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OCEANIA IN THE PLAINS: THE POLITICS AND ANALYTICS OF TRANSINDIGENOUS RESURGENCE IN CHUUKESE VOYAGING OF DAKOTA LANDS, WATERS, AND SKIES IN MINÍ SÓTA MAKHÓČHE¹

Vicente M. Diaz

American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota

Introduction

OF THE VAST WATER WORLD traversed by Pacific Islander navigators aboard outrigger sailing water craft, the American environmentalist Ken Brower once observed with tongue in cheek that, in the Central Carolinian region of Oceania, “there are no purple mountains’ majesty, no amber waves of grain” (Brower 1983: 103–04). There was, however, trumpeted Brower, “*the ocean . . . the blue, wind-kerneled fields of the Pacific and the mountains of following seas.*” And the canoe, “the means of escape into that big country.” He explained, “the canoe brought drama into Carolinian lives, and heroism. It loosed Carolinians on the vastness of the planet and it kept them in touch with the rest of mankind.”

Around the same moment that Brower was writing about the unabated survival of Central Carolinian traditional voyaging culture despite centuries of four colonial administrations, political leaders of the larger Micronesian region, of which the Central Carolines are a part, were negotiating new, modern, quasi-independent nations in “free association” with the United States. While it is important to recognize the political status and relationship of “free association” as a misnomer, a euphemism, really, for neocolonialism with (or under) the United States—the arrangement institutionalizes US Congressional plenary as well as economic power over the constitutions and peoples of these

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microstates—it is important to know that the terms of economic assistance to these microstates also include visa-free travel to and *residence in the United States* for the Micronesians. As we know from native studies, and what indigenous people can do through travel and opportunity, indigenous agency can just as well frustrate as much as help consolidate the machinations of settler colonialism and policy (Diaz 2010).

In this article I want to tell a political and cultural story about the effort of one group of displaced Micronesians, from the island of Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia, to practice traditional outrigger canoe culture and traditional navigation using stars, waves, and clouds, and sea creatures, but in waters and lands—rivers, lakes, and skyways—of the northeastern plains world of the Dakota Makhóche of present-day Minnesota and North Dakota. In an unfolding tale that involves learning Dakota land, water, and sky knowledge as a precondition for learning how to become a traditional Micronesian navigator in and for the twenty-first century, I will also pause along the way to model an analytic and a political framework sometimes referred to as “transindigeneity” (Allen 2012) that can help us imagine new ways of being indigenous but that also describes deep aboriginal cultural belongings to specific places while also permitting wide lateral reach across time and space, albeit in ways that do not lose familiar and signature indigenous belongings and accountabilities to place, to site, and cultural specificity.

At the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, through what we might now regard as the modern *political canoe of free association* with the United States, close to half of contemporary Chuukese now live outside their island region, and an increasing number firmly in country where “God shed his grace on thee,” to riff off of Brower’s own riffing off the words of America’s “unofficial national anthem,” *America the Beautiful* (Sherr 2001). What does this tale of indigenous Micronesian diaspora and globalization of America have to do with American Indians, and this tale for critical indigenous Pacific Studies? One answer lies in how the shared building and sailing of traditional outrigger canoes by displaced Micronesians in the eastern prairies of Dakota can center the concept of transindigeneity to give us a better analytic on native cultural persistence and political resurgence and a pretty good practice to counter the persistence of US settler colonialism. But there is also a tale, here, about the ocean in the prairies, and the terrain of Oceania, as these are deeply interrelated with, and so as to be co-constitutive of, sky and indigenous subjectivity, a tale that can counter other historical and intellectual developments. For example, for over the last decade or so, in both scholarly and popular discourse about Native Pacific culture and history, there has emerged a problematic valorization and reification of the tropes of expansiveness and fluidity, marked by a tendency to play up and favor the moniker “Oceania” over the term “Pacific

Islands,” and with accompanying claims about the nature of oceanic indigeneity. Later, I’ll return to these valorizations and reifications, including their political and analytical costs. Against these hegemonic tendencies—hegemonic in the sense that they operate noncoercively and through sympathetic, even celebratory and benevolent rhetorics—I’ve been trying to think, write, teach, and research in ways that center indigenous vernacular practices and frameworks that allow for expansiveness without sacrificing specificity, ways that ground indigeneity without essentialist insularities, and that might be nudged mindfully into potent forms of decolonized indigenous futures. Those who know my work know that I have tried to do this through indigenous watercraft and traditional knowledge involving seafaring. This current project continues that work as it now involves acknowledging, understanding, and operationalizing through honoring deep indigenous ideas about the fundamental interrelationality of all life and supposedly nonliving forms.

In this article, I bring together indigenous water craft and larger “crafts” or technologies and narratives of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in Oceanic and Anishinaabe and Dakota worlds to critically illustrate the cultural and political possibilities of transindigeneity. By transindigeneity, I mean the claims and conditions of aboriginal belonging to specific places, but as such discourses of vertical depth or rootedness (in deep time and place) are forged in two additional processes: (1) in productive relations with histories, narratives, and technologies of travel or geographic reach, here referred to as lateral or horizontal routedness, and (2) in strategic relationship with other equally deep and moving indigenous peoples and traditions from elsewhere (Aikau, Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, and Silva 2016; Allen 2012; Cook 2018; Diaz 2016a). Furthermore, inasmuch as such expansive and fluidic cultural legacies of indigenous American Indian and Pacific “crafts”—the material vessels and the equally material forms of knowledge associated with the vessels—reveal the importance of and necessity for technical and geographic grounding that make for cultural specificity, this transindigenous framework also offers ways to counter the effects of settler colonialism and larger forms of colonial discourse that operate by erasing or disavowing prior indigenous presence and knowledge as preconditions of self-articulation. Here, I want to show how a critically informed canoe cultural revitalization practice centered on indigenous TEK and committed to decolonization in the context of settler colonialism and larger colonial discourses can also provide the content and form for transformative knowledge production. What can a strategic harnessing of traditional knowledge of Micronesian seafaring and Dakota river and skyways offer efforts to decolonize and produce new forms of knowledge? In what follows, I give a sense of this yearning. In section II, I offer a reading of a painting of a canoe, not by a Dakota but by an Ojibwe artist, and, perhaps just as sacrilegiously, from the vantage point of

Micronesian seafaring culture and technology. In section III, I'll offer a description of what we might call a transindigenous community-based research and teaching program centered on juxtaposing Dakota and displaced Micronesian communities in rural west Minnesota. In the fourth and final section, I offer a theoretical and historical context for the need for such a transindigenous theory and practice, and then conclude by resituating Micronesian seafaring in the larger universe of cultural, political, and analytic possibilities.

II. On Scrolls

Elizabeth LaPensée's painting of an Anishinabe *wiigwaas jiimaan* (birchbark canoe) appears to be free floating in outer space, but it's not, or at least not in any way that obscures indigenous grounding in specific localities, even if the flow might turn out to be cosmological, as indigenous skyways through winds, clouds, and stars might be classified. For example, titled *On Scrolls Carried by Canoe*, the immediate reference to birchbark scrolls in the painting's name, and the visible material composition of the canoe as birchbark staunchly identify the craft and surrounding environment, and for the import of that environment, the collective identity of the canoe's occupants. Together they gesture to a *deep* Anishinabe cultural history that also has *wide reach*. An artist and media scholar, LaPensée herself is Anishinabe with relations to Bay Mills in northern Michigan.



FIGURE 1. "On Scrolls Carried By Canoe" by Elizabeth LaPensée, with permission.

Like rock paintings, for Anishinabe and Nishinabe (and other water-borne Algonkian speaking peoples of North American rivers, lakes, and skyways) birchbark scrolls are famous media inscriptions and texts. Indeed, they constitute entire archives. Libraries of historical and spiritual mobility, these texts also signify deep cultural identity as told through prophecy, and as such, theirs is a history and a future of travel by water through land, to and from the skyworld. If they stopped it was in places where, as prophesied, “food grows on water” (Benton-Benai 1988, 89). Where I work in the present-day state of Minnesota, homeland of Dakota people (I’ll return and dwell with them later), water prevails: state-boosters refer to it as the “Land of Ten Thousand Lakes,” and still the best descriptor of the larger (Great Lakes) terrain of which Minnesota is a part, that I have come upon, is that it is that kind of land “where to travel at all was to travel by water” (Roberts and Shackleton 1983, cited in Neuzil and Sims 2016, 61).

Here and there, the reach of ancient Anishinabe (and Dakota) prophetic and geographic mobility is also historical and discursive: in *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, a canoe journey memoir through waterways in Northern Minnesota and Canada, Louise Erdrich (2003) asserts that the people who wrote on wiigwaas scrolls (and painted on rocks) weren’t the ancestors of modern Ojibwe but *the* modern Ojibwe. Here she pushes the date of modernity in Indian country back thousands of years to the beginning, by explicitly defining indigeneity in terms of cultural innovation and change through the technology and instrumentation of inscription upon birchbark (and rocks). Thus, we might say that both the technology of writing on birchbark materiality and the stories that are carried on technologies of mobility called birchbark canoes cover a lot of ground, geographically, temporally, and discursively speaking. As such, both birchbark and the canoes out of which they are made have great carrying capacity for Ojibwe indigeneity. What I love most about this painting is how the particular mix of depth and reach and political self-determination that is expressive in the cultural specificity of Ojibwe birchbark indigeneity does not foreclose on other interpretive and political possibilities in meaning. And so, as one also from indigenous water country with remarkable travel habits that constitute nativeness, I take up the invite.

To add value to what we might now refer to as the birch canoe of Anishinabe indigeneity, I jaunt momentarily to the Marshall Islands, and then from there, to the Central Carolines. Marshall Islanders refer to their islands as *aelon* [*ai-lahng*], which sounds as if they can’t pronounce the English word “island” properly, except *aelon* is an indigenous Marshallese word with meanings of even greater cultural alterity to the tropes of isolation, remoteness, and insularity about which the Euro-American term “island” has come to signify in racist and essentialist colonial and postcolonial discourses about Pacific Islandness (Diaz

2015). *Ae* means “currents,” and *lang* means “sky” (Ahlgren 2016). But Aelon’s composite materiality of fluidity and infinite vastness also connotes the specificity and indispensability of site locality, indeed of resolute foundationality, that conditions the surrounding environment and informs its inhabitants’ sense of self. Much as how sea and currents pound and shape land into existence, land’s contours in turn give distinct form to water, winds, rain, and air. This stuff is quite literally deep: the term aelon actually includes submarine flow down to the seafloor, but especially as currents bend and wend around the particular contours of individual and chains of atolls. Land and water shape each other in specific ways. From seafloor to the stars is how we might better understand indigenous Marshallese notions of islandness and indigenous belongings to it. And island and islanderness in relation to seafaring: by all accounts Marshallese navigators were/are particularly adept at a form of reckoning position at sea by reading distinct swells as they bend and inflect around specific island forms. All island navigators use the positions of rising and setting stars, the sun, cloud formations, colors of the water, and the behavior and itineraries of sea and winged creatures endogenous to specific islands to discern location and positionality at sea (Lewis 1972), but the Marshallese were/are masters of swell reading and feeling, swells and currents that span the sea floor to the celestial skies and all things in between (Genz et al. 2009). Such is an island in Marshallese discourse. For the moment let’s catch a ride from Marshallese waves to Carolinian skies.

In the Central Caroline islands are to be found the two most famous of atolls in seafaring lore: Polowat and Satawal (Gladwin 1970; Brower 1983).



FIGURE 2. Paafu. Shells that mark rising and setting points of stars for directional purposes. By Author.

Navigators from across the Central Carolines use a system called *paafu* that looks to the rising or setting points of stars and constellations to determine

the relationality between one's position and the direction of other marks. It is the cartographic instrument called *paafu*, within the framework of indigenously grounded mobilities like the Marshallese *aelon*, that enables me to provide value-added reading of LaPensée's Ojibwe canoe. Actually, that reading was first published last fall, but in a venue of dubious academic respectability: Facebook, and in an exchange with students enrolled in my Native Canoe Cultures of Oceania and the Great Lakes, though not that I'm in the habit of Facebook friending current students. In any case, in class we had just covered how *paafu* worked, and had been studying Anishinabe, and Dakota sky knowledge (Gawboy and Morton 2014; Goodman 1992; Gould and Rock 2016), when Jacob posted the image and Chrissy inquired about it:

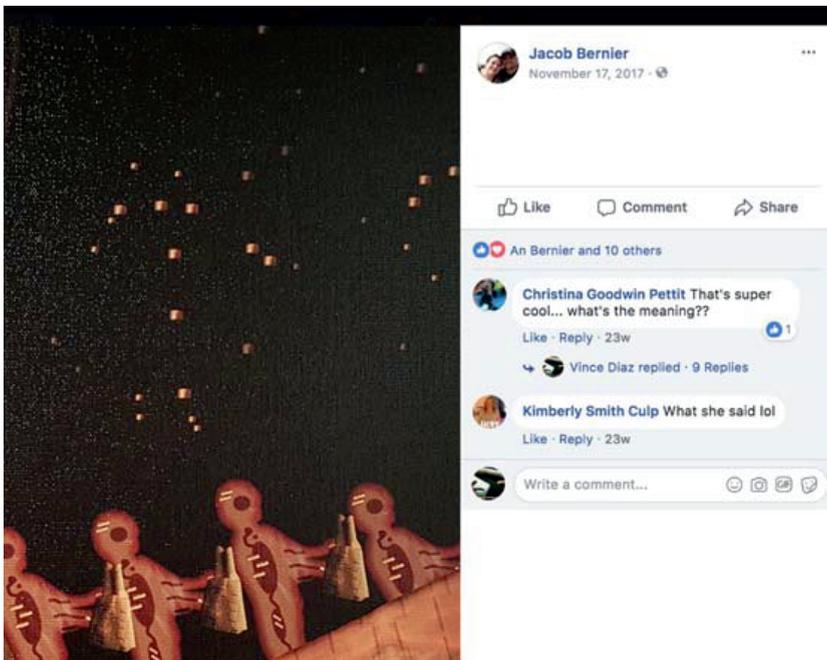


FIGURE 3. Screen Shot 1, from author's Facebook page, November 17, 2017.



FIGURE 4. Screen Shot 2 from author's Facebook page, November 17, 2017.

In the ensuing exchange, which yields information about where Jacob saw the painting, Chrissy observes that the canoe is missing the *amara* or “sail” (in Polowatese), in response to which Jacob quickly corrects her (“it is a birchbark”), and to which she just as quickly replies, “Oh, I know, but with an *amara* and *tam* (outrigger pontoon) it could be Micronesian!” And that’s all I needed.

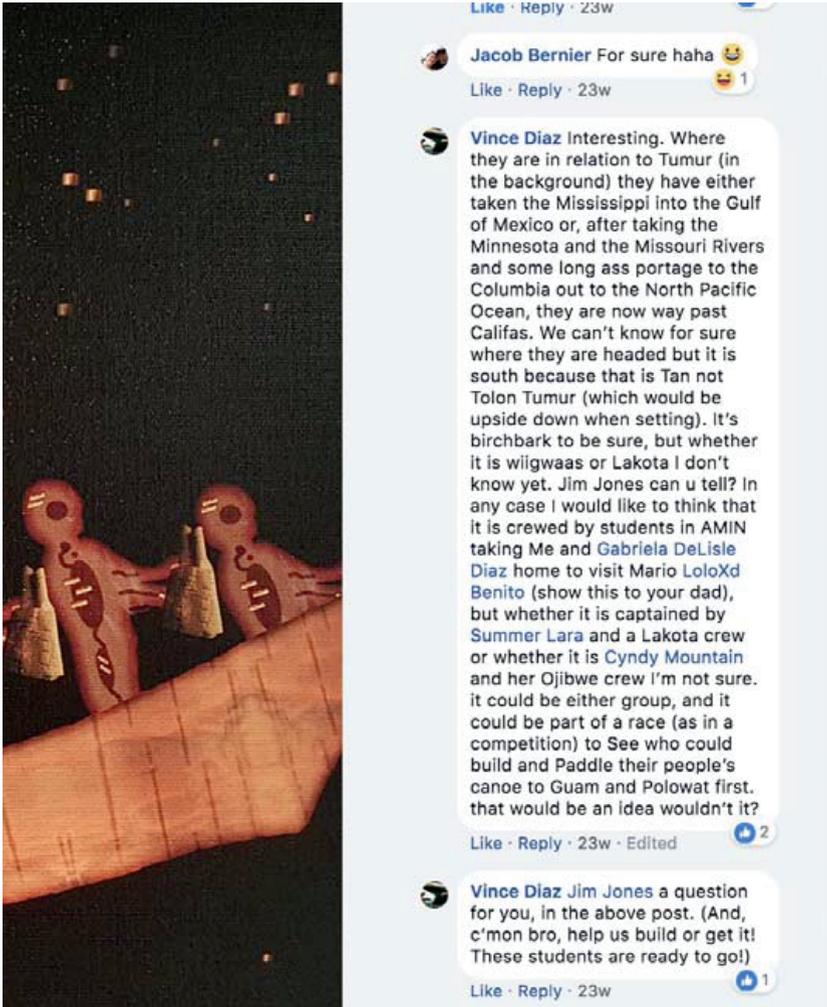


FIGURE 5. Screen Shot 3 from author's Facebook page, November 17, 2017.

Let me explain. For me, at least, the constellation that is visible behind the second passenger on the right (best visible in Figure 1) looks like what Polowatese call *Tumur* (that is part of Scorpio's tail), and in a position that appears to be rising in what the west calls the "eastern" horizon. Set precisely against *Tumur*'s "look" just so, as would be viewed from Polowat, the canoe appears to be heading south (or heading north, from the south). This would mean, as an Anishinaabe

canoe, it would be somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico via a southern trek through the Mississippi River. Or it could be in the Pacific Ocean, somewhere in the latitude between Central and South America but anywhere, really, in the interior of the Pacific Ocean. In either case, the initial trek from the Great Lakes could have been through the Mississippi (if to the Gulf), or through the Minnesota and/or the Missouri Rivers with portages to the Columbia Rivers (if westward, to the Pacific Ocean). This is how I grounded the flight of my own imagination. While a flight of fancy,² the larger point of my contribution to the Facebook thread was that Micronesian seafaring also offers additional mileage to Anishinabe, and, as we shall see in the next section, Dakota, cultural and geographic itineraries. This indigenously added value anchors the third part of this article.

III. Back to the Future Between Faichuuk and Mini Sóta Makhóche



FIGURE 6. Oceanic artifacts on iconic American Indian Pendleton blanket. By author.



FIGURE 7. Iconic American Indian artifacts on Fijian tapa bark cloth. By author.

The bid to join Anishinabe and Pacific indigeneity in the skyworld through canoes is not some postmodern flight of fancy, is not simply a case of anything-goes-fluidity. It is most certainly not a neoliberal token for a free ride or pass at the expense of indigenous integrity and sovereignty. Instead it expresses a contemporary, very serious, very rigorous, bid to strategically harness traditional knowledge of Micronesian seafaring knowledge with TEK of river

and skyways from Dakota country for what working together can do for two distinct groups of relatively and differentially displaced indigenous peoples, each in their own ways trying to decolonize. What follows in fact builds off of antecedents in canoe work involving Central Carolinians and Chamorros in Guam when I taught at the University of Guam in the 1990s (Diaz 1994, 2002), and Pacific Islanders and Anishinabe communities in Native Great Lakes region, when I taught at the University of Michigan and University of Illinois in the 2000s (Diaz 2013). The current project involves a long-term program of cultural revitalization of canoe voyaging and knowledge of land, water, and skyways in the Caroline islands and in Dakota homelands in rural, western Minnesota.

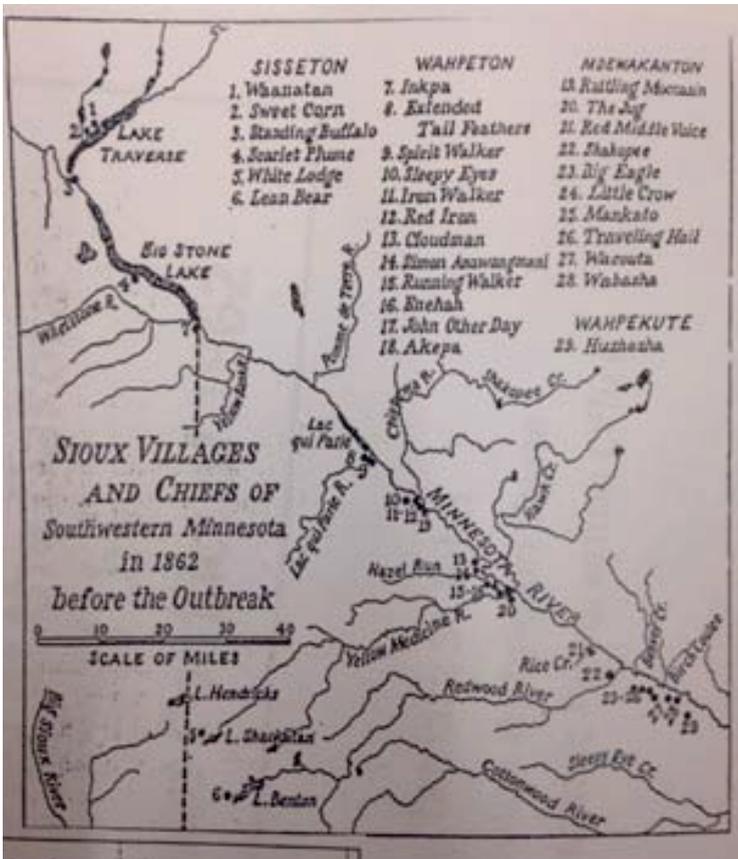


FIGURE 8. Map of “Sioux Villages and Chiefs of Southwest Minnesota in 1862.” With permission from the Minnesota Historical Society.

The project is many things: a mapping project (that also involves virtual and augmented reality technology), and an ethnography. I like to think of it as understanding—and making—history by way of the particular ways that we move forward with other similarly motivated and propelled Natives. Mostly, I like to think of it as an act of decolonization, of indigenous resurgence (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Aikau, Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, and Silva 2016; Corntassel 2012; Coulthard and Simpson 2016; Dhillon 2018; Diaz 2015; Simpson 2011; Teaiwa 1997) through projects of cultural revitalization and reclamation that feature radical indigenous relationalities between human, other-than-human, and nature, in multiple and competing scales (Todd 2017; Whyte 2018; Goeman 2013; Yazzie and Baldy 2018).

