

*Cultural Rupture and Indigeneity:
The Challenge of (Re)visioning “Place”
in the Pacific*

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Some time ago I submitted an article to a major Pacific Islands studies journal in which I examined development in the Solomon Islands from the standpoint of Kwara‘ae indigenous epistemology. By “indigenous epistemology” I mean a cultural group’s ways of theorizing knowledge (Gegeo 1994, 1998; Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001). Kwara‘ae and Lau are the two cultural and linguistic groups on Malaita Island to which I belong (my father was Kwara‘ae and my mother Lau, and I grew up bilingual and bicultural). I received comments from three reviewers. The first two seemed enthusiastic about my arguments, and strongly recommended the paper for publication. The third reviewer also recommended publication, but rather caustically commented that the paper was déjà vu with regard to two issues. One was that so much had already been published critiquing development in the third world, yet here was another Native scholar once again describing the failure of development. The other was that anticolonialism was (to paraphrase) an old, tired topic. Indeed, the reviewer complained that only a postmodernist would truly appreciate the article!

I was taken somewhat off-guard by the reviewer’s comments, because I had written the paper from the standpoint of an Indigenous Pacific Islander, borrowing and applying postmodern discourse where it seemed relevant and appropriate. More specifically, I had written primarily from the perspective of Kwara‘ae indigenous epistemology, based on both my own knowledge and experience growing up in Kwara‘ae and that of the 150 rural villagers I had interviewed on their indigenous knowledge of development. Growing up in Kwara‘ae I had personally witnessed massive, often harmful changes that had taken place there under the rubric of

“development.” I had also attended numerous formal community meetings and been part of casual conversations in which negative changes brought about by poorly planned and culturally ill-conceived development were the primary subject of discussion. To this day, witnessing the failure of development and being part of discussions of such failure are common experiences for any child growing up in Kwara‘ae. Such conversations have intensified since the 1950s and 1960s when I was a child.

Reflecting on the third reviewer’s comments, I was struck by a difference that had always bothered me about the way research is done from an Anglo-European standpoint as opposed to that of an Indigenous or Native Pacific Islander. The individualistic, careerist approach of Anglo-European scholarship often means that after publishing a few articles or maybe a book on a topic, the scholar moves on to something else, often in pursuit of the field or discipline that has itself moved on to another topic. An apt example is the intense interest in writing about *kastom* (Solomon Islands Pijin: “culture, tradition”) in the South Pacific during the 1980s and early 1990s, followed by a sudden drop in scholarly interest—as if the topic had been exhausted, explained once and for all, and we all could be done with it.

The perspective of a growing number of us Pacific Islands scholars, however, is to approach research from a *communitarian perspective*, that is, research that is not only applied (targeted to making positive changes) but is firmly anchored in Indigenous or Native epistemologies and methodologies (see Smith 1999). Such research is carried out for the good of the whole community and emanates from the community’s Indigenous epistemology/ies and methodologies. For us Pacific Islands scholars who follow this path, then, a problem like “development” is laid to rest only after it has been truly solved in a manner that meaningfully benefits the communities, especially rural people. So we will continue to talk about issues that in Anglo-European scholarship, are already old.

A good example is colonialism, which we will not stop talking about until its effects are gone. I would argue, for example, that political independence is only part of the answer to decolonization in the Solomon Islands. And from what I have seen of political independence in the Solomons so far, all that has happened is the *localization* of government and leadership (Gegeo 1994). In other words, independence has meant merely replacing white faces with brown faces. Further, since many of the current generation of leaders were educated in universities of the previous colonial power(s), namely, England, Australia, and New Zealand, they

are for the most part not different from or maybe even worse than their colonial counterparts. Their worldviews are colonial, as well as their preferred living style. True independence comes from *dehegemonization*, that is, undoing the already established hegemony—which in the case of the Solomon Islands I do not expect to see in my lifetime.¹

In what follows, I speak from the standpoint of Kwara‘ae Indigenous epistemology, and not even postmodernism, although I embrace much of the postmodern perspective. More specifically, by *indigenous epistemology* I mean a cultural group’s ways of thinking and of creating and reformulating knowledge, using traditional discourses and media of communication, and anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture (Gegeo 1994, 1998; Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001). When I use terms such as *indigeneity*, *culture*, *place*, or *space*, I am not drawing on a postmodern vocabulary. I am instead using these terms as the Kwara‘ae understand and use them.

