the thought and action of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, this essay proposes a comparative analysis of “articulated sites of indigeneity.” It explores the advantages and limitations of translating North Atlantic cultural studies approaches into island Pacific contexts. Stuart Hall’s articulation theory is proposed as a partial way beyond the stand-offs created by recent debates around the “invention of tradition.” The dialectic of indigenous and diasporic histories, roots and routes, is explored with regard to experiences of post- and neocolonial interdependence and pragmatic sovereignty.

KEYWORDS: articulation, diasporic, Stuart Hall, indigenous, Jean-Marie Tjibaou