More specifically, the project is spawned by the efforts of a group of displaced Micronesians in rural southwest Minnesota who basically want to continue to be Micronesian in what they think is modern America by revitalizing outrigger canoe building and sailing using traditional knowledge from their kinship relations in the Central Carolines. The hitch is hitching the project to similarly conceived and staked efforts by the real home team: Dakota communities. And, as we are learning to negotiate and navigate together, we are also learning how Dakota, too, have a long and deep history and tradition of movement and expression through profound instrumentalized interconnectivity between self and environment that refuses colonial compartmentalization and binary logics. What is quickly developing, hence, is a partnership to practice indigenous Micronesian cultural traditions in Dakota homelands, waters, and skyways without replicating the sins of settler colonial dispossession and disenfranchisement. What we are beginning to learn is just how necessary it is to *include good and generative relations with Dakota as a precondition for being traditionally Micronesian*.

In the past decade a Chuukese community of almost 700 people has sprung up in rural, southwest Minnesota plains. Sourced from a single individual who initially wanted only to visit his Peace Corp worker brother who had returned to his own hometown in Milan, Minnesota, a population soon exploded in that town alone to over 400 today. While the number itself is small, the wave of migrants from the state of Chuuk in the Federated States of Micronesia in the Carolines is really a deluge in that Chuukese now comprise three-quarters of the town's population, whose remaining townfolk consist primarily of elder folks.

Milan, Minnesota, is one of those rural towns founded by Norwegian and Scandinavian settlers in the mid-nineteenth century.

It is not for nothing that Minnesota's professional football team, which had its fair share of Polynesian players in its past rosters, is called the Vikings, and



FIGURES 9–11. Polowat Navigator, Mario Benito in downtown Milan Town, Minnesota, October 2017. By author.



FIGURE 12. Town Mural, Milan, Minnesota. October 2017. By author.
FIGURE 13. Arv Hus Museum, downtown Milan, Minnesota. October 2017. By author.



FIGURE 14. **Replica Viking boat by Sons of Norway, Milan Fourth of July Parade, July 2016. Photograph by Gabriel Elias.**

Milan's residents, not without basis, boast of being the Norwegian-American capital of Minnesota, if not of America's heartland.

In its annual fourth of July parade down the single block of main street, the perennial float entry is a replica Viking ship built by the state's civic organization, the Sons of Norway. In the summer of 2016, the number of floats doubled.



FIGURE 15. **Micronesian waa herak/outrigger canoe Milan, Fourth of July Parade, July 2016. Photograph by Gabriel Elias.**

That's my outrigger sailing canoe, built in Guam but Polowatese in design and operation.

The Chuukese of Milan have also begun to refer to themselves as the Milaneseans. Milanesia is a play on the town's name and the standard orientalist taxonomy of Oceania into the more familiar divisions of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. Unlike the conventions, this one is self-imposed and deliberate.



FIGURE 16. Collage, Milanesian Café, Milan, Minnesota, October 2017: Photographs by author.

In their recent history here, the Milaneseans have traded a self-subsistent lifestyle of fishing and harvesting back in the Chuuk lagoon for small town life of modest wage earning. The majority of the men work for the Jenni-O Turkey processing plant in the next town, while women hold menial jobs and work as volunteer assistants for the local government and two churches in Milan and the surrounding towns. It is a young demographic; its leaders are in their late thirties and early forties, though there are about a dozen elders.³

On the whole, rural southwest Minnesota towns are in economic decline. Milan is the sole exception, and this on account of the still-growing

population of Chuukese. If for this reason Milan town stands out in the region, the Milanese also stand in sharp contrast to the profile and reputation of other displaced Micronesian, especially Chuukese, communities in Guam, Hawai'i, and the US Pacific west coast (California, Oregon, and Washington). The Chuukese of Milan have a relatively good reputation, and tensions with neighbors are relatively minor. There have been no deaths from driving under the influence, stabbings, robberies, the tale of the tape for which Chuukese in the diaspora are stereotypically stigmatized. The biggest difference stems from the fact that most of the Chuukese come from a single island—Romanum—in the Faichuuk region of the Chuuk Lagoon, which is itself a particularly complex sea of island hubs that is also politically associated with three “outlying” groups of atolls beyond the Chuuk lagoon, of which Polowat is a part.



FIGURE 17. Juxtapositions of 3 Maps: (a) Romanum Island (lower left hand), emplaced in (b) Chuuk Lagoon (upper right hand), emplaced in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Map of Chuuk reproduced with permission from Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i. Map of Romanum screen shot from Google Earth.

One particularly auspicious sign in the story of lagoon people displaced in rural west Minnesota—as if written in the stars—is that the leaders of this community turn out to have traditional “fictive kinship” ties to Polowat atoll beyond the lagoon. Particularly remarkable is that their kinship ties are to the same clan and canoehouse and navigational school into which I myself had been adopted and trained, thereby making all of us kin. That canoe house and clan may now include, in its traditional orbits, housing and resources in rural west Minnesota as it does in the Chuuk Lagoon.

Milan is a very small town with many low rent bungalows, and a small one and a half block downtown. It is also surrounded by corn and soy fields, and these, by prairie. In this sense it is not unlike the island of Romanum in the Chuuk lagoon, in the surrounding Micronesian seas.

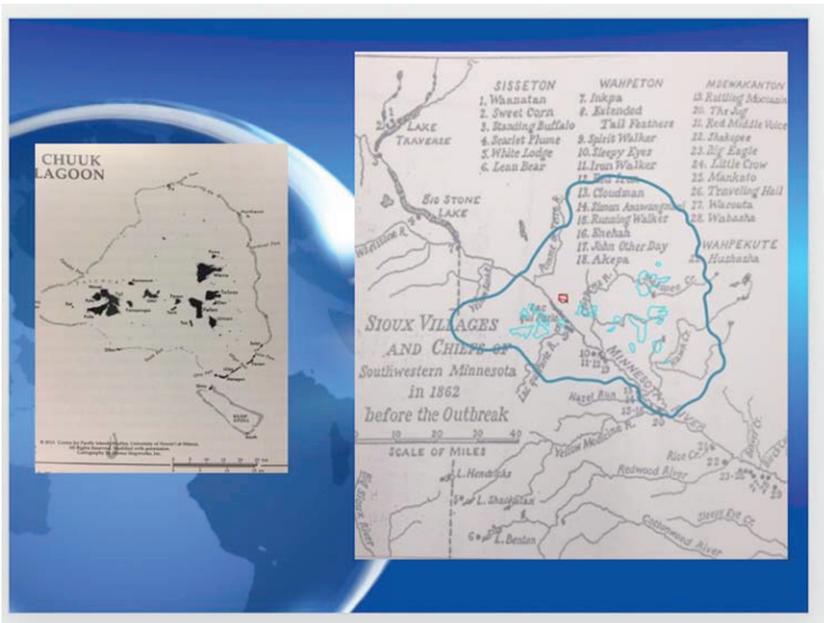


FIGURE 18. Cartographic overlays of Chuuk Lagoon upon 1862 map of Yellow Medicine. Produced at the Architecture as Catalyst-Cosmopolitan Design Workshop: Rural Futures, by graduate architecture students, School of Architecture, College of Design, University of Minnesota Twin Cities (UMN-TC), Spring Semester 2018. With permission from Prof. Virajita Singh, College of Design, UMN-TC. Map of Sioux Villages reproduced with permission from the Minnesota Historical Society.

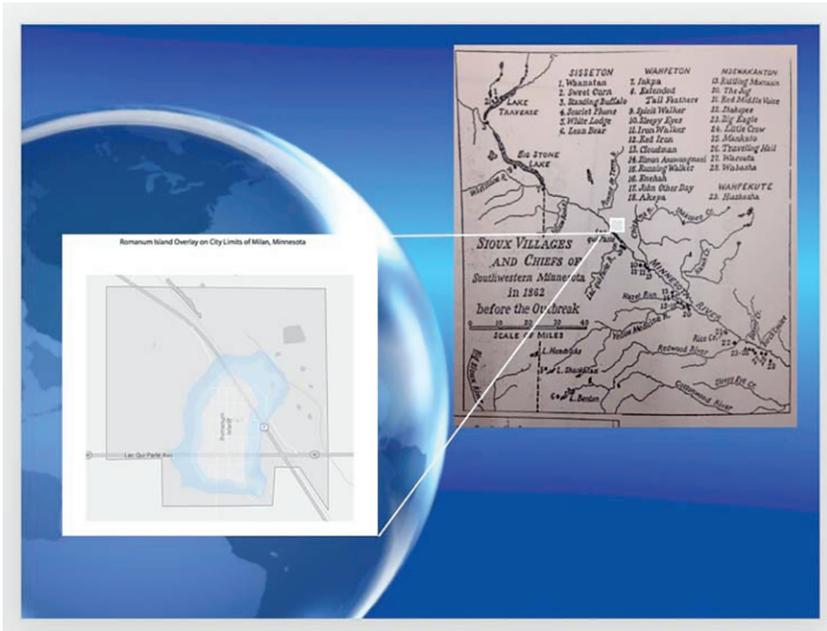


FIGURE 19. Romanum island emplaced in location of present-day Milan as seen in 1862 “Sioux” Map. By Students in Catalyst Workshop 2018. Map of Sioux Villages reproduced with permission from the Minnesota Historical Society.

Indeed, the Milanese often say being in Milan reminds them of being back home.

But rural west Minnesota is still *Mini Sóta Makhóche* (Westermann and White 2012), the traditional homelands of the *Dakhóta Oyáte*, who still hold fiercely to that fact, while the larger region itself is better understood as the eastern edges of the Great Plains of *Oceti Šakowiŋ*, the Seven Councils of Fire, as the different branches that comprise the Great “Sioux” nation call themselves, as they range across North and South Dakota (once having included Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois) and into deep reaches of Northern Plains Canada. This was and continues to be the traditional range of the *Oceti Šakowiŋ*, but as it has been occupied by military and settler colonialism (Wazyatawin 2006, 2008).

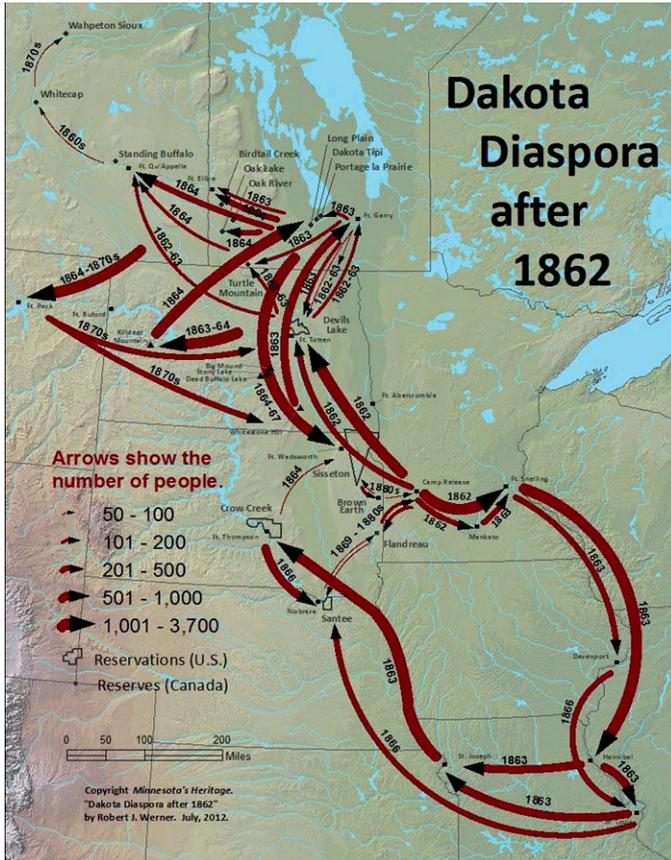


FIGURE 20. Dakota Diaspora 1862–1870. Image use courtesy of Robert Werner.

Since the 1860s, after bloody warfare and the start of a genocidal campaign of removal, most Dakota had been rounded up and removed from the state in the Dakota version of the Trail of Tears. But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Dakota had begun to return and now comprise four state-recognized and other nonrecognized tribal communities. The two closest to Milan are the Upper and Lower Sioux reservations, and they still refer to the region in which Milan is located as Petihutazizi Ka'pi Makhóche ("Where They Dig for) Yellow Medicine." The "Upper" and "Lower" Sioux are so named for their location up and down the Minnesota River.

In 2016 Milaneseans expressed to me a desire to build their own outrigger canoes and learn the fundamentals of Carolinian voyaging. As a migrant community, their preferred language is still their Romanum (aka Ulalu) dialect, but the leaders fear acculturation. Though they have a strong sense of their own island's traditions, and prefer to speak in their language, they feel that seafaring in particular would give them a stronger basis on which to build and ensure their future as Chuukese.

Made For The Ocean, Outrigger Canoe Takes On The Wind-Swept Waters Of Lac Qui Parle Lake On The Prairie

September 7, 2016 Tom Cherveney Outdoors



TOM CHERVENY | TRIBUNE

Sepestian Mateus, Singeru Elias, Vicente Diaz, and Gabriel Elias return after easily managing the waves and winds on Lac qui Parle Lake on September 3

MILAN – Gusty winds bore down the length of Lac qui Parle Lake, chasing up waves like a whitewater run on a wild river.

FIGURE 21. **Paddling at Lac Qui Parle, Minnesota, September 2017. By Tom Cherveney, with permission.**

And so we put the canoe in the water, in Milan, the Lac Qui Parle, which is fed by the Minnesota River, but not before we formally sought permission and acknowledged being on Dakota lands, waters, and skyways.



FIGURES 22 AND 23. Dakota Language professor at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, *Çaŋte Máza* (Neil McKay), greets the Milaneseans and the *waa* at the Bdote, the sacred confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, in the vicinity of present-day Fort Snelling. Photos courtesy of Charissa Blue-Downs.

In spring 2017 we had a soft launch at the Bdote, the sacred confluence of the Minnesota and the Mississippi rivers, and then a more formal launch as part of the founding of my department's Native Canoe Program, at the Mississippi River, on the east bank of the river on campus.



FIGURE 24. Launching of the Native Canoe Program, Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota (UMN), at East (Mississippi) River Flats, UMN East River Bank. October 2017. Photograph collage by author.

At both places we were hosted by Dakota leaders and community people who offered prayer, welcome, and gratitude for reaching out to them. At both places they also taught us about what Dakota call *bdote*, “confluences of rivers,” but also of domains, for example, between this temporal world and the sky, not unlike the Marshallese idea of *aelon*. We learned quickly of one *bdote* of remarkable significance: where the Mississippi and the Minnesota Rivers converge. In “eastern” Dakota cosmological cartographic mapping of Dakota peoplehood, this is *the* most sacred *bdote*, the portal, from which Dakota themselves sprung from the prior world into this temporal realm and through which they return to the afterlife in the *Woniya Wakan Tanka*, the “breath of the Great Mystery,” as the sky world is known (Goodman 1992, 1). As such, the *bdote* expresses the Dakota concept of the *Kapemni*, that is, that what is found in the skyworld reflects all that transpires on land and vice versa (17).

Imaged as a “twist” or spiral as to illustrate perfect symmetry between what’s above and what’s below, *Kapemni* also draws cosmic energy from the temporal and spiritual realms of past/present/and future intersectionality to a meeting point through which lives and meaning transit. The *Bdote* is thus the most sacred site of Dakota genesis and departure. But in the nineteenth century, US militarized settler colonialism built at the *Bdote* the notorious Fort Snelling. Literally overseeing the *Bdote*, Fort Snelling served as a concentration camp to and from which Dakota after the War of 1862 were rounded up and imprisoned in a particularly brutal winter, and then exiled from the state. For this, the sacred site of Dakota genesis and portage also became the horrific site of Dakota genocide, as Dakota historian and activist, Waziyatawin, explains in *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (Waziyatawin 2008, 103). In this important manifesto, Waziyatawin spells out the moral imperative in seeing Fort Snelling as an icon of nothing less than an ongoing history of Dakota genocide, whose location at the *Bdote* requires nothing short of tearing it down as a prerequisite for honoring Dakota ancestors and sacred landscape, beginning with those who were incarcerated there in the early 1860s and from whence they were exiled. Launching our canoe at that site came with prayers and pledges to ensure that the process of becoming good Micronesian navigators in Minnesota will not do anything that contributes to this legacy of violent erasure.

The initial quest to build and sail traditional Carolinian canoes in Milan is now articulated to an ongoing community development plan for sustainability and resilience. Besides building and sailing canoes, we are also learning the fundamentals of Carolinian navigation. Last fall, for the aforementioned course, I brought a *pwo* or traditional master navigator from Polowat, Mario Benito, to coteach and codesign the classes and projects on campus and in the Milan community. At Milan we even did *paafu*, opening up the “mat” of knowledge of the rising and setting stars as used in Polowat.



FIGURE 25. Collage of Polowatese pwo navigator, Mario Benito, conducting paafu with *Re Romanum* (people of Romanum) inside the Milanesian Café, Milan, Minnesota. October 24, 2017. The event was cosponsored by the Milanesian community and the Milan Listening House project, in conjunction with the ArtPlace and the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership. Photographs by author.

On campus the course met at the river on weekends, but also went out and visited and paddled with Anishinabe and Dakota communities across the state.



FIGURE 26. Paddling at Milan. Photograph courtesy of Tom Chervený.



FIGURE 27. Canoe Kin: a Carolinian *waa* and a Dakota *wata* enjoy a break. Community paddle at the Lower Sioux Indian Community. Photo by Jake Bernier, with permission.

This work also includes a virtual and augmented reality component, begun in Illinois, but that is another story for another time.

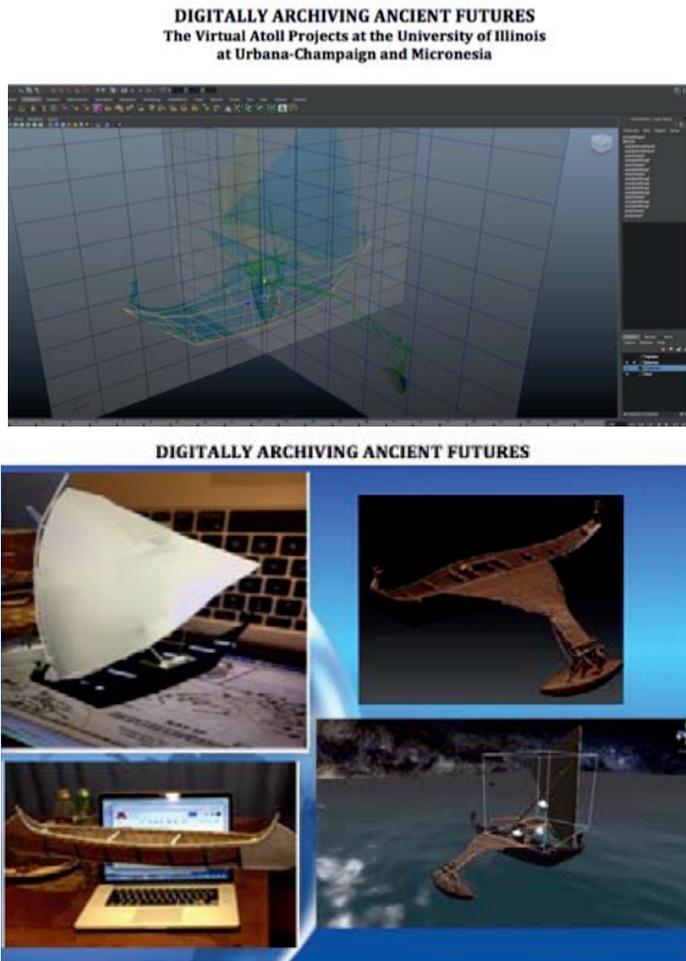


FIGURE 28. Screen shot of 3D Waa, “Digitally Archiving Ancient Futures” Project, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Graphic engineering by Dani Pavic, Fall 2014. Photograph by author.

FIGURE 29. Samples of virtual and augmented waa and wiigwaas jiimaan/ Birchbark Canoe, “The Canoe Virtual Project,” University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Spring 2018. Funded by a Liberal Arts Technologies and Innovation Services (LATIS) Technology Innovation Grant, College of Liberal Arts, UMN-TC, with generous technical support by the Interactive Visualization Lab (IV/Lab) under the direction of Prof. Dan Keefe, Department of Computer Engineering and Sciences, UMN-TC. Photographs by author.

These multisited, community-engaged pedagogy and research activities resonate well within these communities since the Dakota and Anishinabe have been reviving birch and dugout canoes.

Development of an Sustainable and Resilient Community for Chouksee people in Milan MN

Angechu in the Chouksee Language this means "Working together" Micronesian People of Milan

Purpose
To provide administrative oversight to better disperse public services to the blended cultures in Milan Minnesota. Angechu will develop a strategy that advocates for Milan's multiple cultures, their arts community and main street businesses to develop a more resilient community. Angechu's vision is to better educate and coordinate the public and private services which surrounds the entire population of the Milan area. Angechu understands that to have a vibrant rural community there must be solid plans in place to serve the community members' with stable and supportive life styles along with filling the total population, recreational annual community forums to track along with providing a more stable, while getting fresh input from the p

There is no question that Milan's art of the Scandinavian community when almost 100% of the citizens of 80 classes yearly to promote the 50 the population of Milan has greatly 148 were Micronesian people. Today around 350 living in the surrounding Milan are Pacific Islanders from MI

PEOPLES OF THE WATERS:
Bridging Communities with Traditional Watercraft and Marine Arts
17 JANUARY 2018

This project proposes to bring together individuals from three distinct cultural and historical communities in Minnesota's Southwest region - Milan's Scandinavian Americans, it's new residents from the Pacific Island nation of the Federated States of Micronesia, and members of the nearby Upper Sioux Dakota community - through the building of traditional watercraft and other arts associated with boats building through each's

on as the plains, to forge aiding traditional boats skills of fine carving, uses, technology, learning, cultural values le of water travel and three communities,

PROJECT SUMMARY
Project Title: The Canoe Virtual: Fusing Advanced Visualization Technology (AVT) and Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) for Advancing Academic Innovation.
AMOUNT REQUESTED: \$26,779
PRIMARY PROPOSER: Vicente M. Diaz

PROJECT ABSTRACT: This project proposes to build a module that employs specific forms of Advanced Visualization Technologies (AVT) to facilitate the teaching and learning of specific cultural skill sets that are associated with Indigenous watercraft and water-related traditional knowledge from the Pacific Islands and Great Lakes region. More specifically, to be carried out in conjunction with a Fall 2017 offering of AMIN 3312 Indigenous Environmental Issues and Ecological Perspectives, which centers Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK), this project calls for data capture of activities for Virtual Reality (VR) simulation and game design of two of the course's components, namely 1) the building of a traditional birch bark canoe, and 2) the teaching and learning of how to "shum" a Pacific islands outrigger sailing canoe, along with the "hot mapping" of a third component that is already in Augmented Reality (AR) form. Through work in these three components, components that are separate but thematically and pedagogically inseparable in an already innovative course that advances the study of indigeneity and the environment through comparative and global connections as well as through hands-on, experiential practices, the module also offers a model of value-added academic innovation in just how it conceptualizes the use of advanced digital technology in relation to traditional forms of indigenous knowledge and technology. That relation relies on an eye for what can happen when the powers of advanced visualization technology for knowledge purposes fuse with the powers of indigenous knowledge technologies for advancement purposes. What distinguishes this project from others that propose to use new digital technology to enhance their content is the mutually informing and mutually beneficial relationship - the cutting both ways - that the new technology will have with the "old" indigenous technology. It is in this way that we are

FIGURE 30. Community Engagement Grants: "People of the Waters/Angechu Master Plan," with support from the University of Minnesota Extension Southwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. Also the aforementioned (see Fig. 29) "Canoe Virtual" Project. By author.