Here I will address three issues. First, what does it mean to be indigenous? Second, is indigeneity a matter of physical *space*? Or is it a cognitive or cultural *place*? Or both? And third, how do Kwara‘ae negotiate indigeneity in a time of cultural rupture and increasing transnational and interisland migration?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INDIGENOUS, AND IS INDIGENEITY ABOUT PLACE OR SPACE?

The term *indigenous* has been used in a variety of ways in third-world and minority people’s struggles against invasion, colonialism, and political oppression. Here I use it strictly in terms of epistemology, that is, to explore the way in which we Kwara‘ae conceptualize and discuss our identity in a rapidly globalizing world. For us, Indigenous encompasses the place from which we see the world, interact with it, and interpret social reality. First and foremost, place (*kula ni fuli*, literally, “place situated in source,” that is, place of one’s existential foundation) in this context refers to the geographical or physical location of Kwara‘ae district on Malaita. Second, place refers to genealogy, that is, one’s location in a Kwara‘ae kin group, both in the present and reaching backward and forward in time. Third, place means having land or the unconditional right of access to land in Kwara‘ae through genealogy and marriage. Fourth, place means the unquestioned position, based on genealogy and marriage, from which one may speak to important issues in Kwara‘ae without being challenged

about identity or the right to engage in dialogue, such as during a communal meeting.

Fifth, place means native fluency in both registers of Kwara'ae language, that is, *ala'anga kwalabasa* 'low rhetoric' (informal register; literally, "meandering, unimportant speech") and *ala'anga lalifu* 'high rhetoric' (formal register; literally, "importantly rooted speech"; Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1990, 1991). Sixth, place means the assumption that because one is already defined as Kwara'ae, one is knowledgeable about Kwara'ae culture, history, cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and so on. Seventh, place is accompanied by certain kin obligations and responsibilities that cannot go unfulfilled, and from which one is freed only by death. Such responsibilities include contributing to brideprice or bridewealth payments in marriages, uniting with one's kin group in times of land or other major disputes and for communal projects, and contributing food and other necessities to the family of a kin member who dies.

Eighth, place means that one shares Kwara'ae perspective(s) through which to view and transform social reality, and be transformed by it—that is, one shares Kwara'ae indigenous ontology and epistemology. Ninth, place means knowing cultural models and having a Kwara'ae cultural framework such that even if one is born and raised in another space, on going to Malaita one can quickly make sense of and acquire depth in aspects of Kwara'ae cultural knowledge that one previously did not know. The framework makes rapid learning possible.

The foregoing constitutes a very strong test of indigeneity. On the other hand, it also means that a Kwara'ae person can live anywhere in the world for long periods or perhaps permanently on a day-to-day basis, and still be seen as indigenous. Moreover, Kwara'ae persons can be born somewhere else and still be seen as indigenous so long as they are not of mixed blood. (Children of mixed marriages, for instance, are seen as Native Kwara'ae but not Indigenous.)

Space (*kula ni tua*, literally, "place situated in dwell[ing]"; that is, place not of one's existential being but rather of temporary or even long-term staying) refers to a space that is not of one's identity or origin. Space has to do with the *location* where a Kwara'ae person may be at any given time as necessitated by contemporary conditions (such as going to an urban area to get a job to meet basic needs, or going overseas in pursuit of an education). The underlying image in *kula ni tua* is that one is sitting in a space that, should one get up and leave it, will be occupied by someone else. Space is the location a Kwara'ae person occupies while in motion or

in circulation, to draw a metaphor from Murray Chapman's work on population mobility and circular migration (1991, 1992).