Back in Milan, the goal of building canoes and learning navigation quickly became folded into a community-driven process, of developing a master plan for economic, social, and cultural development, the latter of which is now taking the form of a project that plans to create an intercommunity team to build an outrigger canoe, a Dakota dug out, and a Viking boat. [Not to be underestimated for its indigenous potential . . . Sami say they taught woodwork to Vikings.]

Another project under development involves working with the Lower Sioux Dakota community's Recreation Program to build a canoe launch and traditional structure in their community on the Minnesota River. That idea, in conjunction with the holding of the paafu lesson at the Milanese Café, convinced us to proceed more diligently with a plan to build a traditional *utt* or "canoe

house” in Milan. In the spring semester of 2018, we collaborated with colleagues and graduate students at the University of Minnesota’s College of Design’s annual Catalyst Workshop, where students are given a particular design challenge to research and develop in one week. Part of this year’s challenge was to “design a traditional Micronesia Canoe House that recognizes its location on Dakota Homelands and doesn’t replicate the sins of settler colonialism.”

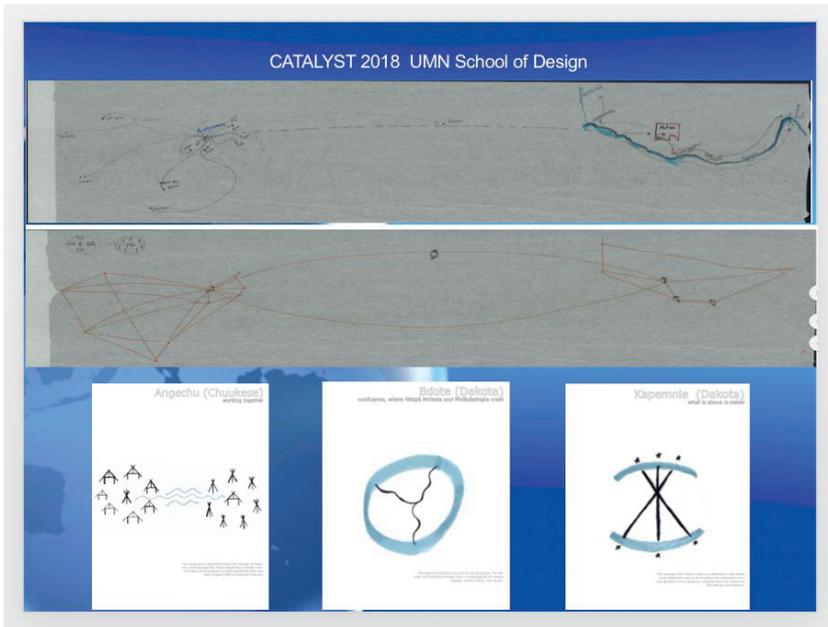


FIGURE 31. Design ideas that juxtapose Micronesia and Dakota spatial and temporal relationships, three planes. Produced at the Architecture as Catalyst-Cosmopolitan Design Workshop: Rural Futures, by graduate architecture and landscape architecture students, School of Architecture, College of Design, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Spring Semester 2018. With permission from Prof. Virajita Singh, College of Design, UMN-TC.

We are currently consolidating these projects and activities into a single, multifaceted, multisited, fully and multisensory program in the community.

Currently we are in formal consultation phases with the Upper and Lower Sioux tribal councils for a project that we hope will expand the courses and activities to include comparative indigenous astronomy, ecology, oral history

(involving water ceremonies for men and women), and even a “mixed reality” virtual reality studio and laboratory component, using TEK from this region and from Micronesia. Imagine a course of community-based and engaged study in which, in this kind of Native-to-Native-to-Settler relations, the Milanese are able to learn the “seas” of their homeland and their new homes, and all the prerequisite ecological and cultural knowledge necessary to locate—to emplace—oneself properly in time/space in indigenous terms. Imagine, a course of action, learning, and research in which, by virtue and method of combined Carolinian local seafaring and Dakota rivers and plains knowledge, the Milanese also learn Dakota land, water, and skyways and then proceed in time to backtrack to home waters and skies by similarly engaging in such activities with indigenous communities along the way. The backtracking is literal: at some point in the near future they literally return home and then plot the star and sea course with the amassed knowledge of such local lands and seas such as how it would have been carried out traditionally, as a voyage from Romanum to Yellow Medicine might be so imagined and carried out by tracking the shifting variable and looks and feels of each leg along the way. The return to Dakota lands would be a kind of homecoming: Micronesians return “home” to Yellow Medicine, Dakota possibly adding new cultural materiality from elsewhere with which to reflect or mirror kinship relations in their own renewed relationship to their sky world. For Micronesians displaced in Dakota lands and waters, it is the first and necessary leg in a long journey back to Chuukese futures. Beginning by working at both ends of what we might call a transindigenous memory map is key, because traditional seafaring works at both ends: shoving off from local waters and skies and knowing where one is by incrementally building—through distinct “legs” of a journey, on knowledge of the “local” leg—in order to arrive at the final destination; for a journey of the largest distance is actually a series of steps or legs involving the “working” of local ecological knowledge to its interphase with eco-material presented in and from the next leg of a journey. A substantive, instrumentalized version of an old adage that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, traditional voyaging works by establishing a baseline of knowledge from the specificities of the first leg in order lay both a course and the units of analyses by which to take the next leg, and so forth. Here, the local seas surrounding the island of origin and the island of destination are crucial bookends, and they need to be incrementally connected through the interconnectedness of the serial and constitutive legs of the journey. The journey here crosses many indigenous homes and traditions, and so must involve all of them as a precondition for carrying out a successful “Micronesian” voyage. Technically these seas are cross-checked against a third reference island in a system, in the Central Carolines, called *etak* or moving islands (Diaz 2015), whose course is charted through legs along a star path. It is precisely the ecological

knowledge of the journey's most important leg—the first leg, as measured from the moment the canoe shoves off and steers in the direction of the rising or setting constellation that mark the location of the destination island, until the point where the origin island can no longer be seen, as it recedes from view—that becomes the baseline data set for subsequent legs. The multiple and shifting variables that must be assessed and calculated in this first leg at “sea”—not in the ocean—but at sea—include the rate of speed as measured by the wake or displacement of water on the bow or off the outrigger pontoon, strengths and direction of currents, which particular waves and swells are at work individually or in tandem or threesome, shifting winds, cloud coverage, mist and rain conditions, etc. It is in this way that good navigators can discern where they are at all points out in the open ocean, that is, by how they work the baseline knowledge established in familiar seas. By knowing the localities of each leg, good navigators can know into whose homes they have entered and are passing through. In this way, as I will elaborate in the next section, geographic reach and cultural depth, or, put in another way, the conditions of routedness and rootedness, are mutually informing. It is in this way that the largest oceans, and the largest islands—Turtle Island, as American Indians tend to call the North American edge of the Pacific—can be traversed indigenously and creatively—without losing sight of site and cultural and ecological specificity.

IV. Toward a Transindigenous Critique

American Indian and Native Pacific culture and identity can, and must, be viewed in more expansive and fluidic terms than are typically accorded “native” traditions by modern discourse, but this expansive and fluidic reach must also not come at the expense of the more familiar depth and specificity for which indigeneity has also been conceptualized and theorized by both indigenous and nonindigenous systems of thought. In this final section I build on the idea, illustrated in the previous two sections, of the need to stake specificity on technical or instrumental as well as on cultural and geographic grounding so as not to aid and abet the sins of settler colonialism and larger forms of colonial discourse that operate through their own forms of disavowing specificity. As unlikely as it might seem, these conditions can be secured through the political and analytical possibilities furnished in the concept of transindigeneity.

The material presented in the first two sections involves indigeneity—the ontological and analytical claims and conditions of nativeness to specific places through the peoples' own conventions of belonging, but especially as forged through the technology of indigenous watercraft and TEK, in the case here, in Anishinabe, Dakota, and Pacific Islander communities. The stakes in such a critically-informed canoe cultural revitalization practice centered on

indigenous TEK, as I have also tried to show, involve the need for indigenous forms of transformative knowledge production committed to decolonization in the context of settler colonialism and larger colonial discourses. The need is as much warranted today as in any other time in the history of the colonization of indigenous lands, waters, skies, bodies, minds, and spirits. In both scholarly and popular discourse about Pacific culture and history in particular, for example, there has been a valorization and reification of the tropes of expansiveness and fluidity, marked by a tendency to play up and favor the moniker “Oceania” over the term “Pacific Islands.” In some key ways this turn to expansiveness and fluidity has become problematic for a host of reasons, beginning, in the case of scholarship, with erasure of historical and cultural specificity and tokenism of indigeneity, and, in the case of popular culture, outright ahistorical and romanticized renderings of indigenous culture and history. In both there is a form of neoliberal commodification and cooptation that rises to cultural forms of resource extraction. I’ll return to this issue after considering an intellectual moment in the field of Pacific Studies at the end of the twentieth century, whose splash, as it were, was specifically to highlight the need to inject much needed mobility into prevailing discourses about Pacific indigeneity. The person most responsible for that injection—not abuse—was the late Tongan anthropologist-turned-satirist, Epeli Hau’ofa, but there had also been a scatter of writings by an upstart group of younger (at the time!) Pacific scholars, including myself, that had also already begun to push for similar such ways of theorizing the terms of Pacific indigeneity through oceanic, particularly mobile, sensibilities and determinations (Diaz 1989, 1994, 2002; Diaz and Kauanui 2001; Diaz, DeLisle, and Nelson 1997; Marsh 1998; Peter 2000; Salesa 2003; Teaiwa 1995, 1997, 2001, unpublished data; Teaiwa 2005).⁴ In this essay I will only address Epeli Hau’ofa’s role.

Epeli Hau’ofa is most remembered for his ground-breaking essay “Our Sea of Islands” (Hau’ofa 1994), which famously re-presented the Pacific Islands region in more expansive terms than was habitually accorded and operationalized in colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial discourse. For so calling attention especially to a deep and ongoing history of islander mobility upon an oceanic world that connected us to, not separated us from, the bigger world, the late Banaban and African American scholar, Teresia Teaiwa (1999), christened Hau’ofa’s essay “the most visionary” piece in our field, and indeed, we all gave it a privileged place in our citational practices.

But as if to ground the claims he made in the earlier, more famous essay, his later essay, “Pasts to Remember” (Hau’ofa 2000) was/is decidedly moored in cultural, ecological, and spatial specificity and technology. In “Pasts” Epeli argued for Indigenous Pacific islanders to tell our own histories, to produce narratives that, he asserted, are “our own distinctive creations” (Hau’ofa 2000,

459). In it he explores how Indigenous writers might center Pacific form in the writing of our own pasts, covering three dimensions of form—first, temporality, as in differing and competing conceptions of time; second, spatiality, as in the primacy of one’s proper geographic, cultural, and epistemological center of gravity or home; and, third, on technological form. The first two forms might necessitate moving away from linear narrativity that centered European or non-Native temporal presences, an example of which is the imagining of Pacific history but only through the lens of European contact and geographic frames of references.⁵ Such an imperialist modality, he argued, delimited the multiplicity and relativity of Pacific truths of the past, and so severed Pacific peoples from their rightful homelands. Of the political effects of reducing Pacific pasts to the binary of prehistory versus history proper, Epeli wrote, “when you view most of a people’s past as not history, you shorten very drastically the roots of their culture, or declare their existence doubtful” (Hau’ofa 2000,456). Displaced from narrative, we are also displaced from our beloved lands, waters, and skyways. He elaborates,

To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa, or to destroy their lands with mining, deforestation, bombing, large-scale industrial and urban developments, and the like, is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood, but also and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and from their ultimate claim for legitimacy of their existence (469).

Instead of linearity, he argued for circularity; instead of what he called “mainline” history, he suggested the figure of the spiral as drawn from knowledge of local and regional environmental and ecological phenomena, also contained in orality and dance and other expressive genres. In fact, Hau’ofa was all about creativity, about riffing and improvising off deep tradition. In this essay he was bidding us to ground ourselves in our specific traditions of local ecological and environmental knowledge in order to be set free. The operational site of that locality, I submit, is the “sea,” a unit of specificity and relationality between the local and the global, between land and water, between self and other, whose eco-vernacular differences and specificities across “Oceania” have been awashed-over by exuberant and often shallow and highly tokenized invocations of an expansive Oceania.

The instrumentality of this local site, understood strongest in seafaring abilities (Diaz in press) is clear in how he described what he referred to as “ecologically-based oral traditions” that, in turn, had two foci: the first, a concentration on the people, by which he specifically meant the “. . . ordinary people, the

forgotten people of history, who have coped and are coping with their harsh realities, their resistance and struggles to be themselves and hold together” (Hau’ofa 2000, 457). The second, on what he called the “notion of ecological time” (458)—that aforementioned Indigenous temporality—as it was rooted in nature and traditional ecological knowledge based on it. To elaborate, Hau’ofa drew examples from Tongan, Fijian, and Kanaka Maoli vernacular discourses of time, citing, for example, Kanaka Maoli historian, Lilikala Kame’eleihiwa’s oft-cited observation that,

It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown, whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge (Kame’eleihiwa 1992, 22–23).

After fleshing out this modality a bit more, Hau’ofa offers a summary that locates a relationality to the past at the very core of our being, provided, that is, we are grounded so.⁶ He writes,

That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and to be aware of its presence. What is behind us cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is in front of our minds’ eyes, always reminding us of its presence. The past is alive in us, so in more than a metaphorical sense the dead are alive—we are our history (Hau’ofa 2000, 460).

With such a conception of time immanent in us, Hau’ofa then shifts us to the ecological grounds proper that center and frame the inquiry:

Where time is circular, it does not exist independently of the natural surroundings and society. It is very important for our historical reconstruction to know that the Oceanian circular time emphasis is tied to the regularity of seasons marked by natural phenomenon such as cyclical appearances of certain flowers, birds, and marine creatures, shedding of certain leaves, phases of the moon, changes in prevailing winds and weather patterns, which themselves mark the commencement of and set the course for cycles of human activities such as those related to agriculture, terrestrial and marine foraging, trade and exchange, and voyaging, all with their associated rituals, ceremonies, and festivities (Hau’ofa 2000, 460–61).

In Hau‘ofa’s essay, the line he draws from circular notions of time through our being to the spatiality of ecological groundwork ends in a discussion of technology that spirals back fittingly to ontology or beingness. Hau‘ofa:

Of equal importance in the consideration of the relationships between Oceanian societies and nature is the role of technology. The driving force that propelled human activities was the knowledge and skills developed over centuries, fine-tuned to synchronize actions with the regularities of nature. As it provided the vital link between the vital link between society and nature, technology cannot be dissociated from or seen to be independent of either. It was a vital and compatible component of the cycles. [. . .] For a genuinely Oceanian historiography, we could use this notion to reconstruct some of our pasts in terms of peoples’ endeavors always to adapt and localize external borrowings and impositions, fitting them to their familiar cycles. In this way they actively transformed themselves rather than *just being passively remodeled by others* (Hau‘ofa 2000, 461–62).

For short hand purposes, I suggest we think of what he says about technology in terms of how our ancestors *instrumentalized* the environment around them, and therefore, created themselves, into powerful forms of knowledge, beginning with instrumentalizing nature, so to speak, for the purposes of successful and capacious cultural and geographic mobility: this is what’s expressed and contained in our seafaring traditions. I suggest, moreover, that we read his essay as a prompt to creatively instrumentalize those instrumentalizations into alternative visions of the present and futures (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua 2018). Thus, his essay permits us to not only imagine but perform the fluidities of Pacific pasts by using cultural forms and knowledge from our own islands and archipelagos and traditions. This specific grounding in place, marked by cultural and ecological rootedness—deep Indigenous ancestral and ecological verticality—or Native depth, for short—is vital because it is precisely through the fully embodied and multisensoried narrative instrumentalization of Indigenous ancestral and ecological verticality, of Native depth—that the other signature legacy of Pacific peoples and islands that Epeli celebrated in “Seas” is enabled and unleashed: indigenous geographic and discursive spread across temporal horizons, or simply, Native Reach. Here I’m not just reiterating a theoretical point about roots and routes (that needs constant reminding), but rather more specifically drawing from seafaring for more technical substantiation to show and work how native roots and routes are not mutually exclusive but mutually and powerfully constitutive and generative. I assert that if Epeli’s “Sea of Islands” foregrounds and also expands upon the history of Native Pacific Reach, then his “Pasts to the

Remember” essay—a narratological instrumentalization of Indigenous Pacific cultural and ecological forms and knowledge for the purposes of creating new Pacific pasts (and futures)—*contracts* the space or field of play in the double sense of *scaling back* to appropriate locale and place—Native Depth—and also *negotiating or transacting* that space into new rounds of expanded Indigenous possibilities.⁷ In this essay, Hau’ofa’s bid to have us create our own pasts out of the specific cultural forms and ecological knowledge of our specific islands and seas opens to new futurities and new ways to imagine and ground political practice, an urgent matter facing Pacific Islanders in a world that doubles down on inequality and environmental destruction but through new hegemonic forms of embracing and presenting and thereby commodifying and coopting Indigenous Pacific culture and tradition in essentialist, ahistorical, ways.

In writing “Pasts to Remember” Hau’ofa had uppermost in mind the politics of knowledge production, of what was insidious about benevolent interest in Pacific cultural pasts in the work of sympathetic nonislander scholars, and this was matched by a larger developmentalist political context of colonial belittlement and erasure of Indigenous worlds, but also of postcolonial Pacific complicity. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Hau’ofa was responding to great strides in ethnographic history and historical ethnography in the Pacific, a relatively new paradigm that built upon earlier decades of work by the so-called Canberra School of Pacific history but as it had been inflected by critical ethnographic theory and practice. Uppermost in his mind, too, was a turn, in Pacific Anthropology, on the politics of culture and tradition. Having already left anthropology for creative writing, as Epeli was commandeering the University of the South Pacific into a center for Oceanic Performance, his essay acknowledged the value of the work by these non-Native anthropologists and historians, but stressed the need for Indigenous islanders to produce our own histories with our own Indigenous forms.

In the lead up to, but also in the aftermath of the publishing of “Pasts to Remember,” and prompted perhaps most of all by Epeli’s passing, “Sea of Islands” had also become so influential as to also become an obligatory citation for all of us to properly situate our work. Of late, the move also includes an especially insidious form of self-legitimization for new sectors and in certain contexts. An example of the former is a whole new tribe of historians writing what they are calling “Pacific Worlds” histories as if they have discovered a whole new world, and then hitch a ride on Hau’ofian expansiveness to the larger history of global flows of peoples, ideas, things, in ways that gut substantive centering on specific islands and islanders (Hanlon 2017). In this way, Hau’ofa and our Oceania are tokenized.

At the same time, among a new generation of Pacific Islander scholars and activists and cultural workers, Hau’ofa’s “Sea of Islands” has inaugurated a trend,

far more authentic than the new historiography from without, to embrace the terms Oceania and especially *Moana*, over the term Pacific, for its fluidic sensibilities, and generally I've been supportive of this, as in fact, I even participate in forums and organizations and collectives that self-identify as "Moanan," though I am not Polynesian. But the problem here is also when Ocean as Moana conflates one part of the Pacific for the entirety, and loses specificity of seas, or, when we are reminded that most of the Pacific does not deal with the Ocean as do peoples from Polynesia and Micronesia (Jolly 2000).

In popular culture, the problems with overly exuberant culturalism of Oceanic expansiveness are seen in Disney's 2016 animated film *Moana* and in broader celebratory discourses of so-called "non-instrument" wayfinding, whose biggest problem is ahistorical valorization of sailing antiquity that denies the modern conditions of wayfinding's emergence—like science, corporate funding, state support, modern scholarship—while also erasing Indigenous technological and instrumentalized seafaring knowledge outside Polynesia. I can only summarize here the gist of my criticism.⁸ In the film's narrative structure and iconography, in every dramatic moment where we are afforded an opportunity to actually see how real Indigenous seafaring technique and technology operate, Disney imaginers resolve the pragmatic problem with divine and mystical interventions—a magical wave or the spirit of a grandmother rights an upended canoe or points the way forward—ostensibly to honor the deep spirituality and *mana* (power) and oneness of Polynesian relationship with Moana the Ocean.⁹ That emphasis may well be what its Pacific Islander consultants wanted emphasized, but it strikes me as a step backward given how colonial discourse has long relegated Pacific islanders to the realm of spirituality, physicality, passion, and expression as the forms of indigenous authenticity at the expense of indigenous intellectual and even science-like traditions. Locating "wayfinding"—a modern phenomenon or at least a phenomenon of revitalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—in the ancient past and emphasizing mysticism, in my opinion, is a step backward of the not good kind.

So, in view of these post "Sea" essay developments inside and outside Pacific Studies as an academic field, I think that, ironically, Epeli's "Our Sea of Islands" unleashed a tidal wave of expansive thinking through abstracted or improperly scaled or just plain old tokenized ideas of Oceans, not of his doing, that had the effect of washing over the principal subjects contained in the title of that essay—Our Sea—the pairing of third person plural and collective subjectivity and possession, and that watery zone that is so central in seafaring islands: the Sea. The sea, here, is the appropriate scale and locality of instrumentalized ecological knowledge as understood in Pacific seafaring systems. Some of us, and our seas, consistently get washed out by the rush to expansive ideas of oceanic fluidity. It took almost 20 years, but I think I now know how our *Melanesian*

and Aboriginal land, and lake, and mountain, and valley cousins feel when the Oceans, Moana or otherwise, keep getting valorized as the essential marker of the Pacific. This is one of the values of working relationally, with people outside the Pacific, where Pacific Islanders have come to lap.

In any case, our project of what and how it takes to be Chuukese in Dakota Country and Skies shows the potential of keeping cultural depth and reach, roots and routes, always articulated together. The program of knowledge relations that I presented here, between one group of Natives displaced from their Indigenous homelands by US military and colonial/neocolonial development in/and with another Native group who continue to battle displacement on their own homelands by settler colonialism, offers a modality that consciously refuses to wash out difference, and consciously does so by embodying and deploying a framework that Chad Allen calls Trans-indigenous (Allen 2012). In effect, for Allen, transindigeneity is an analytical, ontological, and political category of Aboriginal claims and conditions to deep temporal specificity but that has the ability and capacity to reach across particularities in creative and powerful ways without losing specificity. One feature of Allen's definition of transindigeneity is the strategic use of creative juxtaposition of Indigenous traditions and histories and experiences that tend to be kept hermetically sealed from each other, precisely to see what political and cultural truths and insights might be unleashed or made possible when they are so juxtaposed. The method was, in part, also prompted by the historical and political circumstances of its production. His first book, *Blood Narratives* (Allen 2002), for example, examined blood and citizenship narratives in Indian country and in Māori country in Aotearoa. He is also an active leader in an international field of comparative Indigenous literatures as well as a larger field called Native American and Indigenous Studies, or NAISA (O'Brien and Warrior 2016), which in the past decade has been advancing forms of Native Studies that so juxtapose material from Indigenous studies in North America and the globe, with strong representation in the Pacific Islands, including Aboriginal Australia. If indigeneity is an abstract concept that can serve as an analytical and political commitment to interrogate the terms of aboriginal belonging to specific places through vernacular practices, transindigeneity offers the same promise but with attention to deep temporal specificity that has the ability and capacity to reach across particularities in creative and powerful ways without losing that specificity. When properly worked, specificity and particularity translate or circle back to temporal and discursive reach or expansiveness. Here is the proper relationship between seas and oceans, and that proper relationality requires knowing into whose home one has sailed as a condition for expanding one's possible homes or at least one's possible circuits of travel. This way of moving is categorically different from the imperialism of settler colonialism and larger colonial discourses. And here, the sky is the limit.

V. Conclusion

According to Lynn Sherr (2001) *America the Beautiful*, from whose lyrics we opened this article, sang more than high praises to the beauty of America's land, seas, and skies; rather, its most inspiring message was that, above life itself, for which life can be sacrificed, it is America the nation itself that stands for the loftiest ideals of freedom, liberty, and equality. On September 11, 2001, the same year that Sherr's book was published, that nation suffered an assault and a test that it had not experienced since the infamous day of infamy sixty years earlier, when Japan attacked a US military base in the occupied Hawaiian archipelago. In an interview shortly after 9/11, Sherr observed that it was the singing of America the Beautiful three days later, at the memorial at ground zero in New York City, that for her signaled America's ascent back to glory after those dark days following the attacks. But, like the song itself, the narrative that Sherr trumpets is of course the familiar and problematic story of American exceptionalism, one that we know is predicated on the erasure and disavowal of indigeneity both on the continent and across the ocean, along with the possession of the continent and the ocean, as the material precondition for the experiment of freedom, liberty, and equality, and for singing its highest praises. In stark contrast, indigenous struggles to reclaim self by reclaiming lands, waters, and skies through indigenous technologies and knowledge surge forward, upward, and outward, to remind us that where we stand is always on indigenous land, waters, and skyways. And that indigenous lands, waters, and skyways on and for which we stand are also never so separated, so compartmentalized from each other, as they have long been conceptualized and managed so in colonial discourse. As we have seen in this article, water's simultaneous capacity to serve as highway and as craft and technology of transportation is also matched by its simultaneous ability to transgress and abide the forms of containment, its abilities to not just shape shift but also shift the shape of everything around it, making water especially good to learn and teach with by way of building with. And because for Natives everywhere, the particularities of indigeneity and place matter, it is also critical to underscore the fluidity staked in the geographic and historical particularities here. Here, land is of the type where, "to travel at all is to travel by water," a place whose boosters call the "Land of 10,000 Lakes." MniSota is also where the Great Lakes meets the Great Mississippi (and its tributaries) meets up with the Great Plains, North America's largest biome and container of North America's largest body of water, the Ogallala Aquifer. Seen and motivated through such an indigenous water lens, the critical project pushes the Milaneseans to learn to be Micronesian *in* Dakota country, to revitalize by knowing deeply where they are at and what differences this kind of fluidic relationality can have for new forms of relationships that do not replicate

the violence and tendencies of settler colonialism and exclusivist kinds of compartmentalized thinking. In the deep terms of indigenous knowledge and the relations of kinship and stewardship built on them.¹⁰

NOTES

¹This article synthesizes work presented in three other venues in 2018: my Epeli Hau'ofa Memorial Lecture, delivered at the “*Two Horizons*”: *Pacific Studies in a Cosmopolitan World* Conference. Biennial Conference of the Australian Association for Pacific Studies April 4–7, 2018, University of Adelaide, South Australia (for an excerpted version, see Diaz 2018a); an invited talk at the *Pacific Island Studies Now* Symposium, held at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, in May 2018; and a paper for the panel on Indigenous Studies Approaches to Health Research, at the *Tenth Annual Native American and Indigenous Studies Association Meeting*, May 17–19, 2018, Los Angeles, California. Support for the project *Backing into Ancient Futures*, described in this article, is funded in part by the University of Minnesota Southwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, the University of Minnesota's College of Design spring seminars, Catalyst Challenge (in 2018 and 2019), and the University of Minnesota's Grand Challenge Initiative.

²Or is it? Mat Pendleton, a cultural practitioner and a project partner from the Lower Sioux Dakota Community tells me that Dakota tell of a canoe party, long time ago, that went all the way down the Mississippi river and was presumed lost, until, years later survivors of the party returned to tell of a voyage to a place, across a big body of water, where there were tiny men whose bodies were completely covered with hair. Dakota interpret these men as monkeys, and that the canoe party made it to Central or South America.

³For positive exposure in Minnesota public television, see the following video programs: Twin Cities Public Television (2019); Pioneer Public TV (2014).

⁴In Pacific literature proper, the intellectual precedence is typically identified as an “oceanic imaginary” credited to the pioneering work of Samoan writer and historian, Albert Wendt (Teaiwa 2010, 731).

⁵For a counterhistory that privileges and demonstrates indigenous spatial and temporal “explorations” by Kanaka Maoli, see David Chang (2016).

⁶For a fuller elaboration of Tongan conceptions of time-space, see Tevita Ka'ili (2017).

⁷This sense of contraction is my homage to my Filipino *tukayo* namesake and mentor, Vicente Rafael, in his pioneering book, *Contracting Colonialism*, first published in 1988.

⁸See Diaz (in press, 2016a, 2016b, 2018b).

⁹For a critical analysis of the subordination of indigenous perspectives at the level of narrative and rhetorical structure in Disney's *Moana*, see Anjirbag (2018).

¹⁰For critical work that unsettles settler colonial discourse by reclaiming indigenous water relations in the Great Plains, see the work of Métis scholar Zoe Todd (2018).

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SACRED GEOPOLITICS: LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN GERMAN SAMOA DURING NEW ZEALAND'S INVASION

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THIS ARTICLE TRACES THE CONNECTIONS IN GERMAN SAMOA BETWEEN MISSIONARIES FROM THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (LDS), Samoan Latter-Day Saints, and the colonial regimes in Samoa, 1900–1920. Latter-Day Saint missionaries largely omitted remarkable geopolitical events, such as New Zealand's invasion and a devastating influenza epidemic, from news reports written for audiences in the United States.

The underlying cause for this silence was reterritorializations in Utah and Samoa. By the 1890s, the church in general began adapting to American norms in recognition of the federal government's sovereignty in Utah. By the turn of the century, Samoa was annexed by Germany and America. The LDS Samoan Mission became adept at navigating the local political geographies, illustrated by greater discursive discipline. Furthermore, the mission decreased its usage of Lamanite to describe Pacific Islanders. This article expands scholarship of Mormon history, Colonial Samoa history, and the geopolitics of religion.

Introduction

With respect to the old-time customs and habits which are difficult to eradicate, we may depend upon time and gradual weaning to produce an entirely different idealized race of people.

—President of the Latter-Day Saint Samoan Mission
(Adams 1911: 233–34).

New Zealand infantrymen nervously eyed the Samoan coast from their transport ships, searching for signs of life. World War I erupted and New Zealand was poised to seize German Samoa. Many New Zealand troops were eager to fight, and New Zealand officials were eager for an empire (Condliffe 1930). The troops understood they would have combat if the Germans refused to surrender. The Germans responded ambiguously. They would not accept the terms of surrender but would offer no resistance. The troops landed on Samoan shores without shots fired, the first time New Zealand occupied foreign soil (Field 1984, 2006; McGibbon 2014).

By 1914, friction between imperialist nations in Europe exploded, spurring global conflict. The German administration in Samoa had built a wireless radio station on Upolu, giving the island group strategic value. With the outbreak of open warfare, British diplomats requested imperialistically ambitious New Zealanders to seize German Samoa. The New Zealand government was happy to oblige and plans for invasion were drafted (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2014; McGibbon 2014).

Over 1,300 armed men landed on the shores of Upolu. This moment was a tremendous rupture in Samoa's colonial history. The seizure of the islands of Upolu and Savai'i introduced a new-era of Samoan history, ending Germany's short colonial rule and the beginning of New Zealand's ill-fated rule of Western Samoa. Scholars have written much about Colonial Samoa, especially about the anti-colonial Mau movement of the 1920s (Parr 1979; Field 1984, 2006; Campbell 1999, 2005, 2009). Several scholars have written extensive histories of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) missionary efforts in Samoa (Britsch 1977, 1986; Baldrige 1978; Harris and Adair 1983; Harris 1988). Possibly only two scholars explicitly contextualize the religious sphere within the geopolitical dynamics of Colonial Samoa, tracing the connections between Christian missionaries, Samoan congregants, the anti-colonial Mau movement, and the colonial administrations (Liua'ana 2004; Beatty 2014). This article critically assesses the connection between the LDS Samoan Mission and the German regime, including New Zealand's seizure of Savai'i and Upolu in Samoa.

I make three arguments. First, the LDS Samoan Mission as an institution became adept at navigating shifts in local political geographies during the early-twentieth century. This is illustrated by discursive discipline in Latter-Day Saint media coverage of Samoa, which was largely denude of geopolitical commentary, despite momentous geopolitical events during those years. Second, unlike the LDS Samoan Mission during the 1890s, the Latter-Day Saint media coverage during the early twentieth century was both explicitly and implicitly supportive of colonialism in Samoa. Third, the LDS Samoan Mission during the early twentieth century broke with a common tradition among Latter-Day Saints during the nineteenth century of employing a "religious geography" contingent on understanding Pacific Islanders as Lamanites, a group of people found in

the Book of Mormon. This religious geography resulted in unique interactions between Latter-Day Saint missionaries and Pacific Islanders (Maffly-Kipp 2008, 135). This may be one factor contributing to the LDS Samoan Mission's condemnations of imperialism in Samoa during the 1890s (Lee 1899b; Wood 1899). During the early twentieth century, however, Latter-Day Saints in Samoa typically employed identity categories common to colonial discourse and geographic determinism to conceptualize Samoan Latter-Day Saints. This includes notions of "tropical laziness" and hints of social engineering a "different idealized race of people" in Samoa (Adams 1911: 232–34).

These shifts within the Samoan LDS Mission were spurred by reterritorializations operating on multiple scales, predominantly occurring at two sites: the Great Basin region—home of Zion—in the American west, and the Samoan Islands themselves. The history of the LDS Church is marred by persecution, hardship, assassination, and even state-sanctioned extermination (Johnson 1993; Blake 1994; Garr 2009). Largely to escape persecution as well as establish the Kingdom of God as a physical entity on Earth, the Saints fled to Utah Territory and created a distinct cultural and political enclave on the periphery of Washington's influence and sovereignty (Hansen 1992: 221–46; Meinig 1996: 33–51; Mason 2011: 349–75; Yorgason and Chen 2008: 478–500).

By the 1890s, the LDS Church in general began tempering much of the fiery rhetoric characterizing previous prophets (Barlow 1999, 148) and restricted practices deemed abhorrent to the sensibilities of most Americans, such as polygamy. Although polygamy is typically considered the catalyst for Americans' disdain for the church, it seems more plausible this disdain was fueled by fears Zion undermined US sovereignty and the expansion of the American empire (Hansen 1966: 63–84; Meinig 1996: 34–35). By the turn of the century, the church relinquished the practice of "selective pacifism" (Quinn 1974, 365), applied the concept of "theodemocracy" exclusively to ecclesiastical government (Mason 2011: 361–62), witnessed the demise of a "Mormon nationalism" (Hansen 1966, 81), and conceded the American nation-state as the "appropriate geopolitical actor" (Yorgason and Chen 2008, 481). The church was enveloped by the expansion of the US federal government and began encouraging greater assimilation within American society.

Also, by the turn of the century, imperial ambitions and political turmoil spurred reterritorializations in Samoa, as Upolu and Savaii became German Samoa and Tutuila became American Samoa. This history will be described in greater detail later in this article. For now, it is important to emphasize it became prudent for Latter-Day Saint missionaries to adapt to the shifting geopolitical terrain, develop ties with colonial administrations, and restrict public discourse critical of those administrations. Unfortunately, the Samoa Mission Manuscript History and Historical Reports collection becomes strikingly sporadic after

1900, leaving us to extrapolate the precise logic prompting these shifts on a local scale.

The decreasing usage of Lamanite as an identity category by Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa in the early twentieth century should be understood as part of a larger discussion about genealogy and the Book of Mormon by church members and officials. Historically, Latter-Day Saints often considered certain communities to be descendants of Lamanites. John-Charles Duffy describes two different perspectives on Lamanites:

Borrowing terms used to describe different models for Book of Mormon geography, I speak of “hemispheric” and “limited” Lamanite identification. Hemispheric Lamanite identification is the teaching that native peoples throughout North and South America—often the Pacific Islands as well—are direct blood-descendants of ancient Book of Mormon peoples. Limited Lamanite identification is the more recent contention that the descendants of Lehi—the father of the Book of Mormon peoples—consisted of a small colony . . . who were eventually absorbed into existing populations (Duffy 2008, 121).

Duffy writes that 1890–1946, hemispheric Lamanite identification was still used to explain Church growth in Latin American and Oceania, though Church leaders began adding more nuance to this concept to reconcile tensions with “scientific discourse about the origins of the peoples whom Mormons called Lamanites” (Duffy 2008: 131–32). However, Duffy argues that despite the momentous shifts in the Church during the 1890s, the usage of hemispheric Lamanite persisted well into the twentieth century (Duffy 2008, 131). Samoa is somewhat of an outlier, with Latter-Day Saint missionaries there decreasing their usage of the term Lamanite in public discourse during the early twentieth century.

The remainder of this article consists of four sections. The next section theorizes colonial religious geopolitics. The second section examines the interconnections between the German Samoan colonial regime, the LDS Samoan Mission and Samoan Latter-Day Saints. The third assesses how the LDS Samoan Mission portrayed tragic events following New Zealand’s invasion. The fourth section is the conclusion, which outlines this article’s implications for Mormon history, Colonial Samoa history and the geopolitics of religion, suggesting future directions for research.

Theorizing Colonial Geopolitics of Religion

The story of the LDS Church provides a lens to examine broader dimensions of the geopolitics of religion and Western imperialism. The precocious ambition

of the LDS Church to expand internationally resulted in Latter-Day Saint missionaries proselytizing on imperial frontlines globally. Before analyzing the Latter-Day Saint experience in German Samoa, it is necessary to situate this article within relevant literature on the geography of empire and geopolitics of religion.

Racialization of Colonial Subjects

Many scholars have theorized imperialism, some using the United States' first imperial forays as a case study. Although this article focuses on the colonial regimes of Germany and New Zealand, it should be remembered the US annexed Tutuila as American Samoa in 1900, eliciting mixed feelings among Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa (Beatty 2014). Furthermore, the concepts drawn from analyzing US imperialism are applicable to this topic.

Several scholars emphasize the conceptual incoherence of empire, accentuating nodes of power and areas of anomaly rather than homogenized territorial spaces (Ogborn 2000: 43–69; Kaplan 2009, 14; Benton 2010, 2; Kramer 2011, 1,350). Others focus on the creation of identity categories involving race, place, and climate (Livingstone 1994: 132–54). Notions of a climate “moral economy” and white acclimatization to tropical places furnished colonial geopolitics where racial identity was a consequence of global location. This discursive creation of racial identity categories employed scientific language (Livingstone 1994, 154). Rothenberg's (1994: 155–72) analysis of *National Geographic* illustrates how popular media discursively othered non-Western communities experiencing colonialism. Relatedly, Tuason's (1999, 9, 45) study of *National Geographic*'s 1898–1908 demonstrates the magazine depicted the brutal US invasion of the Philippines as a messianic mission of civilization. The LDS Samoan Mission's public discourse during the early twentieth century exemplifies these processes. Latter-Day Saint missionaries employed scientific language to create racial identity categories in popular Mormon media, sometimes representing the LDS Samoan Mission as a mission of civilization.

Geopolitics of Religion

Scholars are increasingly interested in the connection between religion and geopolitics (Yorgason and Robertson 2006, 272; Dittmer 2007, 737). The early years of the LDS Church are a prime example of this connection (Yorgason and Chen 2008: 480–81). Yorgason (2010, 52, 68) contends that, although evangelicals emphasize the role of the United States in their eschatology, Mormonism takes this idea further with a belief a New Jerusalem will rise in America. Latter-Day Saints sought to create a unique geographic space within the US, a

process referred to as a gathering to Zion (Meinig 1965: 191–220; 1998: 104–08; Yorgason and Robertson 2006, 260). Geographer Meinig describes the resulting conflict with other people, writing “the fundamental issue was geopolitical: the control of territory and the character of society therein” (1996, 40). This gathering effort operated at multiple scales, including locally in Samoa (Baldrige 1978, 168; Britsch 1986, 375, 380).

Evangelization projects often include employing pseudo-science to construct identities of target communities (Han 2010, 192). Similarly, LDS Church discourse often included pseudo-scientific debates on the origins of Pacific Islanders. This produced a sacred genealogy, inserting Pacific Islanders into the category “Lamanite” and the Book of Mormon (Maffly-Kipp 2008: 123–41). During the nineteenth century, several Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa contended Polynesians were descendants of Lamanites (Lee 1899a, 337; 1900, 185). An article written by Mission President John Q. Adams to *Improvement Era* illustrates the category of Lamanite was still used during the early twentieth century in certain contexts, such as tragedy (Adams 1911, 237). However, by this time, it seems Samoans were not strictly considered Lamanite, possibly minimizing Latter-Day Saint sympathy for victims of colonialism. Missionaries’ lack of sympathy for victims of German and New Zealand colonialism sharply contrasts some Latter-Day Saint missionaries in the 1890s who condemned Western imperialism in Samoa.

Disciplining Discourse

The media and public representations of geopolitical events play a vital role in constructing imaginings of colonial spaces. These events are encoded with meanings through structured communication (Hall 2008) intended for consumption in the metropole. Jackson argues elites use ideology and language to reify power (1989, 53), a dynamic especially present in colonies. Foucault’s notion that discourse is controlled, selected, organized and distributed is well known (Foucault 1972, 216).

During the 1890s, some Latter-Day Saints condemned British, German, and US imperial aggression in Samoa (Lee 1899b; Wood 1899). This moral outrage toward imperialists is especially poignant considering Zion and the LDS Church became victims of US expansionism in the American West during and following the Utah War. It also illustrates the embryonic nature of the LDS Samoan Mission during the 1890s. By the early twentieth century, the mission was adept at controlling discourse and relaying structured communications of events in Samoa to audiences in the United States. Gee writes that discourses are ways of displaying membership in a particular group (Gee 1990, 142). By disciplining discourse and distilling critiques of colonialism, the LDS Samoan

Mission displayed membership (Gee 1990, 142) in the colonial elite of Samoa and reflected a larger transformation to reconcile with American society following a troubled past (Hansen 1966: 63–84; Quinn 1974: 365–66; Alexander 1986; Barlow 1999: 140–53; Yorgason and Robertson 2006: 256–79; Yorgason and Chen 2008: 478–500; Mason 2011: 49–375).

Latter-Day Saints in German Samoa and American Samoa

The LDS Church is based on Mormonism, an American religion, and was founded by the Prophet Joseph Smith in upstate New York in 1830. A geographic lens is critical for understanding the history of the church. Philip Barlow writes, “Mormonism’s essence is religious, but geography has always conditioned the religion. . . . Those hoping to comprehend religion . . . ignore geography at their peril” (1999, 140). Several practices among Latter-Day Saints drew the ire of Americans (Meinig 1996, 51). Although polygamy is often thought to be the catalyst for this ire, the core issues were the political dominance of the church and attempts to construct the literal Kingdom of God on Earth (Hansen 1966: 63–84). Their drives to gather resulted in bustling Mormon communities in Missouri and Illinois, further alarming their neighbors. This resulted in state-sanctioned persecution, including the assassination of Joseph Smith, prompting them to flee to Utah Territory under the guidance of Prophet Brigham Young (Hartley 1976; Johnson 1993; Thomas 2005). Both prophets exhibited immense talent for organization and mobilizing large numbers of people, perhaps best exemplified by Brigham Young’s leadership during the migration westward. When the Saints arrived in the Great Basin, they began building Zion. Brigham Young and the Latter-Day Saints soon eyed outward expansion. With the relative stability offered by distance from their persecutors, their organizational prowess and proselytizing ambitions flourished (Bartlow 1999: 145–46). However, Zion succumbed to US sovereignty when federal troops marched west to crush a “Mormon rebellion” in 1857 and federal pressure to end polygamy increased in subsequent decades (MacKinnon 2003: 186–248; 2007: 43–81; 2008: 226–60; 2012: 1–21; Fleek 2006: 81–106; Turley 2007).