For the Kwara'ae, therefore, because of the possibility of space, a person can be anywhere and still be inextricably tied to place. Place is portable and, as we Kwara'ae say, "It's in our blood." It is in the notion of the portability of place that I see an alternative conceptualization for a gulf that has paralyzed discussion in Pacific studies. Even though the claim about which Pacific Islanders have the right to be called *Indigenous* rather than *Native* has not yet surfaced in the scholarly literature, I have witnessed many conversations at conferences and in other settings in which discomfort with one or the other of these terms has been manifested. Those who for whatever reason feel that, for example, *Indigenous* should be eliminated have argued that the term is anachronistic in a period of heightening diaspora and globalization, and that everyone should instead be called Native.² Part of the problem has been that so much of the discussion has been around the politics of identity rather than the nature of indigeneity along the lines of my discussion here on Kwara'ae conceptualizations of Indigenous and Native. The alternative conception of the portability of place opens the door to the possibility of a more principled and nuanced discussion of Indigeneity and Native versus the politics of identity.

For myself, and I think for many of us Pacific Islanders, the notion that because we are away from place we are somehow contaminated and can no longer claim our Indigenousness or Nativeness, is an alien conceptualization. Yet this charge is often made against those of us who live for periods in countries other than our Indigenous countries, typically by those from the metropolis. It is true that if we are living elsewhere or were perhaps even born elsewhere, we necessarily have acquired behaviors, ideas, and values that differ from those of our Pacific Islands place. We have become bicultural or multicultural. However, that does not diminish our connection to place or our Indigeneity. Interestingly, while we Pacific Islanders are charged with losing our Indigeneity if we live abroad or were born elsewhere, the same standards of judgment are not applied to the metropolitan citizen who lives in another culture or is born abroad. For instance, nobody claims that the children of Peace Corps members or researchers born where their parents are temporarily working are somehow not American. Similarly, an American who lives and works in Japan for several years does not cease to be regarded as American. Rather, people see such experiences abroad as enriching and something to be proud of. But when we Pacific Islanders do the same, we are often accused of

having forfeited our identity and our claim to Indigeneity and Nativeness. Therefore when we Pacific Islander scholars who live abroad write about our cultures, we are criticized as “essentializing” our cultures and, worse, as no longer having the right to speak from the standpoint of our Indigenous or Native identities. Our words are treated as bearing no scientific credibility. In a recent example, I received back the text of a chapter I was invited to write for a book on the Solomons. Everywhere in the manuscript that I had written “we Kwara‘ae” an editor had written in red “But Gegeo lives in the USA.” The editor obviously objected to my use of the inclusive we on the grounds that I was no longer Indigenous, as if my living in the United States had erased my identity as a Kwara‘ae and Lau.

Having briefly laid out “place” and “space” as seen from the perspective of Kwara‘ae indigenous epistemology, I now turn to how the current crisis in the Solomon Islands may be bringing about a redefinition of these terms.

CULTURAL RUPTURE AND DIASPORA

Until now in the Solomons, people have not tended to permanently migrate to a metropolitan area, locally or internationally. Even when they leave their home islands to work or attend school, they ultimately return to their villages after a few months or years away, and certainly on retirement. This is the phenomenon of “circular migration” mentioned earlier. That is, while people may live for many years away from their heritage island and village, off and on they return home for long visits. In old age they feel an obligation as well as a desire to go home, fulfill their share of leadership responsibilities, and immerse themselves in traditional culture.

Such returnees have typically been the source of recurrent waves of cultural revitalization (or what outside researchers call “*kastom* movements”) because once back home, returnees feel the reality and intensity of their *kula ni fuli*, that is, place. Many say that they save the last few years of their lives to take up traditional roles in the village and to deepen and broaden their cultural knowledge. Some become village chiefs, others experts in particular ritualistic areas. To the Kwara‘ae, dying and being buried off-island is referred to as *mae‘a ana faka* (dying or death in pseudo-westernization), in contrast with dying in one’s heritage village, or place, which is seen as dying in *‘imoto‘a‘anga* (dignity).