Hawaiian Latter-Day Saint missionaries Kimo Pelio and Samuela Manoa unofficially founded the LDS Samoan Mission in 1863 (Harris and Adair 1983, 2; Britsch 1986, 350). For decades, the LDS Church was unaware these devout missionaries labored in Samoa. This was largely because of the chaos caused by the Utah War as well as the misadventures of the infamous, yet fascinating Walter Murray Gibson (Jenson 1900a: 5–13; 1900b: 86–95; Adler 1986). The LDS Samoan Mission was formally founded in 1888, by which time Elder Pelio was already dead (Harris and Adair 1983: 2–3; Harris 1988: 8–9).

The 1890s was a tumultuous decade in Samoa, as three separate imperialist states—England, Germany, and the United States—all manipulated the internal politics of the island group. This manipulation resulted in civil war, allowing proxy warfare between the Western aggressors. In 1899–1900, the United States annexed Tutuila as American Samoa, whereas Germany annexed Upolu and Savai'i as German Samoa. Latter-Day Saint missionaries unexpectedly found themselves amidst this maelstrom, witnessing the carnage of war and receiving threats of death (Lee 1899b; Millennial Star 1899; Britsch 1986, 356). A prominent Latter-Day Saint publicly denounced the Westerners and implied his colleagues felt similarly through publications in *Improvement Era*, a periodical affiliated with the LDS Church (Lee 1899b; Beatty 2014). By the early twentieth century, this voice of dissent dissipated, replaced by tacit acceptance of colonialism in both American and German Samoa.

One would think the sight of warships appearing on the horizon, 1,300 armed men landing on the shores of Upolu, the arrest of the German administrator, and the raising of a foreign flag in Samoa would have made a profound impression on observers. The fact that Latter-Day Saint news articles and personal journal entries largely omit New Zealand's invasion is astonishing.

This ear shattering silence signposts an acute break with the earlier years of the LDS Samoan Mission. By 1914, the LDS Samoan Mission had become a firmly established institution within the social fabric of the Samoan Islands. Although German Administrator Wilhelm Solf was not friendly with Latter-Day Saints, the LDS Samoan Mission was tacitly accepted. The German order banning English-language schools greatly hindered the efforts of the Samoan Mission, and apparently the Latter-Day Saints felt “singled out” and “persecuted” (Britsch 1986: 371–72). Despite this, the order that classes be taught in the German language was applicable to all the Christian missions in Western Samoa, not only the LDS Samoan Mission. Simultaneously, the mission began to associate more closely with the colonial regimes. This is reflective of both the larger shift in the LDS church thought following the 1890s as well as a strategy of self-preservation in German Samoa.

The number of LDS Samoan Mission authored publications in *Improvement Era* and other periodicals sharply decreased during these years. Furthermore, the content of this correspondence was politically benign, ignoring geopolitical events of tremendous importance to Samoa, such as New Zealand's invasion. The Latter-Day Saints seemed preoccupied with the expansion of the LDS Samoan Mission. One new feature of the development of the LDS Samoan Mission was gathering Samoan Latter-Day Saints into special purpose LDS villages. The politicized accounts of current events disappeared from the Latter-Day Saint discourse under the German regime.

The nature of the German regime, 1900–14, is debated by scholars. Field (1984) spares scant space for the German regime in his research, focusing instead on the inept and possibly criminal failures of the subsequent New Zealand regime. He argues Germany was more capable than New Zealand in ruling Samoa because of Germany's colonial experience. Field concedes, "Solf had a heavily paternalistic attitude towards the Samoans, even if he did have a greater understanding of their culture than other Germans" (Field 1984, 29). Campbell challenges this relatively benevolent view of Germany, arguing Solf's only contribution to welfare in German Samoa was to bring peace, disarm the population, and to establish the Land and Titles Court to eliminate causes for conflict (Campbell 2005, 52). Solf's philosophy and style of rule is indicated by his summation of notions on the "Right relationship between officials and Samoans:"

The Samoan mores, customs, and legal usages need to be further studied. What's good needs to be retained and eventually integrated with our customs and practices. The bad, barbaric and dumb has [*sic*] to be excised (Solf 2010, 103).

Solf's administration sought to eliminate Samoan political power and to stabilize German Samoa after years of violence and chaos. His success was largely contingent on his political knack for pushing his agenda in gradual, almost imperceptible ways, yet with profound consequences for Samoans. However, there was one significant threat to his rule, Mau a le Pule (the opposition movement in Savai'i) (Field 1984, 30).

Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe issued a challenge to Solf with the simple statement: "We are *Tumua* and *Pule*, we are the rulers of Samoa" (Field 1984, 29). In response Solf created the Fono a Faipule, an advisory group holding no real power (Field 1984, 30). Lauaki organized his own fono, the Mau a le Pule, based in Savai'i, directly challenging the German regime. The imperialists used gunboat diplomacy to reify Western power. The arrival of the warships *Leipzig*, *Arizona*, and *Jaguar* intimidated the Mau but did not crush it (Germany and the Mau). Solf ordered Lauaki and some of his key supporters to surrender within eight days. The Mau refused and fled to the jungle. It seems Christian missionaries convinced the majority of Lauaki's supporters to surrender (Germany and the Mau). With his forces diminished, Lauaki and his closest supporters surrendered. Solf exiled them to Saipan, where Lauaki later died (Field 1984, 30). Samoa's first Mau was defeated through a collusion of warship diplomacy, Solf's administrative skills and the authority enjoyed by a group of unknown Christian missionaries. A more robust Mau emerged to challenge New Zealand and American rule in the 1920s. It is unclear which missionaries urged Lauaki

to surrender. Their actions reveal the Western Christian missionaries generally sided with the imperialists. Consequently, the Latter-Day Saint missionaries of the late nineteenth century were unique. Although no records suggest they supported the Mau of the early twentieth century, their outspoken condemnation of imperialism in Samoa during the late nineteenth century was anomalous. I contend two predominant factors prompted some Latter-Day Saints to sympathize with Samoans during the 1890s. First, they conceptualized Samoans largely as Lamanites, people of the Book of Mormon. Second, they were simply moral individuals disturbed by the injustices of imperialism.

Other than the Lauaki led rebellion, the period following the annexation of Samoa was relatively stable. No longer precariously fighting for survival amidst chaos, the LDS Samoan Mission embarked on a process of expansion and gathering the Samoan Latter-Day Saints. Latter-Day Saint missionaries began turning their attention to regions neglected during the violent 1890s. They established several LDS branches on Savai'i, building a meeting house in Tuasivi. However, in 1910, the German Administration confiscated the land and dynamited most of the structures built there (Harris and Adair 1983, 25). One would think this bombing of LDS Mission buildings by the colonial regime would have warranted some sort of reaction within the LDS news correspondence, but I was unable to find any. With the political chaos of the nineteenth century a distant memory, the LDS Church was organized in Samoa on a much larger scale. Between 1900 and 1920, twenty-three new branches were established in the Samoan Islands.

This work transcended merely proselytizing among Samoans but involved much labor, literally building villages, mission homes, chapels, meeting houses, schools, and plantations. The plantations were destined to play a controversial role in the LDS Samoan Mission, whereas the schools were to play a crucial role augmenting the membership of the LDS Church. In April 1902, Mission President Joseph H. Merrill received news from Salt Lake City. Several German Latter-Day Saints were enroute to teach German to Samoan Latter-Day Saints (Britsch 1986: 373–74). After several years however, the German speaking Latter-Day Saint missionaries failed to meet Solf's standards, and the schools were disbanded. Consequently, the English-speaking Latter-Day Saints were expected to learn Samoan to teach in their schools.

Around the turn of the century, the Latter-Day Saint missionaries began gathering the Samoan Latter-Day Saints in villages set aside for the sole occupation of members of the church. As early as the close of the nineteenth century, Samoan Latter-Day Saints began gathering in Faleniu, Upolu (Britsch 1986, 375). By 1903, it was decided there should be two gathering locations, one in German Samoa and one in American Samoa. Mapusaga, Tutuila was designated the gathering spot in American Samoa, whereas

Sauniatu, Upolu was designated in German Samoa. Sauniatu was purchased from the German firm Deutschen Handels und Plantagen-Gesellschaft (Baldrige 1978, 168).

The dynamics of hierarchy complicated the social environment on the LDS special purpose villages. Like the American, German, and New Zealand colonial regimes, the LDS Samoan Mission, on a micro-level scale, attempted to reconcile *fa'a Samoa* (Samoan way) with Western notions of power relations. One specific conflict experienced in Sauniatu involved the *fa'a Samoa* concept of respect for elders. Despite this, Samoan Latter-Day Saints in the special purpose villages were expected to submit to the authority of American missionaries, although the missionaries were significantly younger than many of the Samoan Latter-Day Saints (Baldrige 1978: 178–79). Several instances of conflict and insubordination occurred in Sauniatu. In 1917, under New Zealand rule, a “minor challenge to mission authority” was confronted by Mission President Ernest Wright (Baldrige 1978, 179). A minor disagreement in 1920 turned into a fight. A Latter-Day Saint missionary records, “Our first fight up here but we won out. . . .” Baldrige points out, “In spite of the implications of the word ‘fight’, the confrontation was probably vocal only, not physical” (Baldrige 1978, 180). At times, a conflict in Sauniatu became so acute that the Latter-Day Saint missionaries felt it necessary to call for the aid of the colonial police. Although Latter-Day Saints experienced danger in Colonial Samoa, it was not common during the twentieth century. Consequently, mission complicity with the colonial regimes was largely shaped by two factors. First, it was part of a political strategy to navigate a tumultuous, foreign geopolitical landscape. Second, it reflected larger shifts in the church following the 1890s to submit to US sovereignty and operate within the formal nation-state system.

Only a year after the village was founded, a group of Samoan Latter-Day Saints became angry with Felix Baird. After clearing land one day, they accused the missionaries of “making slaves out of them” (Baldrige 1978, 179). Approximately eleven years later, in the same village of Sauniatu, the same allegation was made against Earl Stanley Paul. Some village men wanted to play a game of cricket against a group of men from another village. Paul recounts:

I told them they couldn't go on Wednesday but if they wanted they could have them come up here, or they could go down there on Saturday. Some of the men said they were slaves and they talked kind of sorrey [sic] to us. After talking to them . . . we got them to feeling better (Paul 1912–15: 192–93).

American missionaries and Samoans were suddenly thrust into new hierarchical relationships manufactured by the gathering process. This set the stage

for greater violence and conflict between missionaries and Samoan Saints in the 1920s (Stone 1929; Baldrige 1978: 185–86; Beatty 2014).

Historian R. Carl Harris concedes the plantations within the Samoan Mission may seem controversial but argues they were not created for accruing capital. The income generated through plantations was used for the cost of the mission schools and other social functions. The profit was insufficient to offset the expenditures in Samoa, which were covered by tithes from Latter-Day Saints globally (Harris and Adair 1983, 41). According to one Samoan Latter-Day Saint account, the plantation in Sauniatu seemed collectively owned. All the Latter-Day Saints worked the land, and all had access to the fruits of their labor (Fonoimoana and Fonoimoana 1979).

Despite this, there were instances when tension stemming from the newly implemented hierarchical relationship between the Latter-Day Saints from America and Samoan Latter-Day Saints erupted into open conflict. By 1910, there was an ideological shift in the way Latter-Day Saints from the United States conceived their role as missionaries. As the LDS Samoan Mission became an established institution, the objectives transcended merely proselytizing among Samoans to augment the number of church members to actively altering the social and economic landscape through the special purpose villages. This concept of gathering Latter-Day Saints into centralized locations had been practiced in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. Under the direction of President Brigham Young, Latter-Day Saints founded special purpose villages throughout Utah. Many of these villages were collectively operated and the products of labor equally distributed. The Great Basin region was considered Zion, the epicenter of this gathering. Gathering Latter-Day Saints in Samoa was merely an extension of this process.

The Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa may have considered other factors when contemplating the gathering drive. Christian missions in Samoa were exceedingly competitive. Furthermore, it seems the other denominations in the islands seemed to especially despise the efforts of Latter-Day Saints. Rumors circulated in Samoa that Solf suddenly decided the LDS Samoan Mission should be driven from his domain (Tangreen 1910: 1133–34). Latter-Day Saint missionaries were convinced the rumor was invented by missionaries from competing denominations to intimidate Samoans wishing to convert to the LDS Church. According to one article published in 1910, some ministers from other denominations went so far as demanding Samoans make an oath to God that members of their *aiga* (extended family) would not join the Latter-Day Saints (Tangreen 1910, 1134). If a Samoan broke this oath, they were exiled from the community, a practice beginning in the nineteenth century (Dimond and Barrus 1894; Burnham 1895). One Latter-Day Saint missionary claimed Samoans were fearful to convert, writing:

. . . only through the law of the town have they put off being initiated into the fold of the True Shephard. We find this to be the case in a great many villages, for many would like to join us but are afraid if they should do so their houses would be burned, the property confiscated and themselves driven from the town. The highest chiefs of every town can do about as they please . . . (Burnham 1895).

A Samoan contemplating joining the Latter-Day Saints was oftentimes forced to decide between the aiga and the church, tradition, and personal faith. The process of gathering Samoan Latter-Day Saints on special purpose villages removed them from the influence of rival missionaries and from Western culture, which was perceived as laden with vices deleterious to Samoan morality. More important, these villages served as a new life, a new community, and a new set of norms for those Samoan Latter-Day Saints shunned by the aiga. However, gathering Samoan Latter-Day Saints led some Samoan members of the church to renounce their membership, sometimes in groups (Britsch 1986, 380). Britsch describes this challenge:

But the growth of Sauniatu and Mapusaga brought serious problems to the mission. There was a falling away among those members who did not want to gather at the Mormon colonies. . . . From mid-1905 on, for the next year or so, it was not unusual to see entries in the mission record to the effect that 12, 38, 110, or some other number of people had asked their names removed from the record of the Church. A number of members preferred to renounce all allegiance with the Church rather than leave their ancestral homes and lands (Britsch 1986, 380).

Despite these challenges, the continued growth of the LDS Samoan Mission afforded by greater political stability in the islands prompted the gathering process, which periodically created tensions between Samoan Saints and Latter-Day Saint missionaries. Simultaneously, Latter-Day Saint missionaries began to see it their duty to encourage Samoan Latter-Day Saints to not only embrace the LDS Church but also Westernized culture. At least this was the message conveyed by President John Q. Adams through public discourse. Samoan Latter-Day Saints were encouraged through hard labor.

Although the colonial regimes desperately sought to fill the vacuous labor shortage in Samoa attributable to Samoan abhorrence to working for wages, the Christian missions were the benefactors of a seemingly tireless Samoan labor force. A report from 1919 reveals Samoans produced 50 percent of the total copra production on private land in the Samoan Islands (Dalton 1919, 21).

German plantations, namely the Deutsche Handels Und Plantagen Gessellschaft (DHPG), accounted for most of the remaining 50-percent of the total copra production. To promote productivity, the German regime exempted the plantation owners from taxes (Dalton 1919, 5). The DHPG firm owned around 56,000 acres of land in Upolu, 9,000 of which were used for copra production, the rest consisting of wild bush terrain. The three main plantations on Upolu owned by DHPG were Mulifanua, Vaitele, and Vaiele. Around 16,500 acres of Upolu land were owned by Britons, Americans and other *papalagi* (foreigners) bringing the total acreage of land in Upolu owned by *papalagi* to around 72,500 acres. The German regime implemented strict criteria for purchasing land from Samoans. This included guaranteeing a Samoan selling land still owned enough after the sale to produce crops for the family. Also, an individual Samoan was prohibited from selling any land that other Samoans may hold claim to (Dalton 1919, 34). Considering the collective nature of land ownership among the *aiga*, meeting these criteria proved exceptionally difficult.

To combat the labor shortage in German Samoa, the regime imported Chinese workers. The first Chinese arrived from Shantou in 1903 (Field 1984, 27). By World War I, 2,184 Chinese and 870 Solomon Islanders worked the plantations in Samoa (Dalton 1919, 21; Field 1984, 28). The treatment of Chinese laborers in German Samoa was notoriously poor. There were numerous reports of inadequate medical treatment, meager food, forced labor, wage cutting, and floggings (Field 1984: 27–28). As mentioned above, the Christian missions enjoyed a seemingly tireless and generous Samoan population. New Zealand Trade Commissioner R. W. Dalton reported in 1919:

The extent to which the Samoans can be induced to give money (and incidentally, to work to get money to give) for religious purposes is remarkable. This is particularly true proved by their attitude toward the missionaries and their keenness in raising money for the erection of churches and other religious purposes (Dalton 1919, 31).

Three factors explain the tension between Samoan willingness to labor for Christian missionaries and disdain for laboring on plantations. First, most Samoans were stalwart Christians. Second, colonial laws on land-alienation mitigated the growth of a landless-class of Samoans forced to sell their labor. Third, *fa'aSamoa* fostered a pride in culture at odds with selling labor to foreigners. Furthermore, *fa'aSamoa* provided an economic safety net for Samoans.

Anecdotes of Samoan dedication to Mormonism and Samoan resistance to Latter-Day Saint authority demonstrate the complex relationship between the LDS Samoan Mission, Samoan Latter-Day Saints, and the colonial regimes. Furthermore, it exemplifies the complications of reconciling Western hierarchy

with fa'a Samoa. It is impossible to generalize the subjectivities of all parties involved. Sometimes Samoan Saints rebelled against missionary authority; other times, their loyalty to the church was unquestionable. However, one historical element seems certain; Samoan Latter-Day Saint resistance often correlated with the prominence of the anti-colonial Mau (Beatty 2014). A disturbing account of a special purpose village in American Samoa reveals both the intense dedication Samoan Latter-Day Saints exhibited towards the LDS Samoa Mission as well as a shift in the role of the Latter-Day Saint missionaries.

In 1911, President Adams of the LDS Samoan Mission, wrote an article for the *Improvement Era*, detailing the founding of special purpose village Mapusaga. The article implies a new role for the LDS Mission within Colonial Samoa. Adams writes the “practical, forceful system of training natives, have done much to raise the standard of intelligence of this island race to the requisite level of comprehending the meaning of life . . .” (Adams 1911, 231). This passage alone is laden with myriad concepts and terminology, which are divergent from the discourse articulated by Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa during the late nineteenth century. The term “forceful” conjures the image of a dominant Latter-Day Saint missionary acting upon a subordinate Samoan Latter-Day Saint. The usage of the term “natives” instead of Lamanites or Samoan “Saints,” which had often been used in previous decades is striking. The term native is rooted in the lexicon of colonialism in the Pacific and Samoan context. Adams does use the term Lamanite once toward the end of his article. The notion that Samoan Latter-Day Saints had failed to grasp the “meaning of life” before interaction with the LDS Church is a drastic example of ethnocentric justifications for colonialism in the Pacific.

According to Adams, the LDS Samoan Mission’s achievement of inculcating the true meaning of life among the Samoan Latter-Day Saints was contingent on their “combined school and colonization system . . .” (Adams 1911, 231). The Protestant Ethic was the remedy for the “tropical laziness” which Westerners claimed proliferated Samoa. Indeed, Adams continues, “one irrefutable fact must be implanted in the mind of the native, that no true happiness exists in an idle village.” Adams realized it took gradual time to “eradicate” customs and habits to “produce an entirely different idealized race of people.” According to President Adams’s logic, the LDS Samoan Mission not only existed to spread religion but also to engineer the perfect, idealized society of Samoans. Schools were seen as a crucial tool in this endeavor. Adams writes:

One sees the small, uncouth [Samoan] tot begin an uphill career in the school, his instinct telling him that Samoan ideals are in advance of all others, while his teacher and surrounding conditions *forcefully* proclaim the contrary. By degrees, as months mould themselves into years

... the once rough diamond takes on a polish of sort that most encourages the teacher, and in the semi-annual pilgrimage our school takes to Pago Pago, with a well prepared conference program to present before the *crew of the man of war* stationed there, the children are supremely happy in the light of the new life (Adams 1911, 237, italics added).

In Adams' mind, manufacturing the perfect Samoan "tot" began "forcefully" with the culturally sophisticated teacher, who inculcates civilization within the child's psyche. These children, social engineering marvels, were paraded before the American imperial forces in Pago Pago, a performance seemingly orchestrated to gain acceptance of the LDS Samoan Mission from the colonial rulers. Again, it was believed by Adams that a crucial element to manufacturing an idealized race was hard labor.

Describing the layout of Mapusaga, Adams writes the missionary house "looms up pretentiously from its elevated side" above the houses where Samoan Latter-Day Saints resided. He adds the LDS church building and schoolhouse also hold a commanding spot of ground. He writes an observer witnessing these large buildings

... is struck with astonishment to learn that the material for both of these large buildings ... was all carried up a narrow, stony, bushy trail, a distance of three miles, on the backs of school boys and girls. ... Tons of sand and lime-rock, boards, timbers, roofing iron, kegs of nails, barrels of cement, each weighing three hundred and sixty pounds . . . all find a secure resting place upon the calloused shoulders of *these children*, and all without complaint. . . . *Is it any wonder that the . . . [missionaries] learn to love them* (Adams 1911: 236–237, italics added).

Was it as horrendous as Adams boasts? There is reason to believe these "children" were teenagers or adults (Fonoimoana and Fonoimoana 1979, 8). For instance, a photo captioned "One of our Bright Young Boys" depicts an adult Samoan (Adams 1911, 235). Referring to adults as children correlates with a larger colonial discourse drenched in paternalism, ethnocentrism, and militarism. However, his earlier passage about a Samoan "tot" indicates children were present in the school and may have labored under these horrific conditions.