The pattern of “circular migration” for Solomon Islanders is therefore different from what Ron Crocombe described in a recent paper (1999) as

a pattern of “straight” migration for Polynesia—by which he meant that Polynesian migration is one-way and linear. Polynesians migrate to another country and do not return home to live again, according to Crombe.³

However, the current cultural rupture in the Solomons may be changing the pattern of circular migration. As reported in the international press, since November 1998 a serious rupture in ethnic relations in the Solomons has occurred, much of which is deeply rooted in colonialism, colonial policies, urbanization, and globalization. Thousands of Malaitans and their families have been driven off Guadalcanal and back to their heritage island of Malaita in a violent ethnic cleansing by indigenous people of Guadalcanal, who targeted only Malaitans among the immigrants living and working on their island. I shall not discuss the ethnic cleansing issue, but rather what this cultural rupture has meant and will mean to Malaitan concepts of indigeneity, place, and space, as well as the possibility of Malaitans’ increased participation in the international diaspora.

The Solomons is a very diverse nation culturally and linguistically, with more than seventy languages and cultures. Prior to the current ethnic cleansing, Malaitans and other Solomon Islanders were just beginning to develop a sense of national identity as Solomon Islanders—a sense that has been slow in coming, partly because independence was achieved only in 1978.

I see several things happening as a result of the cultural rupture. First, the ethnic conflict has forced a back-migration of Malaitans to Malaita. The conflict has largely destroyed the sense of nationhood that Solomon Islanders generally and Malaitans specifically had been developing, and has reinforced old ethnic prejudices. One of the demands of the Guadalcanal militants is for statehood, by which they mean a strong sovereignty for individual states. As a result, Malaitans are going further, and have begun discussing the possibility of complete independence and a separate country from the Solomons for Malaita itself. Other island provinces have expressed similar desires for their own independence. Unless positive steps are taken, the current crisis may result in a political and social fragmentation that will mean the end of Solomon Islands as a single nation-state.

Second, the conflict has intensified a narrower Malaitan perspective on “indigeneity.” Malaitans and other island ethnicities seem to be redefining their ideas of “indigeneity” to exclude other provincial and cultural groups. For example, before the crisis, Malaitans were talking about doing things as Solomon Islanders, in the spirit of *iuminao* (Solomon Islands

Pijin: “we all as a collectivity”). This was an inclusive idea of indigeneity. Today, however, the talk is very exclusive—“our group for ourselves.”

How is this affecting the concept of “place”? For one thing, it has led to what I call the *implosion of place*, by which I mean two things. First, at the physical level on Malaita Island, Malaitans are suddenly crowded together at densities never before experienced, on an island that historically has always been overpopulated in relation to resources. With this situation come all of the problems that such conditions cause: conflicts over ownership of land and resources, overcrowded hospitals, epidemics, overcrowded schools with a shortage of teachers and materials, the introduction of negative behaviors from urban areas to unprepared rural areas, and so forth.

Second, the implosion of place refers to people’s feelings of being invaded. *Indigeneity*, which used to mean to them a peaceful quality to be proud of, now suddenly has to be redefined—and people must act accordingly. The redefinition applies, for instance, to sharing. In the sudden backmigration of thousands of people, some migrants have seized houses belonging to others, have moved in with unprepared relatives, or have set up instant villages on land to which they have no right of ownership or residence. More seriously, people are setting up new villages indiscriminately, without regard to whether the land they are occupying is garden land or nonarable land—and the thin margin of arable land is being further eroded.

Another example of a redefinition of sharing is that the national government and the Malaita Province government have recently urged landowners to “share your land and resources” for the good of development for everyone. This kind of sharing is no longer the indigenous concept of *fangale’a’anga* (share, literally “eat together in love”), to use the Kwara’ae term. *Fangale’a’anga* means sharing that comes from the heart and extends outward. Instead, the sharing that is being requested now by the national and provincial governments reverses that direction. The demand comes not from the heart, but from outside, and is being forced on clans who have land and resources—not just any land, but land that is suitable for large-scale modern development. Not only are certain land pieces targeted, but certain clans will be hit harder than others. Moreover, it is a western-defined notion of sharing, since the contracts the two governments want to negotiate are all shaped by western law.

While *place* is imploding under the current circumstances, *space* is likely to explode. What I see happening over the next ten years is that even if

development on Malaita progresses rapidly, there will not be enough income-generating employment for the large population. Overpopulation and the lack of arable land also mean that not everyone will be able to live by subsistence gardening—there just is not enough garden space left for the new population. Inevitably, somebody has to leave, and in fairly large numbers. Who will these leavers be? I would predict that they will be the western-educated Malaitans, in which case Malaita will be deprived of the very people who should be there to foster its development in healthy ways.

I see a rising tide of emigration of the school-educated—from Malaita and from the Solomons. The situation on Malaita, and perhaps elsewhere in the Solomons, is thus likely to become more like what has happened in other parts of the Pacific, especially Polynesia. Malaitans, at least, will be going off island and out of the country to find jobs, not only to support themselves, but also to remit money back to their extended families. They will do this because it may be the only way everyone can survive. People will do whatever they can with whatever skills they have, which for the educated may mean that emigration is the primary or perhaps only strategy. Some educated individuals may feel they can serve Malaita best by emigrating and working elsewhere, thereby leaving the land for those who need it most, whose only choice is to stay on Malaita and live by subsistence gardening. In other words, the educated will be giving up their space on Malaita to those who have no employment options off island.

What does this possible diaspora of educated Malaitans and perhaps other Solomon Islanders mean in terms of the concepts of place and indigeneity? Does it mean that Malaitans and other Solomon Islanders who emigrate will lose their sense of who they are, or will have to “(re)invent” their identity—as Pacific Islanders have so often been accused? I do not think so, for a number of reasons.

One is that the possible increased participation in international diaspora is not of these Islanders’ own choosing, but is born of social catastrophe. Many of the migrating Malaitans will see their movement as an *expansion of place*, and attendant on it will be a strengthening of the sense of indigeneity. Overseas, Malaitans will certainly be a minority wherever they are; one way to deal with that status is to focus on one’s connections to home—that is, to place. If anything, for those living abroad, it will be increasingly important to reinforce aspects of their traditional culture within their own families, even as members of the family are acculturating to the space they are currently living in and its expectations. I suspect

that this will mean that circular migration, rather than being within the confines of the Solomons nation-state, will incorporate an international dimension. Because their emigration will be more or less forced after violent confrontations, migrants' anger alone is likely to intensify their sense of indigenous identity and the need to remain a people. The sort of pattern I am describing, of course, has happened with many ethnic minorities in the world, including the Armenians in the Bay Area of California.

Second, because of the historical bias of the Solomons' educational system against Malaitans, many Malaitans will make a renewed effort to leave for higher education. The bias has been in admissions policies that controlled the number of Malaitans who were admitted to secondary schools in proportion to the rest of the population. Since 1978, when the Solomons became independent, a Malaitan child has had a much lesser chance of going to secondary school than has a child from another island. To obtain a place in secondary school a Malaitan child has to pass the national examination with very high marks, and placement is not guaranteed. This form of discrimination was set up to prevent Malaitans—who are the largest ethnic minority in the Solomons—from “dominating” other groups in the professions and government service. Since the crisis, I have personally received many international long-distance telephone calls from Malaitans inquiring about opportunities for funded higher education in the United States, reflecting the trend of trying to obtain such education and possibly continue to live abroad.