New Zealand's Invasion of Samoa

In August 1914, following the outbreak of World War I, Great Britain wired the New Zealand government requesting their armed forces seize German Samoa (Secretary of State 1914). The Germans previously built a radio wireless station

on Upolu, which connected to a transoceanic telegraph network in the Pacific (*Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 2010). Great Britain viewed this antenna as strategically important to seize. The New Zealand government responded, agreeing to the plan and requested naval support during the operation attributable to the possibility of German warships patrolling the area. Englishman Colonel Robert Logan was chosen to lead the force (Field 1984, 3). The invading force of 1,383 included infantry, engineers, two fifteen-pounders, two six-pounders, medical personnel, and assorted army service corps details (Governor of New Zealand 1914, 14). The troops voyaged to Samoa on two transport ships, *Moeraki* and *Monowai*, under the protection of the warships *Australia*, *Melbourne*, *Psyche*, and *Philomel* (Ibid., 14). The convoy stopped in Suva along the way. The Fijian governor supplied them with geographical information pertaining to Samoa. Also, upon the advice of a Reverend Father Fox, the convoy took on board eleven Samoans “of some standing” to facilitate the acceptance of New Zealand rule among the Samoans of Upolu and Savai’i (Logan 1914, 5).

Upon arrival at dawn in Apia Harbor 30 August, a New Zealand officer, under a flag of truce, delivered an ultimatum for surrender (Logan 1914; Field 2014). The New Zealand naval officers in the harbor heard the wireless station tuning up. Rear-Admiral Patey messaged the wireless operators to desist or they would be blown away by the gigantic guns of the warships. At 8:30 AM the next morning, the British flag was hoisted over Apia, and Solf was arrested. Upolu and Savai’i fell under New Zealand rule, and Western Samoa was invented.

New Zealand’s seizure of Samoa was barely mentioned within Latter-Day Saint media. The few references to New Zealand rule were retrospective, brief, and ambivalent. By the early twentieth century, political topics were excluded from the public discourse of Samoan Latter-Day Saint missionaries. The mission record is astonishingly sparse during the early twentieth century, the years following the colonial takeover. This is especially surprising since church historian Andrew Jenson visited Samoa in 1895 during his global journey to collect mission histories and instruct Latter-Day Saint missionaries on record keeping procedures (Neilson and Moffat 2012: 141–61). Baldridge writes the missionaries in Samoa “were given the responsibility of keeping a daily journal of events” (1978, 165). However, even private diaries largely omit political topics. One example is the diary of missionary Earl S. Paul, who arrived in Samoa December 30, 1912. A native of Rexburg, Idaho, Paul was consistent with journal entries (Paul 1912–15). However, there is a gap in his journal entries between March 23 and December 23, 1914, the summer of the New Zealand invasion of Western Samoa. It is perplexing that suddenly an entire section of the journal is missing, especially during the dates of the New Zealand invasion. This omission probably had much to do with his increased responsibilities in Sauniatu. It is also possible this section of the journal was damaged during Paul’s extensive

journeys on foot through Upolu. If the section was not damaged or removed, this clearly illustrates Paul lacked concern for geopolitical events. This silence is all the more astonishing vis-à-vis Baldrige's belief New Zealand troops marched through Sauniatu at some point following the invasion (Fonoimoana and Fonoimoana 1979, 11). One would think this event would be noteworthy enough to jot down in a diary. Frankly, I am perplexed by the omissions in Elder Paul's journal and the larger LDS Samoan Mission historical record.

Tragedy in Western Samoa

Colonel Logan faced grave challenges as soon as he landed in Upolu. Mason Mitchell, the US Consul to Apia, informed Logan there was a severe shortage of food in the islands (Logan 1914, 6). This shortage was probably attributable to the war, which altered the priorities of the German Empire as it geared for conflict. The indentured Chinese had been on short rations since the outbreak of war. European residents feared a Chinese uprising if rations were not increased, but only ten days of food remained for the Chinese. The explosive situation erupted in rebellion on September 1, two days after the New Zealand invasion. One hundred twenty Chinese rose against a German plantation owner, surrounding him in his house, only seven miles from Apia. New Zealand troops and "native police" suppressed the rebellion, and Logan decided Germans could retain their guns to defend their lives and property. Logan wrote he "found it necessary to allow the German planters to their arms for self-protection, considering it that we would run some risk in this direction rather than that a European family should be placed at the mercy of the Chinese . . . who, in my opinion, are a menace to the European population unless very carefully handled" (Logan 1914, 7). Unsurprisingly, Logan was willing to keep the German population armed rather than disrupt the social, economic and racial hierarchy in Western Samoa, despite a raging world war between England and Germany.

The labor question in Western Samoa was far from solved by this point. To the utter dismay of the papalagi, the Samoans could not be convinced to labor long hours for foreign capitalists. Consequently, the indentured Chinese were necessary for the profits of the plantation owners. However, many people in Western Samoa were uncomfortable with their presence in the islands. Samoan chiefs approached Logan and voiced their concern over the racial mixing of Samoans and Chinese, suggesting the indentured laborers be repatriated (Logan 1914, 7). The Chinese question weighed heavily on Logan. Field writes Logan "became almost obsessive about the Chinese" (Field 1984, 30). This obsession culminated in him promulgating Proclamation No. 42, which prohibited any Chinese laborer from entering any Samoan home (Field 1984, 31).

This concern over the interaction between the Samoans and the Chinese indentured laborers was not unique to New Zealand's rule of the islands. While travelling near Sauniatu during German rule, Paul and his two companions ran into indentured Chinese. Paul writes:

We run acrossed [*sic*] two chinamen [*sic*] they were on the opposite side of a creek than we were. They are not allowed in the village. So I told them to pelase [*sic*] go in Samoan. They didn't understand so I had to repeat two ore [*sic*] three times. One of them though [*sic*] we wanted him to carry us across the stream and he come a running we all the time telling him to go. . . . We finely [*sic*] made him understand. They are very polite little fellows but we have quite a time keeping them one (Paul 1912–15: 56–57)

It is unclear from Paul's entry why the Chinese were barred from the village and whether it was attributable to policy of the German regime or the LDS Samoan Mission. However, it is indicative of the segregationist environment of Colonial Samoa.

In 1918, with the end of a world war of unprecedented destruction and suffering in sight, influenza swept the Earth, with an estimated 15 million lives lost to the sickness globally (Field 1984, 34). This efficient killer claimed more lives than all of World War I. The devastation caused by the epidemic in Western Samoa is known as one of the most controversial events of New Zealand's rule of the islands. Influenza reached Western Samoa aboard the *Talune*, which arrived in Apia on November 7, 1918 (Field 1984, 37). Influenza was introduced to the vessel days earlier in Auckland. New Zealand officials in Western Samoa were aware an epidemic was sweeping the globe, but unaware it already reached New Zealand and could have possibly been on the *Talune*. In a cruel twist of fate, the letter informing the officials in Western Samoa that influenza was raging in Auckland was unopened and onboard the *Talune*, the very vessel carrying the deadly cargo. *Talune's* Captain John Mawson informed the port health inspector, Captain Frank Atkinson, all the passengers were healthy. The passengers disembarked before the letter was read by Logan.

Influenza ravaged the Samoan community, killing upward of 8,500 people, 22 percent of the population (Field 1984, 49). One stunning story about the epidemic involves a chief who succumbed to the sickness while visiting Apia. His village sent a longboat to retrieve the body, but none of the rowers returned home, all seventeen dying in Apia (Field 1984, 40). The New Zealand regime was completely unable to cope with the calamitous situation. Logan seemed on the verge of some sort of breakdown. He ordered no food be sent to London Missionary Society (LMS) School Papauta, although influenza was raging

throughout the all-girl population there. The LMS missionary in charge of the school, Elizabeth Moore, sent for some meat from Apia to make stew for the 150 gravely ill students. Logan was outraged by the request for food and visited Papauta to berate Moore. Field quotes Moore's account of the exchange as follows:

. . . he began . . . by saying in a voice which became louder and more angry, 'Miss Moore . . . I wish to inform you that no meat will be given you. . . . Send them food! I would rather see them burning in Hell! There is a dead horse at your gate-let them eat that! Great fat, lazy, loafing creatures. . . . Send them down to the public burial ground to dig graves! A disgrace to Christianity! I should like to see them all in Hell,' etc. etc. . . .

I told him I was trying at that moment to find any who were strong enough to bury their own dead, but he kept on, 'If you do not send me twenty-five of these girls to help dig graves, I will come back this afternoon and burn down the school' (Field 1984: 42–43).

New Zealand troops carried out the brunt of the mass burials, which was such a gruesome activity many could only stomach it while drinking whiskey. A Christian missionary protested the vast consumption of whiskey among the grave diggers. In response, Logan ordered the missionary to help with the burials. Later, he was seen swigging the bottle with the troops (Field 1984, 44). By this time, Paul had finished his first mission in Samoa (he was to again serve as a missionary in Samoa decades later) and gone to Europe to fight in the war. Ironically, while the influenza epidemic decimated the Samoan population, he fell ill with the sickness in Clermont-Ferrand, France as a soldier (Paul 1912–15, 106).

One of the most outrageous elements of the story of the epidemic in Western Samoa was Logan's refusal to allow doctors from American Samoa to help the sick. It is difficult to understand why he would make such a deadly decision, other than evidence he seems to have been truly unhinged from the stress. American Samoa was one of the few places on Earth that did not experience the epidemic. Logan's refusal of outside aid was criminal.

The Latter-Day Saint missionary media was silent about the epidemic with possibly only one known exception, an article written in 1920 by none other than Adams. He waits until the very last paragraph of the article to mention the epidemic and begins by writing, "One more paragraph and we our done" as if it were an afterthought. Despite this, Adams's account of the epidemic in Sauniatu

is moving and poignant. He writes from the perspective of himself returning to Sauniatu after a decade:

We note the absence of many a familiar face of a dozen years back, and are welcomed by but a handful of the original band of pioneers. . . . Crossing the river and gaining the graveyard, we are confronted abruptly by the reason written in tombs that dot the earth in little mounds of pebbles. . . . As the writer stood silently viewing the city of the departed, our most faithful Saint and veteran of the village since its inception, came to his side and pointed out the last resting place of this and that brother and sister or child who went down in the influenza epidemic a year ago, like grain before the sickle, some of them being buried in their own dooryards and others in whatever place they dropped dead. Heart rendering incidents were recounted in simple, touching style, and after a mental review of the horror and helplessness of it all, one is lost in wonder that even this remnant survived that we find. Strangely like old Chingagook of Cooper's tale, appeared our old Lamanite chieftain, Opapo, as he stood in that quaint native cemetery that day and swept his trembling arm from point to point—one of the links that connects the past of Sauniatu with its present (Adams 1920, 65).

Adams's account is heavily sympathetic with the Samoan Latter-Day Saints. Adams used the term "native" when referring to the Samoan Latter-Day Saints, a term solidified in the lexicon of colonialism, in his previous article from nine years earlier. It is noteworthy nine years later he refers to Opapo as a "Saint," implying recognition of a shared identity between the Latter-Day Saint missionaries and the Samoan Latter-Day Saints. Despite this, his account is starkly apolitical, omitting any perceived condemnations of the New Zealand regime. Although sympathetic with the pain and misery the Samoan community experienced, this passage tacitly affirms the allegiance of the LDS Samoan Mission to the contemporaneous status quo by ignoring the fact that colonialism contributed to the Samoans' pain and misery.

Conclusion

Between the years of 1900 and 1920, the LDS Samoan Mission became firmly established within Colonial Samoa. President Adams envisioned the mission's role to include replacing fa'aSamoa with Western norms and ideas. He saw Latter-Day Saint missionaries as colonizers, a role that spurred them to attack fa'aSamoa and to build Samoan Latter-Day Saint villages. Western missionaries

were at the apex of the hierarchical social relations within these villages. Gone from the consciousness of these Latter-Day Saint missionaries was the notion of a collective identity of oppression and alienation their predecessors from the 1890s shared. Instead of publicly defending an oppressed community, the Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa during the early twentieth century took a more accommodating stance toward the colonial regimes ruling the islands. Indeed, President Adams's notions of the role of the LDS Samoan Mission were largely congruent with the objectives of the colonial regimes in Samoa.

The shifts in the Samoan Mission were caused by reterritorializations in Samoa and Zion. In the 1890s, the church tempered its fiery rhetoric and restricted practices such as polygamy in an acknowledgement of US sovereignty of the Great Basin. Furthermore, reterritorializations in Samoa around the turn of the century prompted Latter-Day Saints to control public discourse and adapt to the new geopolitical terrain in the islands.

This article expands Mormon history, Colonial Samoan history, and the geopolitics of religion. It provides depth to Latter-Day Saint missionary histories by critically assessing their engagement with colonial projects in Samoa. It further expands scholarship on the religious dimension of Colonial Samoa history, which has largely been neglected. It provides nuance to theories on the geopolitics of religion, demonstrating that missionaries sometimes operated beyond simple colonial binaries. At times, Latter-Day Saint missionaries in Samoa cited religious geographies and Lamanite genealogy to conceptualize race and identity, problematizing shorthand binaries of colonizer/colonized, civilized/backward, Christian/pagan. Despite this, the LDS Samoan Mission seemed increasingly more inclined to support colonial projects in Samoa, resulting in notions of social engineering an idealized race of people.

Research on the dynamics between the LDS Samoan Mission and the anti-colonial Mau movement exists (Beatty 2014) but could be expanded. Furthermore, future research on the LDS Samoan Mission following the Mau movement of the 1920s as well as following Samoan independence in 1962 would broaden understandings of the religious dimension of Colonial Samoa history. Research into the Latter-Day Saint missionary experience in the larger Asia-Pacific region would expand Mormon history and theoretical understandings of the geopolitics of religion.

NOTES

1. For more on this debate, see Roper 2003; Murphy 2002; Southerton 2004; Sorenson Roper 2003; and Whiting 2003.

2. *Pule* were orators of Sava'i and *Tumua* orators from Upolu.

3. Field defines the *Fono* as “the meeting of councilors, or rulers.”

4. For one example, see Arrington 1954.

5. For narratives especially critical of the later arriving New Zealand colonial regime, see Field 1984, 2006. For different perspectives, see Campbell 1999, 2005, 2009. For the American colonial regime, see Chappell 2000.

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AMERICAN SĀMOAN LAND TENURE—APPORTIONMENT OF COMMUNAL LANDS AND THE ROAD TO INDIVIDUALLY OWNED LAND RIGHTS

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*When a village was established, the land in that village belonged to the people of that village. A mātai could claim land for his family or clan by clearing and then working it. Any land that was not under the direct “pule” of a mātai remained belonging to the people of the village. Paramount chiefs would have a more general control of larger areas. It is important to keep in mind that the power of a mātai was really defined not by title name, but by the land which he had control. Through this system, ownership of land from the mountain peak to the reef was defined among the various families, villages, and districts. *Leuma v. Willis*, LT 047-79, slip op. at 4 (Land and Titles Div. Dec. 16, 1980)*

PRIOR TO 1800, ALL LANDS IN AMERICAN SĀMOA WERE NATIVE LANDS (Crocombe 1987; 14–18). Native (communal) lands were identified not by boundary markers or survey pegs but as specific tracts of large, medium, and small lands collectively owned and controlled by the *āiga* (family) within a *nu'u* (village) and demarcated by settlement, cultivation, and virgin bush lands where the natural features of rivers and hills were understood as boundary land markers (Meleisea 1987: 1–6). Family clans, descendants of family lines, and successors to the *mātai* (chief) title have a direct interest in the communal lands, because they are what would be considered in the Western context

“part-owners” of communal lands. The powers and authority vested in mātai leadership over communal lands were (and are still currently) balanced between the state and local governance in the villages and districts. The senior mātai are stewards of the communal lands and serve the families by protecting the assets of the āiga.

The legal pathway to alienate native American Sāmoan lands from family clans and the *fa'amātai* (chiefly institution) began under the American Naval Administration by introducing adverse possession land rights in 1901. These USN Commandant-governors legally recognized “title” to real property to be lawfully acquired (without compensation or consent) by clearing a piece of land and occupying it for a given period. If someone lived on a property belonging to someone else without permission, known or unknown to the true owners, for a certain amount of time, the “squatters” could take a claim to the Naval Court to adversely possess the real property and take individual title to that property. USN Commandant-governors embraced adverse possession rights and allowed native lands to be disentangled from the family clans and village, then owned as “individually,” just by squatting (living there with or without permission; *Kaliopa v. Silao*, 2 A.S.R. 2d 1, 1983). The adverse land possession principle has created a judicial anomaly in the American Sāmoa land tenure system.

The Navy’s empire-building in American Sāmoa established American law and values, which in some cases overruled Sāmoan customs. Ultimately, US authority demonstrated how Western law would reign supreme when it became entangled with culture. The Navy’s power over the administration and adjudication of the introduced Western law, like principles of adverse land possession that require corroboration of testimony, perfectly supported the discourse of empire-building. The Naval Commandant not only was the commander of the Tutuila Naval Station but also the appointed governor and Naval Court Chief Judge. There was no separation of powers or checks and balances during the Naval Administration over American Sāmoa from 1900 to 1950. There were no executive or legislative branches. The US Constitution only partially followed the flag.

The Naval Administration instituted American property laws alongside the traditional Sāmoan land tenure system in American Sāmoa. Adverse land ownership rights were determined to be a milestone of enlightened Western jurisprudence for land issues where Sāmoan customary laws were deemed insufficient, without merit, and uncivilized. The application and usage of adverse possession rights in American Sāmoa allows an individual person to stake a claim to real property based upon various elements of land possession. Actual possession required that all claimants provide evidence through testimony and corroboration, hostile possession required physical occupancy over a requisite period, open and exclusive possession required conspicuous occupation that leaves no doubt regarding ownership by village residents, and notorious possession

required the opportunity for the true owner to learn that his supposed land has an adverse claim upon it (Kelley 1990, 26).

Anthropologist Walter Tiffany describes the Naval Court, when confronted with the difficulty of deciding between land claims premised on hearsay-based family traditions, decided in favor of who was on the land and awarded title according to the common law notion of adverse possession (Tiffany 1981: 136–53). Naval judges at the turn of the twentieth century were deeply concerned about foreign Sāmoans from German Sāmoa. Not just their presence in the newly minted only southern Pacific US territory but the influence of Germany and the Kaiser. The Navy's priority was to demarcate American Sāmoa as an American territory from the German influence and any land claims by Sāmoans in German Sāmoa. The introduction and incorporation of adverse possession rights to native lands are the building blocks of nationalistic empire building, cloaked as an instrument to civilize and standardize Sāmoan society. There was an imbalance between the “individual” versus Sāmoan communal concept by the Navy's emphasis of the individual's right to title. This preference corrodes communal lands available for Sāmoan community land tenure and threatens the fa'amātai (So'o 2007; Va'ai 1999). The apportionment of communal lands deteriorates the authority and power of the fa'amātai system within the village. In effect, this leaves less and less land over which the senior mātai have authority and power as stewards for the āiga.

The Navy preoccupied itself in strategic, military, and geopolitical positioning in the South Pacific region vis-à-vis American Sāmoa territory; thereby, their sole focus was to keep the resident Upolu mātai title holders from using their mātai titles to claim lands in American Sāmoa. No one bothered with the impacts that apportioning customary lands through adverse possession would have upon the communal land holdings—not to mention their natural resources and access to those resources to family clans and their future generations. Adverse land possession claims divided customary lands from family clans lands and the inherent obligations under the fa'amātai. Adverse possession land rights evolved into individually owned land rights in one generation.

Individually owned land tenure is a court-established land tenure classification that was entirely created in the judicial branch without a single piece of legislation in over 100 years to define, address, or limit individual rights. Individually owned land tenure is a hybrid form of land tenure classification, part fee simple but restricted to American Sāmoan ancestry from Tutuila, Aunu'u, and Manu'a Islands. Individually owned land tenure has not only resulted in the apportionment of communally owned lands, but also forever disentangles access and usage to family clans, delimits the authority of fa'amātai over the lands and removes the family clan obligation between the mātai and family using the native land.

The unabated and unmonitored growth of registered individually owned lands gave rise to the fear of the 1979 Territorial Planning Commission. This early planning commission foresaw the negative impacts that individually owned land rights would impose upon communal obligations to the family clans and culture. They cautioned that Sāmoans would convert communally owned lands into individually owned lands because there was a growing “minority of Sāmoans that wanted to break free from communal obligations,” in part so that these lands then could be willed to their children. They wisely saw the writing on the wall that Americanization, or the “I” culture, beginning to take hold and more and more American Sāmoans wanting to own land that did not carry obligations of the *fa’amātai* and *fa’asāmoa* (Sāmoan culture, custom, and language) structures. In the 1979 case *Craddick v. Territorial Registrar of American Samoa*, the petitioners asserted that individually owned lands comprised less than 4 percent of all lands in American Sāmoa (*Craddick v. Territorial Registrar of American Samoa*, CA 61–78, slip op. (Trial Div. May 10, 1979) (Order Denying Motion for New Trial or Rehearing Civil Action No. 61-78). The fear of the 1979 Territorial Planning Commission has come to fruition.

From 1979, less than 4 percent of lands were registered with the Territorial Registrar as individually owned; in 2013, 25.7 percent are now registered as individually owned (American Samoa Government Statistical Yearbook 2013, 97). There are more individually owned lands registered with the Territorial Registrar than the American Samoa government is recorded as owning. Meaning, 25.7 percent of the population live apart from the cultural obligations of the family clans and *fa’asāmoa* on individually owned lands. Lands that were all communally owned in 1880 are now being converted and registered as individually owned, and unlike the family clan lands, do not carry the obligations owed under a communal *fa’asāmoa* lifestyle. Communally owned lands are being progressively removed from the authority of the *fa’amātai*, which as a result lessens the authority of the institution and the quantity of land stock available to redistribute to family clans. Family clans to the 25.7 percent of individually owned registrants do not have access, communal usage of the resources, and are disentangled from any cultural, custom, or traditional obligation to communal sharing, distribution, or redistribution during times of need, disaster, or customary need.

Decisions and Vernacular Language Usage in High Court, Tracing Individual Ownership

In land dispute cases from 1900 involving adverse land possession rights, or rather, foreign rights to native lands, rights were based upon the court’s determination of rightful ownership through dominion or authority over the lands.