Third, Malaitans as a people, despite there being ten or more different languages and cultures on Malaita, have a very strong island identity. That is, they have a strong identity as Malaitan.⁴ Over time, this island identity is likely to be strengthened by the adversity that Malaitans have experienced during the ethnic conflict, and the hatred toward them that many non-Malaitans have demonstrated. A component of Malaitans' strong identity is that more than any other cultural grouping in the Solomons, they have been painted by white colonials and outside researchers as aggressive, truculent, stubborn, and generally difficult to deal with. These representations by outsiders have contributed to problems for Malaitans among non-Malaitan insiders who are familiar with the representations, but they have also strengthened the sense of unity among Malaitans. In making this point I want to make it very clear that I am not excusing those Malaitans who have engaged in aggressive activity of one kind or another. I am only pointing out that studies show that the proportion of criminal behavior among Malaitans is the same as the proportion of criminal

behavior among other island groups (personal communication, anonymous official in Solomon Islands Government). Because Malaitans are so numerous, however, anything they do stands out. Interestingly enough, it is the negative things Malaitans do that seem to get the greater attention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIVE PACIFIC CULTURAL STUDIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

How is the current Solomon Islands situation related to the issue of formulating Native Pacific Cultural Studies in the twenty-first century? One obvious point is that Pacific Island societies are going through tremendously rapid social change as a result of globalization and ecological processes. More and more Pacific Islanders will be participating in trans-island and international diaspora because of these processes. Does this escalating diaspora necessarily mean that we Pacific Islanders will lose our Nativeness or Indigenosity as Pacific Islanders? As I have theorized on behalf of Malaitans, I do not believe so.

Certainly one thing I have noticed in my overseas living experiences and travels, is that the Pacific Islanders I have met do have a strong cultural identity even if they have adopted many non-Pacific characteristics in behavior and lifestyle. Sometimes outsiders mistake these external behaviors and characteristics as signs that we Pacific Islanders have lost our identity. But when two Pacific Islanders get together, though they may be from very different parts of the Pacific, they instantly recognize the Pacific qualities in each other, and instantly relate in particular ways in dialogue that would neither be understood by outsiders, nor be evoked by Pacific Islanders' interactions with outsiders.

From a Kwara'ae and Lau point of view, there is no such thing as "losing one's identity" or Nativeness. These are not qualities a person can lose; they are built in from birth. One can add other identities, and the Kwara'ae (for instance) recognize that people are always changing just as culture is always changing (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001). They also recognize that people change according to the environment or space in which they find themselves. But ultimately, a Kwara'ae or Lau person is still a Kwara'ae or a Lau (or in my case, I am recognized as both).

The notion that identity and place are portable, as I have described for Kwara'ae indigenous epistemology, opens the possibility of resolving the tension between Native and Indigenous as opposed to non-Native that has created problems for a Native Pacific Cultural Studies. This concep-

tion of place would remove the test of one's Nativeness or Indigenesness based on where one is living, and would instead recognize the unity of Islanders wherever they are. The increasing hybridity of identity and ethnicity in the Pacific and worldwide should not prevent us from being able to make claims about parts of our identity if we feel them to be central to who we are. We must be careful, because battles over degrees of ethnicity or cultural identity—whether one is more Native or Indigenous than someone else—are metropolitan battles that have been imported into Pacific cultures. We know what these battles have done to groups in metropolitan areas. Here is a case where the cliché about the value of diversity holds true: we need to recognize and celebrate rather than try to root out the diversity among us.

For me personally, one of the most important issues for a Native Pacific Cultural Studies in this new century is to recognize that while change is inevitable, we should focus on forms of change that unite rather than divide us as Pacific Islanders. We must resist the rhetoric of colonization that would insist on a litmus test of some kind to prove our Nativeness or Indigenesness in order to be part of the Pacific community. In so doing, we can chart the way for a Native Pacific Cultural Studies that enhances and upholds our unique positive qualities rather than emphasizing the divisive thinking and incessant questioning of identity that are the legacy of colonialism. Moreover, we will open the possibility of Pacific Islander scholars taking the leadership in shaping Native Pacific Cultural Studies into the future.