What is peculiar to American Sāmoa in comparison with any other American jurisdiction is the hybrid legal system: the burden of proof rests with the āiga or family clans to prove their occupancy, cultivation, and authority over what they believed were communally owned lands. The pendulum swung so far to the other direction that the burden of proof to evidence land rights rested on the āiga to effectively evidence their dominion or authority over lands starting with the Naval Commandants in the early 1900s then the Department of the Interior appointed judges from the 1950s to 1970s. The Naval Court limited testimonies to forty and thirty years because of their belief that Sāmoan oral history communities without written deeds or surveys are hearsay. Āiga were required to sufficiently evidence their ancestral ties to communal lands to prove their own occupancy and cultivation to retain their lands.

The mātai possesses dominion, authority, and stewardship over the communal lands only if he or she holds the mātai title by consent of the āiga (*Talala v. Logo*, 1 A.S.R. 165, 1907). Acts of dominion and authority over communal lands are not only forms of possession; they are inherent to the fa'amātai and fa'asāmoa systems. Select native lands are left untouched and unassigned to āiga members by the authority of the senior mātai and village council. Under the Naval Administration, however, lands that were left virgin, without an individual occupying the land and evidencing "dominion over it," were reduced to a "virgin bush land" terminology by the Naval Court and further widened by the post-1950 Department of Interior appointed foreign judges. This "virgin bush land" classification assumes that it is without Sāmoan ownership (Coulter 1957, 87). What the Naval Court failed to recognize is that native lands also included unassigned lands that were unoccupied and uncultivated, possibly attributable to low population count, deference to cultural considerations, or preservation for future generations.

Although the Naval Court correctly recognized that land in customary ownership is not permanent and can have fluid occupancy, some Sāmoan traditions purposely leave "virgin bush lands" unoccupied and uncultivated. For example, in Sāmoan custom, sleeping quarters and guest houses of senior mātai title holders and their āiga are built on communal lands. These structures give notice to neighboring villages that certain āiga have claimed such lands under the senior mātai title holder. Native lands were assigned to be left open for such accommodations within the villages. In addition, senior mātai title holders and their āiga are buried on communal lands, and certain lands were purposely kept uncultivated for burial purposes. *Malaga* (journey or visit) that were performed in the early 1900s required *malae* (vast open space) for visiting villages, dignitaries, and guests. There is no perfect comparison between Western and Sāmoan traditions in terms of the exercise of authority and dominion over land ownership. Western law expects to find an individual who is visible and physically

exercising dominion over the lands to claim ownership. Yet, in Sāmoan tradition there are ancient understandings that large tracts of communal lands can go uncultivated and unused for decades. Ownership and authority over them is held under the fa'asāmoa, with senior mātai assigning different land parcels for specific purposes.

Ancient Statute of Merton

As early as 1901, the Naval Court applied English common law with respect to property ownership without ever balancing custom, culture, and dissimilarities in law or environment. Early naval jurists failed to consider the roots of English property rights and ownership when applying common law property rights in American Sāmoa. The Naval Court embraced the legal presumption of individual rights to land, which was based on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English common law writings of William Blackstone and Henry Maine and which was frequently referenced in land dispute cases in American Sāmoa from 1901 to the 1940s.

Individual land ownership did not exist at the beginning of English common law; there were, as dictated by the Ancient Statute of Merton, the English statute written by Henry III of England and the Barons, only estates of land (Ancient Statute of Merton 1811; ch. 4, vol. 143, 262). This older land system gave birth to fee simple and freehold types of land tenure. The Crown provided landed estates for tax collection purposes paid by every Duke, Earl, Viscount, Baron, and vassal. The Crown did not award land in perpetuity. Land ownership was not permanent. The Crown had power and control over the peerage system to ensure the Crown had definitive ownership of all land holdings exercising a key demonstration of economic domination over its subjects. Loyal subjects received land estates from the Crown. Anyone perceived to be an enemy of the Crown could be removed from the lands, stripped of noble title, have all their material wealth confiscated by the Crown, and even be imprisoned under a charge of treason. Crown land was given and taken away as the monarchy saw fit.

The Naval Court embraced the Blackstone and Maine legal doctrine to validate the presumption that unoccupied native land, such as virgin bush land did not belong to the district, senior mātai, or family clans. Meaning, all native American Sāmoan land purposely left uncultivated or unoccupied was legally remade, by introduced foreign legal doctrine, into unowned lands belonging to no one.

The presumption that virgin land belongs to no one was not applicable in England, and it was not applicable in American Sāmoa either for two reasons. First, in fa'asāmoa custom, all large and small tracts of land are communally held,

whether the lands are occupied and cultivated or unoccupied and uncultivated. The Naval Court did not recognize these basic Sāmoan principles of land tenure and ruled that land ownership rights could only be evidenced by a person visibly sitting on the land. Second, at the root of English common law there were only estates of land, not individualized land, thereby concluding that unoccupied, uncultivated communal lands in American Sāmoa belonged to no one based on the English common law property rights is spurious at best. In fact, fee tail¹ and life estates² were prominently used in England to ensure the noble class's dominion and authority over the lands through the peerage system (Black's Law Dictionary 2001). Land estates awarded to loyal subjects were taxed with sunset dates earmarked for eventual reclamation to the Crown. The Naval Court did not consider or evaluate the potential impacts of applying law derived from a European peerage system on native land ownership in American Sāmoa.

Case Law's Evolution from Adverse Land Possession Rights to Individually Owned Land Tenure

In 1900, there were only two types of land tenure in American Sāmoa: native and freehold land classifications. Figure 1 depicts how individually owned land was developed through adverse land possession principles by the High Court from 1901 through the 1980s.

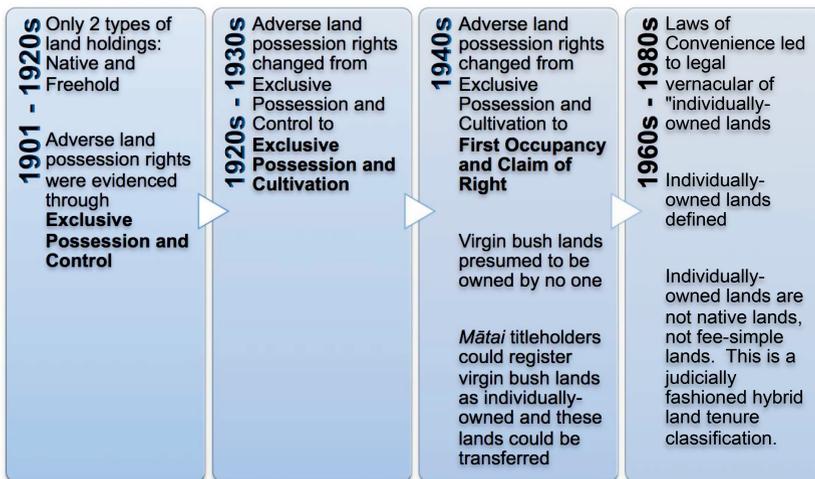


FIGURE 1. 1901–1980s, Tracing Adverse Land Possession Rights to Individually Owned Land Tenure.

Between 1901 and 1930, the Naval Court under various naval commandants recognized and decreed adverse possession rights to claim legal title over communal lands whose ownership was primarily evidenced by exclusive possession, control, and cultivation. These early cases were built on the premise that adversely possessing land did not require customary consultation or the checks and balances of legislative or executive branches to include American Sāmoan voices. The Naval Court applied adverse possession rights in American Sāmoa simply because it was accepted in every other “civilized” place where Western law reigned supreme. There was no further legal inquiry or customary consultation to determine whether these foreign land rights abrogated the commitments in the Deeds of Cession to protect Sāmoan culture, or how these foreign land rights would coexist with the local culture and customary institutions (fa’amātai and fa’asāmoa). The 1900 and 1904 Deeds of Cession signed by the Manu’a, Tutuila, and Aunu’u reigning high chiefs explicitly protect Sāmoan culture and customary lands in exchange for their allegiance to the United States.

Oral Tradition Termed “Hearsay” and Oral History Limited to Forty Years

Pacific Islanders passed down genealogy, legends, spiritual and cultural myths, taboos, and history of family lands through oral histories. Like other Pacific Islanders, American Sāmoans had no recorded land surveys, written deeds, or any form of written land ownership records. The transition from oral history to written language (Sāmoan and English) only came in the mid-1800s as the missionaries set up schools in the villages that began by teaching Christianity, Western behaviors, and dress to the Sāmoans. Eventually Christianity became imbued into the fabric of Sāmoan society.

In defending native land claims against adverse possession claims, defendants had to evidence continuous possession and cultivation. The Naval Court considered oral testimony (without written records) hearsay and, therefore, inadmissible as evidence. Out of necessity, the Naval Court admitted some oral history (which typically would have been considered hearsay in America) but placed limitations on testimony based on the oral history of family lands (native or communal). In *Tialavea v. Aga* the court stated:

Most of the tradition was handed down orally—all of it orally for about 200 years for Samoans a good many years after the missionaries came to Samoa about 1830 [. . .] It is common knowledge that tradition handed down orally over a long period of time is frequently not very trustworthy. This elementary fact is the reason that tradition in one family about an event occurring years before is frequently entirely different from the tradition in another family about the same event.

And the longer the tradition is handed down, the more it is subject to error. After all, tradition is only hearsay (*Tialavea v. Aga*, 3 A.S.R. 272, 275, 1957).

USN Commandant Harry P. Wood distrusted testimony given by Sāmoans that reported oral history of ancestral claims to land. Wood limited oral history of family knowledge in land ownership disputes to forty years after hearing conflicting testimony between the same and different branches of ancestral lineages laying claim on communal lands. Wood, bewildered by inconsistent testimony, avows:

I am willing to hear the history of this family as it bears upon this piece of land, but I am not willing to hear the history of this family just as history. The question is who owns this land Auvau or Patea? However I am perfectly willing to listen to the history of the family, if the witness does not state what someone a long time ago said. In a *Mātai* name case I do not go back further than ten *Mātais*, which is never over 75 years, but in a land case 40 years is far enough. All I want to know is who has undisputed possession of this land for the past 40 years, which is twice the usual time of 20 years. If you cannot prove your case without going back several hundred years your case would not seem to be [a] strong one. I will only allow the family history as it pertains to this particular piece of land for the past 40 years (*Patea v. Auvau*, 1 A.S.R. 380, 1926).

Oral history testimony was belittled as “pure tradition” by the Naval Court and an unacceptable form of evidence (*Tuiolosega v. Voa*, 2 A.S.R. 138, 1941). In *Tuiolosega v. Voa*, the plaintiff, representing himself, claimed that he cleared land called Mati on the island of Olosega in the Manu’a Group that was entirely virgin (bush) land and that he planted coconuts, manioc, bananas, and *taro* (a tropical plant grown for its edible corms) and lived there for a long period of time (*Tuiolosega v. Voa*, 2 A.S.R. 138, 1941). The Letuli family, a branch of the Voa family clan, testified on behalf of the defendant to ownership and based their testimony on oral history passed down from one generation to the next generation. The Letuli witness testified that prior to 1918, the Voa family had entered the bush land and planted fruits and took fruits upon their claim of ownership (*Tuiolosega v. Voa*, 2 A.S.R. 138, 1941). The Naval Court declared that the Letuli family exercised open, notorious, actual, visible, exclusive, continuous, and hostile occupation while under a claim of title before and since 1918. The Letuli family were awarded the land in Olosega because Judge Arthur A. Morrow determined their possession, which was testified to have continued

for more than twenty years and was “clearly adverse to any claims to Tuiolosega or his family.” Morrow specified that Tuiolosega’s testimony was entirely pure tradition. Oral history of family clan usage and its relationship to land ownership in Sāmoan custom was reduced by the court to testimony that “he had no personal knowledge as to the ownership of the land.”³ Judges reducing oral history testimony as “pure tradition” fractured the customary institutions of fa’amātai and fa’asāmoa by the apportionment of customary lands whereby reduced the power and authority of the fa’amātai system over the use, access, and natural resources on the customary lands. In *Vili v. Faiivae*, Judge Edwin W. Gurr stopped witnesses from testifying about their genealogies because it was believed to be what he described as pure tradition (*Vili Siopitu Faatoa v. Faiivae*, 1 A.S.R. 38, 1906). But, disallowing testimony about genealogy, however conflicting such testimony from opposing parties was, severely limited the opportunity of witnesses to prove their genealogical connections to communal lands and the interconnections to the mātai structure that may have allowed them to occupy and use the land.

In *Tufaga v. Liufau*, the Naval Court stressed that the testimony of both parties was founded solely upon pure tradition and that the High Court cannot favor the statement of one party over another. No party’s claim was declared to have any solid foundation in fact (*Tufaga v. Liufau*, 1 A.S.R. 184, 1903). Without written records, and with conflicting testimonies about ownership of lands, the Naval High Court was often left to make assertions or assumptions about where and how the rule of law could be logically applied.

In *Letuli v. Faaea*, the parties claimed ownership over Olosega lands called Falesamātai, which were composed of Falesama-Uta, Falesama-Tai, Fanuaee, Lofloí, and Taufasi. The defendant claimed that their ancestor Afe gave permission to Letuli to enter and use the lands for the past twenty years. Letuli claimed his right to the land was not by permission but through a claim of ownership (*Letuli v. Faaea*, No. 8-1941). Morrow decided that the defendant’s witnesses had no personal knowledge that Afe gave Letuli permission to enter Falesamātai, rendering the Letuli testimony pure hearsay. Going even further, Morrow stated at the end of the testimonies that “Tradition in one family does not rise even to the dignity of reputation in the community as to the ownership of land” (*Letuli v. Faaea*, No. 8-1941).

1901–1930

In 1901, USN Commandant-governor Benjamin F. Tilley strongly laid out adverse possession rights in landmark *Leiato v. Howden* to firmly establish the political sovereignty of the US territory as separate from German Sāmoa. Tilley vehemently professed:

The case before the court was of the greatest importance to all the people of Tutuila; that if this unproved claim of the chief in Upolu were admitted it must be upon the grounds of tradition or family stories; that such would involve nearly all the lands in Tutuila. That the government of the United States could not admit nor approve claims to lands in Tutuila by people in Upolu unless such claims be fully proved: that in the present case there was no evidence whatsoever [. . .] This case is one of the greatest importance, for the reason that it involves a claim to land by people who have not lived on the land for a long time. Included in the same class of claims are all the claims of the residents of Upolu claiming land in Tutuila. The court has found it imperative—absolutely necessary—to follow the practice that is generally now in every civilized portion of the earth, and that is to recognize that the occupancy of the land for a fixed period, constitutes an ownership of the land (in this case 10 years uninterrupted occupancy). It is absolutely necessary, as I have said, that the government, through the court, shall take such extent to protect the natives of Tutuila, who have so long occupied the land, cultivated and improved it, from the onslaught of claimants from Upolu (*Leiato v. Howden*, 1 A.S.R. 45, 1901)

The newly formed Naval Court applied the principles of adverse land possession, but USN Commandant-governor Uriel Sebree defined the period of occupancy for claiming a prescriptive land title was ten years prior to the land dispute.⁴ This ten-year period of occupancy became the standard for all land title claims in American Sāmoa.

In 1905, USN Commandant-governor Charles B.T. Moore defined exclusive and hostile possession in adverse land disputes. In *Sapela v. Mageo*, exclusive possession was defined as “a possession exclusive to all persons whatsoever” and hostile possession was “done or made in such manner and under such circumstances as to leave no doubt that they came to the knowledge of the owner or someone [*sic*] representing him” (*Sapela v. Mageo*, 1 A.S.R. 125, 1905). Moore also emphasized that, although there may have not been written notice, there must have been possession so open and notorious it would raise a presumption of notice to him “equivalent to actual notice” (*Sapela v. Mageo*, 1 A.S.R. 125, 1905). Moore ruled in favor of the plaintiff in *Maloata v. Leoso*, declaring “that the Plaintiff has cultivated and improved the land permanently and has reaped the produce, the fruits of his labor” (*Maloata v. Leoso*, 1 A.S.R. 138, 1905). Although just five years earlier all land was considered native lands, Moore declared that “It was a well known [*sic*] custom in Samoa that the **individual owner of property**, notwithstanding his well-established [*sic*] rights to it, was subject to the will of the community and upon the commission of

any act contrary to the desire of the community he would be banished or have to submit to gross degradation imposed by the people” (emphasis in original; *Maloata v. Leoso*, 1 A.S.R. 138, 1905). Moore may have based this assertion on a misinterpretation of the mātai title system, under which the individual has *pule* (authority) over the native lands at the will of the family clans. He may have understood “individual owner of the property” as meaning that the mātai title holder had authority at the will of the āiga, per the fa’asāmoa custom. The definition of individual in the Sāmoan context, however, is not analogous to the Western definition. The mātai title holder is not perceived as an individual in the Western sense because his authority and dominion over native land is but a link in the Sāmoan customary chain of mātai title holder, senior mātai, orator, village council, county chiefs. Moore introduced a legal term with specific meaning into the laws about land rights vested in an individual—an introduction that became a stepping stone on the path to recognizing individual rights to property.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, the Naval Court’s rules of evidence for adverse land rights evolved from exclusive possession and occupancy to exclusive possession and cultivation. Occupation evolved into cultivation. Cultivation became the new requirement to evidence adverse rights. Village ordinances imposed by the USN commandants, under penalty of hefty fines, required all individuals and mātais to cultivate taro, *ta’amū* (variety of giant taro), coconuts, and bananas. In 1926, Wood proclaimed cultivation as a key element to evidence adversely claimed land:

In whichever one of these examples this particular case comes under, or any land case, it is not necessary to go back into the dim past to clear your title. You do not have to rely on stories that have been handed down in a family for ten generations to establish a title [. . .] In this particular case, I want to know who is taking care of the land, who is cutting the copra and living there, saying “this is my land” (*Patea v. Auvau*, 1 A.S.R. 380, 1926).

In 1930, the Naval Court further decided that to determine ownership of land, they must consider the āiga that took all produce and profits from the land for over twenty years (*Satele v. Afoa*, 1 A.S.R. 424, 1930). In *Tuimalo v. Mailo*, the Naval Court proclaimed, “The best evidence of communal ownership of land is clearing, planting, cultivating, and building upon the land” (*Tuimalo v. Mailo*, 1 A.S.R. 434 at 26, 1931). Although the requirement of cultivation replaced that of control, exclusive possession remained a steadfast requirement (*Talo v. Tavai*, 2 A.S.R. 63, 1938). For the first fifty years under the Naval Administration, it operated as a unitary system of government without separate branches to

check and balance power, rights, or justice. The post of USN Commandant-governor had supreme powers to expand or limit laws and then indoctrinate them through Naval village and enforce them through ordinances, fines, and imprisonment. The Naval Court purposefully created legal pathways to individual ownership of land founded on American principles and values of individual land ownership, as a territorial appendage, the view of land, possession, and ownership became intertwined with civility and democratic governance. The Naval Court expanded and redefined property laws to replicate Western models of economic development like cultivation, which are also essential revenue measures for government operations of tax collection.

1930–1940

Without any US congressional oversight, commission, or agency to monitor whether the actions of the Naval Administration met the commitments embodied in the two Deeds of Cession and were within the spirit of the 1899 Treaty of Berlin, USN Commandant-governors did next to nothing to research the negative impacts their decisions would have upon customary lands, culture, and traditions. There was no territorial blueprint for Commandants on how to balance civil and military operations in the only South Pacific US outpost. Although the Naval Commandants lacked consistency and long tenure on the bench, Morrow was consistent in his decisions as the longest serving judge in the Naval Court—to the detriment of Sāmoan customary land tenure and fa‘amātai.

Morrow made brazen and inaccurate assertions that private land ownership was embodied in fa‘asāmoa (*Talo v. Tavai*, 2 A.S.R. 64, 1938). Morrow effectively defined and recognized “private land ownership” in American Sāmoa such that his legal doctrine did not appear to conflict with the two Deeds of Cession. Adverse land possession added the legal possibility of individual ownership to a system of land tenure classification that had previously only had categories of native and freehold. Prefatory right to individual ownership of land was recognized by the Naval Court as distinct and separate from the native or otherwise communal lands under the fa‘asāmoa and fa‘amātai structures. In 1933, in *Avegalio v. Suafoa*, three āiga members in the Leone district all claimed ownership to a specific parcel of land (*Avegalio v. Suafoa*, 1 A.S.R. 476, 1932). Salave‘a testified that the land was owned by him as an individual, not by mātai title rights or communally. He claimed it was individual, not individually owned, because this land classification had not yet been created by the court. Salave‘a testified that he had received the land as an individual, not a native, from his father Fepulea‘i, and that Fepulea‘i had received the land as an individual from his father, Su‘a. Wood seemed to be taken back by this bold claim of individual ownership, because in court he proclaimed, “You know, do you not, that there

is very little land owned in American Samoa by individuals, how did it happen that this land came to be owned by an individual” (*Avegalio v. Suafoa*, 1 A.S.R. 476, 1932). Wood apportioned the land. Avegalio was awarded land west of the stream and north from the road passing through it to the northern boundary. Wood declared that the Salave’a family did not use or cultivate the land for at least twenty years and the weight of testimony favored the Suafoa family having had an uninterrupted and adverse use of the period for at least forty years under a claim of right.