Finally, I want to briefly address some ideas for a Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the edge. I am thinking here of programs and activities that encompass the entire Pacific Island region rather than focus on a single island area, such as Hawai'i or Aotearoa. Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i, for example, is a very strong program. What I am addressing, however, are a few general but critical issues we need to consider when thinking regionally of Pacific Island studies.

First, we need to deconstruct and rid ourselves of the three-way division among Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (to list them alphabetically). These labels are colonial impositions that imply we can be reduced to characteristics of our physical spaces as perceived by outsiders. Thus, Melanesian people live on islands that appear, from the surface of the sea at a distance, to be black. Polynesians live on many islands, and Micronesians on tiny islands. The connotations of these labels as they have been applied to us historically are the problem. Generations of Pacific Islanders have learned these labels and taken them at face value, in a way that

divides us against ourselves. Yet we are all peoples with historically ancient cultures. We need to replace these imposed labels with terms that refer to us as human beings with multiple, interrelated, very vibrant cultures. We need to cultivate relationships among Pacific Islanders that emphasize our capacity for integration and cooperation. We need to have a unifying term or set of terms for ourselves as Pacific Islanders, rather than colonial, divisive—and derogatory—terms.

Second, we need more studies that deconstruct our colonial history and experience. Contrary to those scholars from the metropolis who seem to feel that this subject has been exhausted, for us it is only beginning because we still feel the impact of colonialism. We are only just beginning to understand the subtleties of the colonial experience that have shaped us in profound ways over the past one hundred and fifty years. The various forms of social unrest that have affected many parts of the Pacific in recent decades, and currently the Solomons, offer one example. We need in-depth study of these situations and issues to counter accusations that our current problems stem from merely the ignorance of our people, our inability to run our own political affairs, or simply interethnic tension. I agree with Kwara'ae indigenous epistemology, which holds that conflicts ultimately cannot be resolved unless the process begins with inquiry into the original roots of the problem. We need to encourage up-and-coming Pacific Islander Indigenous and Native scholars to continue to study these issues.

Third, the deconstruction processes must be undertaken through the lenses of our own Pacific Islander ways of knowing—in other words, our own epistemologies. For example, in examining the impact of colonialism on Hawai'i, we must consider the Native and Indigenous Hawaiian ways of constructing knowledge around this issue. We get ourselves into an intellectual bind when we try to work on such issues using only the frameworks of the powers who colonized us in the first place. Through our experience up to this point, we know that western epistemology does not have all the answers. We must design research strategies that are grounded in Indigenous and Native epistemologies. There are moves in this direction that I think are very exciting. One of them is the work going on in Aotearoa by Māori studies researchers as reported in the recent book by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Other Pacific Islander scholars are already working on Indigenous or Native epistemology, including Manulani Aluli Meyer (1998) at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

Fourth, and related to Indigenous and Native epistemologies, we need to do more work recording our Indigenous philosophies. Up to now everything has been lumped together by outsiders under the general topics of

“worldview” or “magic and sorcery,” or “ethnoscience.” For us, all of these may be related, but they are also separate and distinct bodies of knowledge. Outsiders have ignored or made light of the idea that Pacific Islands cultures have philosophies, in part because our knowledge was oral rather than written until very lately—yet philosophy predates literacy. I have heard a very prominent anthropologist who worked in the Pacific for many years say that Pacific cultures have no level of philosophical talk or thinking. This is simply not true. But it is true that it is highly unlikely an outsider could ever elicit a philosophical level of knowledge from villagers, because of the way outside researchers go about questioning villagers when collecting data. To talk about this further would be a separate paper altogether. The point is that we Pacific Islander scholars need to turn some of our attention to a Native Pacific philosophy or, rather, philosophies.