Laws of Convenience

Morrow stated that the Naval Court had determined the possession of land created presumption of ownership in the possessor (*Avegalio v. Suafoa*, 1 A.S.R. 476, 1932). In *Talo v. Tavai*, Morrow relied upon sixth century *Corpus Juris Civilis* (first codification of Roman and Civil Law), seventeenth-century English statutes of adverse land possession rights in possessor and occupant and early twentieth-century work by real property scholar Herbert Tiffany. Taken together, these sources creatively devised limitations on how native land might be held under Sāmoan custom. Under Sāmoan custom, dispersed and low population numbers and large tracts of land with unassigned parcels would always make exclusive possession difficult to prove. Applying ancient Western real property principles without carefully considering the long-term impacts to Sāmoan custom and native lands effectively rubber-stamped the “Laws of Convenience,” giving weight to civil codes and laws that favored the possessor who is in “open, notorious, actual, visible, exclusive, continuous, hostile, and [. . .] adverse possession.” American Sāmoa High Court Justice Thomas Murphy stated on record when dealing with communal land disputes the court introduced a series of ad hoc decisions has resulted in what he termed “Law of Convenience” (*Kaliopa v. Silao*, 2 A.S.R. 2d 1, 1983). The Law of Convenience introduced Western property concepts: actual, hostile, open, notorious, exclusive, and continuous or uninterrupted for a statutory period where elements of adverse possession were applied to settle and stabilize land disputes. In *Kaliopa*, it states:

As Justice Murphy has often commented, the so-called law in the field of communal land ownership in American Samoa consists of a series of ad hoc decisions in which various courts have come to varying results in differing factual situations. This has resulted in what Justice Murphy calls the Law of Convenience. This is not at all surprising as, during the last 83 years the members of this court have tried to blend a thousand-year-old Polynesian culture with a contemporary legal

system which has its roots in the English common law. The Treaty of Cession guaranteed the Samoan way of life and the Constitution of American Samoa advises that it is our responsibility to protect persons of Samoan ancestry against destruction of the Samoan way of life. A.S.C.A. section 1.0201 states that we should apply the common law of England “as is suitable to conditions in American Samoa.” Section 1.0202 states that the customs of the Samoan people are to be preserved. A picture emerges that is bright and clear—the protection of the Samoan way of life is the court’s primary responsibility. The twin cornerstones of the Samoan way of life are communal land tenure and the matai system. Each is essential to the other. Without the matai system to administer it, the communal land system becomes anarchy. Without the communal land system, there is no reason for a matai. In American Samoa, the family owns the land. A matai, selected by, and object to removal by, the family, allots the land to family members who pay a type of compensation comparable to rent in the way of service to the matai—actually, to the family. In return the matai undertakes the protection and well-being of the family members. Such is the basic Samoan custom and tradition. We western judges, schooled in the common law, valiantly attempt to support the matai system and communal land tenure and, in so doing, all too often confuse the issues by attempting to apply common law labels with which we are comfortable to factual situations which are controlled by Samoan custom and tradition. Accordingly, the average opinion sets forth a factual situation, states the controlling Samoan custom, then attempts to apply a common law principle—together with supporting citations—in an attempt to justify the decision. We should stop trying to rationalize Samoan customs and traditions by recourse to common law principles and precedents. We should accept Samoan customs and traditions as controlling authority. These customs and traditions need no common law support. Actually common law principles, which are based on private ownership of land, are often the antithesis of Samoan customs and traditions which are based on communal land tenure (*Kaliopa v. Silao*, 2 A.S.R. 2d 1, 1983).

Individually Owned Lands

In 1938, Morrow manufactured individually owned right to land ownership in American Sāmoa. In the case of *Fa’aafe and Una’i v. Sioeli*, Morrow awarded individual land ownership through adverse possession to the plaintiffs as

tenants in common (*Faaafe v. Unai*, 2 A.S.R. 22, 1938). This decision to manufacture individually owned land rights was a judicially created land right without a legislative or executive branch to balance these introduced rights with the will of the people.

Apportioning native lands is more than splitting lands from family clans to individuals and leaving less lands to the family clans and stewardship authority under the fa'amātai. Individuals that own land, under the individually owned land classification are disentangled from the family clans and obligations to rendering service by using native lands for redistribution and assignment for specific usage or nonusage for family clan and senior mātai needs. Senior mātai have less and less land to redistribute, preserve, or use for family clan needs; ultimately weakening the fa'amātai system in deference to a Western lifestyle of individual ownership of real property. Morrow manufactured a land right to apportion native lands from family clans and the fa'amātai. The American dream of individual land ownership does not sit easily alongside with fa'asāmoa or fa'amātai institutions, which require native land to survive as an institution.

Sioeli surveyed "Asiapa" land in Fagatogo and claimed that this land was not native land but individually owned, whereas the plaintiffs, objecting to his land registration, claimed Asiapa was individually owned by Fa'aafe and Una'i (*Faaafe v. Unai*, 2 A.S.R. 22, 1938). Without having provided any factual or legal references in law, Morrow declared that, based on the land surveys of Asiapa and both party's sworn testimonies, Asiapa was not native land but individually owned. The claim by both parties that Asiapa was individually owned outside of native lands is preposterous; in 1900, there was only native and freehold land tenure. Sioeli testified that approximately sixty years before the case was heard, Mailo had sold the land to Sioeli's father, Taeu Paea, and that upon his death, Asiapa was willed to Sioeli (*Faaafe v. Unai*, 2 A.S.R. 22, 1938). This testimony concludes that in 1878 Mailo sold "Asiapa" land to Taeau Paea as individually owned land. This could not have happened in 1878 because there were only native lands in American Sāmoa at that time and a very select few parcels of freehold lands.

Morrow did not critically question Sioeli's testimony how the land was individually owned by his father or willed to him; he side-stepped these assertions altogether by deciding Sioeli's entire testimony was based on hearsay (*Faaafe v. Unai*, 2 A.S.R. 22, 1938). Not one witness in this case or any other case from the 1900s have testified how and when these lands were not native and instead, individually owned (other than native ownership under the matāi). From 1900 to 1938, no single case ever explicitly defined or identified how, where, or when native lands were remade into "private or individual" lands. There were only generalizations from the bench with strong affirmations that private ownership existed in Sāmoan custom. Morrow's presumption that private ownership

existed in Sāmoan custom drove forward the widespread application of adverse possession of lands to legally convert native land into individually owned land.

1940–1960

Between 1930 and 1940, “Law of Convenience” rights began to apportion native lands in American Sāmoa. The concept of individually owned land was cemented and enlarged by the Naval Court when native virgin (bush) land was legally defined as belonging to no one. Virgin (bush) land belonging to no one is legal fiction.

Between 1945 and 1947, the Naval Court placed the burden of proving positive title on the traditional mātai title holder. Mātai were shouldered with the burden to factually evidence occupation and claim of right to own native lands under the fa’amātai and fa’asāmoa institutions as stewards on behalf of the family clans. A series of cases starting in 1945 established a presumption that uncultivated virgin lands were “not native lands” and belonged to no one. This meant that all uncultivated virgin lands were presumed to not be under the fa’asāmoa or fa’amātai pule.

In the 1945 case *Tiumalu v. Lutu*, the Naval Court acknowledged the rights of individually owned land. This landmark case established the presumption of individual ownership, as well as the right for the property to be inheritable (*Tiumalu v. Lutu*, 2 A.S.R. 222, 224, 1945). In *Tiumalu*, the court divided ownership of two pieces of land, Asi and Sigataupule, in Fagatogo village. Sigataupule land was awarded as individually owned to Lutu Simaile (the defendant) not through customary practices but through intestate succession of right through the defendant’s deceased father, Afoa. In other words, the court granted the title vested in Lutu Simaile through inheritance. In contrast, Asi land was awarded to the plaintiffs as communally owned. The court acknowledged that, absent evidence of communal ownership, land could be defined as “individually, as opposed to communally, owned” (*Tiumalu v. Lutu*, 2 A.S.R. 222, 224, 1945). This meant that if the parties in dispute claimed that these lands belong to no mātai or were not part of āiga lands—for example, virgin lands—the Naval Court may declare these lands freely available to become individualized.

The Naval Administration opened the door to a form of alienation of lands. Alienating native lands from family clans (and future generations) and the fa’asāmoa and fa’amātai institutions. Morrow’s decisions further laid the groundwork for individually owned land tenure. Several years later, in *Tago v. Mauga*, Morrow again made declarations about Sāmoan culture and land ownership without bothering to pinpoint legal precedent or historical foundation, stating that “Samoans acquire title to bush land under custom by open occupation and use coupled with claim of ownership” (*Tago v. Mauga*, 2 A.S.R. 285, 1947). Morrow

makes clear distinctions between bush lands and native lands: this improper legal fiction opens the floodgates to individual land ownership by adversely possessing native lands owned by the district but left unoccupied or uncultivated by the senior mātai. Bush lands belonging to no one is not based on Sāmoan culture, factual foundation, or legal justification. In *Tago*, Morrow eagerly accepted Vaipito as individually owned land and gave Sami and Fa'afeu Mauga individual land rights based on testimony from persons such as Pulu and Soliai, who claimed that the previous mātai title holder Mauga Moimoi owned it individually and not through his paramount mātai title (*Tago v. Mauga*, 2 A.S.R. 285, 1947).⁵ Morrow expanded the alienation of lands, by ruling that land could be freely willed to his heirs, his adopted daughters Sami and Fa'afeu (*Tago v. Mauga*, 2 A.S.R. 285 at 7, 1947). Morrow accepts the testimony on behalf of Sami and Fa'afeu Mauga that Mauga Moimoi entered Vaipito while it was bush land “owned by no one” and that he acquired title to it through first occupancy and claim of right (*Tago v. Mauga*, 2 A.S.R. 285 at 2, 1947). Morrow mentions briefly the fact that Sāmoan custom does in fact address first occupancy and claim of rights but does not supply factual foundation or precedent. Not once in any of his cases does Morrow provide the legal basis for how and when virgin lands became “owned by no one” within Sāmoan custom. Morrow declared that in Sāmoan custom, individual land ownership existed and then later without factual foundation declared that bush lands belonged to no one (*Talo v. Tavai*, 2 A.S.R. 64, 1938).

Attributes of Individually Owned Lands

In 1948, Morrow partially defined individually owned land by attributing certain characteristics to that land classification. In *Taatiatia v. Misi*, Morrow continued to declare that virgin bush land belonged to no one, applying the old English law of Blackstone and Maine to the American Sāmoan land system (*Taatiatia v. Misi*, 2 A.S.R. 346, 347, 1948). Morrow created new methods for converting land to individual ownership by ruling that individually owned lands could be created if a mātai gives them away as such (*Gi v. Taetafea*, 2 A.S.R. 401, 403, 1948). Morrow claimed that this had been done in the past by pronouncing:

We know judicially that some *mātais* in American Samoa have, with the consent of their family members, given family lands outright to certain members of their families. Taetafea testified that she was present and heard old Gi in 1905 make a gift of this land to her and her husband and that such gift was a reward for splendid service rendered by her husband and herself to Gi; also that such gift was followed by possession by the donees (*Gi v. Taetafea*, 2 A.S.R. 401, 403 at 10, 1948)

In *Muli v. Ofoia*, several weeks later Morrow declared that, if virgin, unclaimed land is occupied and cleared for an individual's benefit, the court would determine this as sufficient evidence to right of individual ownership (*Muli v. Ofoia*, 2 A.S.R. 408, 410, 1948). The twentieth-century laws against the alienation of land were meant to stop foreigners from stripping away native lands from Sāmoans; instead, native lands were being apportioned from fa'asāmoa custom and through its improper legal fiction that virgin lands belong to no one.

1960–1980

On July 1, 1951, the Secretary of Interior took over the administration over the territory of American Sāmoa. The Naval Court transitioned into a civilian High Court with judges appointed by the Secretary of Interior. By the 1960s, individually owned land tenure had become firmly planted in the legal vernacular of American Sāmoan land tenure. Sāmoans, both mātais and non-mātai, recognized that native lands could be apportioned and registered as individually owned lands if an individual continued to adversely possess the land for a statutory period or if an individual cleared virgin bush land or if a mātai gifted the land as individually owned.

In *Government v. Letuli* the High Court awarded very large parcels of individually owned land on prime real estate near the only international airport by citing the earlier cases of acquisition of title by first occupancy and claim of ownership:

This court has ruled many times that Samoans may acquire title to land through first occupancy accompanied by claim of ownership. *Soliai v. Lagafua*, No. 5- 1949 (H.C. of Am. S.); *Faatiliga v. Fano*, No. 89-1948 (H.C. of Am. S.); *Gi v. Te'ō*, No. 35-1961 (H.C. of Am. S.); *Magalei et al., Lualemaga et al.*, No. 60- 1961 (H.C. of Am. S.). This doctrine of the acquisition of title by first occupancy coupled with a claim of ownership is approved in Main's Ancient Law (3rd Am. Ed.) 238. See also 2 Blackstone 8. The most common way for a Samoan to acquire title to land is to clear a portion of the virgin bush, put it in plantations on the cleared area, and claim it as his own land or the communal land of his family. This is a recognized way of acquiring land of his family. This is a recognized way of acquiring land according to Samoan customs (*Government v. Letuli*, LT No. 016-63, 1963).

The High Court again referred to Blackstone and Maine, using the same irrelevant English philosophies, to justify the individualization of land ownership in

American Sāmoa. Earlier 1920s and 1930s court decisions had replaced exclusive possession and cultivation requirements with first occupancy and claim of right. After sixty years, the *Fono* (bi-cameral Legislature) tried to define individually owned lands, but it failed to pass by majority vote in two consecutive Fono sessions:

Sec.9.0103—INDIVIDUALLY OWNED LAND: Individually owned land means land that is owned by a person in one of the first two categories named in Sec. 9.0102, or that is in court grants prior to 1900. Such land may be conveyed only to a person or family in the categories mentioned in Sec.9.0102, except that it may be inherited by devise or descent under the laws of intestate succession, by natural lineal descendants of the owner. If no person is qualified to inherit, the title shall revert to the family from which the title was derived.⁶

At least seven attempts to define individually owned lands never made it out of the first house.⁷ As the Fono couldn't muster enough political will to define this judicially made land tenure, the High Court proceeded to invent its own definition.

In the 1974 case *Haleck v. Tuia*, the High Court expanded once again the definition of individually owned land rights by deciding that individual land rights are established when a person enters virgin bush land that no other person previously cultivated, provided that the first occupier clears the entire land "substantially," and a "considerable plantation was developed" (*Haleck v. Tuia*, LT No. 1384-74, 1974). Still other possibilities for creating acceptable types of individually owned land registrations were discussed, including no objections being made to the registering of the land at the Territorial Registrar's office; an individual entering the land on other than the direction of mātai; the work being done entirely at the individual's expense; and the work being other than a "communal effort" (*Haleck v. Tuia*, LT No. 1384-74, 1974). The High Court added another definition for individually owned land. Whereby previously the registrant needed to be the first occupant and establish a claim of right when clearing virgin bush land, in 1974, the court modified the claim of right, stating that it could be based on "substantially clearing the entire land." By this time in the late 1970s, individually owned land rights and the concept of private land ownership had taken hold within American Sāmoa.

The defining attributes and expanding definitions of individually owned land was built on precedent cases, and the 1977 *Fanene v. Talio* case perfectly reveals how individually owned rights apportion communal lands and disentangles family clans from fa'amātai and fa'asāmoa institutions. The access and use of resources that had once been shared among family clans on contiguous

parcels of land were forever disrupted. *Fanene v. Talio* was complicated because eleven cases were consolidated into one trial, some parties claimed sections of Malaeimi land as individually owned, others claimed sections as communally owned, several leases existed, and some parcels were large lands and others much smaller lands (*Fanene v. Talio*, LT 64-77, slip op., Trial Div. April 22, 1980). Fanene claimed 265.9 acres as individually owned although a major part of the entire acreage remained virgin bush. Fonoti claimed 35 acres (“Alatutui”) as individually owned land based on adverse use of land for over thirty years and first occupant claims. Fagaima claimed 34 acres of individually owned land based on adverse possession of thirty years. Tauiliili claimed 24.4 acres of individually owned land through clearing virgin bush in its entirety and performing some cultivation. Sotoa claimed 21.15 acres of individually owned land entirely cleared by his father and cultivated and thereby demonstrating dominion over the land. Moeitai claimed 1 acre of individually owned land. Uiva Te’o claimed 79.86 acres as individually owned land on the extreme southwest portion of the Fanene lands called “Etena.” Tuiaana Moi claimed individually owned lands through adverse possession and first occupant claims. Heirs of Niue Malufau claimed 12.55 acres and 18.015 acres. Fanene claimed lands of 265.9 acres. Leapaga claimed 4.37 acres of land (“Lepine”) as communal property. One of the rulings by the High Court in the eleven consolidated cases decided in favor of Fagaima, who was declared the individual owner of the 34.04 acres of land against Fonoti, Tauiliili, and Sotoa āiga. Fagaima’s winning claim shows how 34.04 acres were forever removed from the total 265.9 acres that once were used by the Fanene āiga.

The Malaeimi land parcels were divided amongst āiga clans and made into individually owned lands. Most of these land parcels were individualized because of the 1960s cases that established first occupancy and claim of right as elements for establishing individual ownership, and the other cases were individualized by outright adverse possession or by clearing virgin bush land in its entirety. On appeal, Justice Richard I. Miyamoto described individually owned land as that land:

(1) cleared in its entirety or substantially so from the virgin bush by an individual through his own initiative and not by, for or under the direction of his aiga or the senior mātai, (2) cultivated in its entirety or substantially so by him, and (3) occupied by him or his family or agents continuously from the time of the clearing of the bush (*Leuma, Avegalio, et al. v. Willis*, LT 47-79, slip op., Land and Titles Div. December 16, 1980).

Miyamoto’s ruling has become the leading case on defining individually owned land rights. This case set the legal pathway to “how to convert and

register” bush lands into individually owned lands, side-stepping the *Sa’o* (mayor) and *fa’amātai*. Miyamoto introduced a lower standard for individualized land by stating that the land could be cleared substantially and not necessarily in its entirety. The pathway to individual ownership once again opened even wider.

Close the Pathway in Legislation or Referendum Vote

From the missionary era, the communal nature of traditional Sāmoan land ownership was thought to be a hindrance to progress and civility. George Turner suggested that the Sāmoan “communistic system is a sad hindrance to the industrious and eats like a canker worm at the roots of individual and national progress” (Turner 1884, 161). In the very first 1900 land dispute cases, USN Commandants were resolute on drawing a line in the sand between German Sāmoa and US territory of American Sāmoa. In the Navy’s eyes, alienation of land by German Sāmoans symbolized a failure of their mission to establish a strong American (military) presence. The preoccupation with foreign Sāmoans were fueled by the fear of German Sāmoans “owning” American Sāmoan land and using their “foreign” *mātai* titles to land claims from German Sāmoa.

Without a blueprint of territorial oversight and administration over a people dissimilar in language, history, culture, and custom; the weight of justice without a governing system of checks and balances empowers the state with absolute control. Individually owned land classification was developed by American Sāmoa case law, not by statute or democratic vote and is a category of land holding that recognizes personal “native effort” without communal ties settling and occupying bush land (*American Samoa Government v. Haleck*, LT 10-08, slip op. at 6, Trial Div. May 1, 2013). Native land currently accounts for 26.7 percent or 2,106 acres of registered lands. Individually owned land accounts for 25.7 percent or 2,029 acres of registered land. Church-owned registered land accounts for 13.1 percent or 1,030 acres and government-owned accounts for 21.9 percent or 1,651 acres of registered land. The total land acreage in American Sāmoa is 48,767 acres or approximately 76 square miles. About two-thirds of all land acreage in American Sāmoa cannot be used for residential or commercial activity because the land is sloping, porous, and steep. Therefore, there are about 32,511 acres of unregistered lands that compose these two-thirds of lands, which I define as native (bush) lands. There are in total 7,888 acres of registered lands. Meaning, there are 8,368 acres of land that compose the one-third arable and accessible lands that have yet to be registered.

These 8,368 acres are theoretically able to be registered as individually owned lands by adverse possession. Some may claim that adverse possession claims are a thing of the past, no one adversely possesses land anymore. Look

around Oceania. No one is safe from alienation of lands. It is time the Fono address this land tenure issue or put this issue as a referendum general ballot vote. Perhaps individually owned lands are a way of the future, a new adapting form to culture and native lands. I like to think that, as more and more American Sāmoans have become educated, serve in all branches of the military, and live around the world, and with the many graduates of graduate programs on-island, perhaps the people have yet to have an opportunity to directly voice their opinion on this land tenure issue. The time is ripe for individually owned lands to be addressed locally before this issue becomes a coat tail to the federal courts. Then, this issue will be addressed once again, by foreigners.

NOTES

1. Fee tail is an estate that is inheritable only by specified descendants of the original grantee, and that endures until its current holder dies without issue.

2. Life estate is an estate held only for the duration of a specified person's life, usually the possessor's.

3. Justice Arthur Morrow referenced in this case, *Talo v. Tavai*, 2 A.S.R. 63 (1938); *Letuli v. Faaea*, No. 8-1941 in which title to land cannot be evidenced by hearsay. There is no such exception to the hearsay rule, also referencing *Howland v. Crocker*, 7 Allen (Mass.), 153; *South School District v. Blakeslee*, 13 Conn. 227, 235.

4. Ten years became the precedent to adversely claim land (see *Tiumalu v. Fuimaono*, 1 A.S.R. 17, 1901; *Laapui v. Taua*, 1 A.S.R. 25, 1901; *Mauga v. Gaogao*, H.C. LT 2-1905; *Pafuti v. Logo*, 1 A.S.R. 166, 1907).

5. Pulu first testified that he was familiar with the land because he was a mātai title holder in the Mauga āiga, and he was seventy years of age and had a very long history to the lands in general and then he stated that the Vaipito belonged to Mauga Moimoi as an individual. However, after a court recess, he changed his testimony stating that Mauga Moimoi did not own the land as an individual. However, Judge Morrow refused to rescind his original testimony and believed his original testimony was more accurate in that Mauga Moimoi owned the land as an individual.

6. Act of April 7, 1962, Pub.L.7-19, codified IX Code American Samoa, section 9.0103 (1961). According to Article I, Section 3 and Article II, Section 9, Rev. Const. Am. Samoa, this legislative bill must pass two successive legislatures for it to be enacted into law. S.107, 15th Fono, 3d Sess. (1978); H.157, 15th Fono, 3d Sess. (1978); H.220, 15th Fono, 4th Sess. (1978); S.2, 16th Fono, 1st Sess. (1979); S.59, 16th Fono, 2nd Sess. (1979); H.119, 16th Fono, 2nd Sess. (1979); S.97, 16th Fono, 3d Sess. (1980).

7. S.107, 15th Fono, 3d Sess. (1978); H.157, 15th Fono, 3d Sess. (1978); H.220, 15th Fono, 4th Sess. (1978); S.2, 16th Fono, 1st Sess. (1979); S.59, 16th Fono, 2nd Sess. (1979); H.119, 16th Fono, 2nd Sess. (1979); S.97, 16th Fono, 3d Sess. (1980).

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BOOKS NOTED

RECENT PACIFIC ISLANDS PUBLICATIONS: SELECTED ACQUISITIONS, JULY 2018–DECEMBER 2018

THIS LIST of significant publications relating to the Pacific Islands was selected from new acquisitions lists recovered from Brigham Young University–Hawai‘i, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, University of Auckland, and Macmillan Brown Library at University of Canterbury. Other libraries are invited to send contributions to the Books Noted editor for future issues. Listings reflect the extent of information provided by each institution.

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