The suggestions I have made here are but a few of the exciting and dynamic things we can do toward establishing a new Native Pacific Cultural Studies that is truly Native and Indigenous in epistemology and focus. Let us bring Native Pacific Cultural Studies from the periphery where we have been forced to struggle since western contact, to the center of cutting-edge Native Pacific scholarship.

POSTSCRIPT

Since I presented this keynote address, a peace agreement has been signed in the Solomons and disarmament, under the observation of an unarmed peacekeeping force from Australia, is about to get underway. It appears that Malaitans will be removed from Guadalcanal and that a state system will replace the current provincial system. Conditions on Malaita have continued to deteriorate under the pressure of back-migration. The Solomon Islands as a nation faces a tremendous challenge in attempting to bring back peace and normalcy to the country, rebuild its economy and infrastructure, and reestablish in its population a sense of national identity.

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Notes

1 I use *hegemony* in the Gramscian sense as the “legitimation of the cultural authority of the dominant group, an authority that plays a significant role in social reproduction” (Woolard 1985, 739). Hegemony begins with coercion and domination (colonialism), then becomes internalized, virtually self-perpetuating, and largely unquestioned. Foucault (1980, 1984) referred to it as “normalization.” A relevant example is third-world countries buying into western schooling and modernization, “imitating Western ideas, consumption patterns, and social relationships” (Nyerere and others 1990, 46), so that even the imitation is accepted as the normal, given, and preferable pattern of behavior.

2 In the introduction to this special issue, the coeditors use *Native* and *indigenous* interchangeably, and capitalize *Native* to distinguish it from other usages of *native*. I capitalize *Indigenous* for similar reasons. While I understand their attempt to bring these two terms together, the reality is that in the larger Pacific Islander discourse community, the two terms have been used to divide Islanders rather than unite them. For the Pacific Islander scholars and activists who distinguish between *Indigenous* and *Native*, *Indigenous* has two meanings. First, it refers to fourth-world people such as the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand, Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, that is, peoples who were colonized and, through the colonization process, have become minority populations still colonized in their own lands. Second, in the Kwara’ae example detailed earlier, *Indigenous* refers to someone who is not of mixed blood. *Native* refers to people who are of mixed ancestry living in the place or land of one or other parent. Persons in the Native category under this scheme have often resented those who call themselves Indigenous. Some of the differences in usage between *Native* and *Indigenous* are regional. In Melanesia (which includes Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji) being called Native is regarded as an insult due to anthropological and colonial or missionary connotations of primitiveness. “Native” is an insult that Melanesians occasionally hurl at one another in anger. Increasingly, Melanesians prefer “Indigenous” in political and scholarly discussions when referring to people’s connections to place. For example, in the recent ethnic conflict in the Solomons, Guale (Guadalcanal Islanders) referred to themselves as the indigenous people of Guadalcanal, in exclusion of people who were Malaitan or part-Malaitan–part-Guale in ancestry. My whole point in this discussion is not to rule out who is

Native or who is Indigenous, but to point out what I see as a growing division that is part of postcolonial discourse, and to argue that people should be able to call themselves what they wish.

3 I do not claim that Crocombe's account is correct, but merely report what he has stated.

4 This is not to say that island groups other than Malaitans do not have strong island identities, for they do. However, here I am discussing Malaitan identity.

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Abstract

What does it mean to be “indigenous”? Is indigeneity a matter of physical “space”? Or is it a cognitive-cultural “place”? Or both? How do Islanders negotiate indigeneity in a time of transnational and interisland migration and cultural conflict? I examine these and related issues through the lens of recent events in the Solomon Islands, including the historical pattern of interisland migration, the recent ethnic cleansing cultural rupture, and the resulting dialogue about identity and indigeneity among Solomon Islanders living abroad and at home via the internet.

KEYWORDS: colonialism, cultural studies, Pacific history, Pacific studies, politics, postcolonialism, Solomon Islands