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Pacific imaginaries: ontologies of connection, reconstruction of memory

It is remarkable that the Pacific is almost entirely absent from contemporary civilisational analysis, especially given its evident importance to anthropology, to archaeology and to Durkheim and Mauss – two formative thinkers in the paradigm. But new world contexts more generally are still marginal to civilisational analysis. The lacuna relates to the strengths and limitations of the three images of civilisations discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. American and Pacific new worlds were mostly separated in history from Eurasia – the main nucleus of creation in perspectives of civilisational analysis – until the sixteenth century. Moreover, successor civilisations were more dispersed in Oceania and the Americas, and inter-civilisational encounters were uncommon and more restricted.

The fates of new and old world societies look different when viewed through the prism of capacity for inter-civilisational engagement. Examining four major themes, I approach the Pacific as both a new world and an old world. First, the Pacific is made by a long history of migration. Through voyaging and migration, islander societies expanded, creating and sustaining zones of engagement for millennia before Europeans came. Travel stimulated an imaginary of exchange, the second theme. Exchange cannot be understood with a utilitarian mindset; it is rather an expression of relationship, association and alliance – engagement broadly speaking. The third theme is the new world context. European colonialism conjoined the Pacific to other civilisations in more extensive engagement. This was a violent and disordering historical experience for the Pacific. But, as argued in Chapter 4, experiences of colonial intrusion, dispossession, subjection and dis-embedding can be considered forms of engagement. It was also the case that forms of engagement in general were far from alien to islander societies. As an old world, Pacific civilisation was already relational and had a paradigm of engagement in the relations of exchange that islander societies practised and the cosmologies that endowed meaning to their connectivity. When European colonisation incorporated Oceanian societies into larger trans-national networks of

capitalism, established cultural habits of exchange could find a place in the trading circuits set up by the colonial empires. Finally, the reconstruction of memory in the Pacific's ocean civilisation revives the values of the past in a project of renewed connection. The chapter ends with a section on Australia's ambivalent cultures which have emerged from the British-Australian project of colonizing the lands and worlds of old world indigenous civilisations. Australia, in particular, is in the Pacific, but also out of place in the Pacific.

The Pacific's absence from contemporary civilisational analysis continues in a scenario in which critical scholarship on the Pacific has grown. Through exchanges between historians, artists, novelists, sociologists, activists and archaeologists from the region and counterparts from elsewhere (known as 'outlanders'), debates about post-colonial conditions have produced new insights, helped to foster cultural memory and islander identities and languages, generated different methods and shaped new practices (Borofsky, 2000). Furthermore, the expansion of knowledge and the range of cultural exchanges has fostered an awareness of the status of the Pacific as a civilisation in its own right. Islander-intellectuals in the arts, politics and sciences, such as Albert Wendt, Vaine Rasmussen and Vilisoni Hereniko, have steadily cultivated exchanges with professional historians who have privileged indigenous historiographies in new epistemologies of the Pacific – Donald Denoon, Kerry Howe and Marshall Sahlins, to mention the main figures. Against the backdrop of cultural and political dialogue, anthropologist, activist and artist Epeli Hau'ofa proposed the encompassing name of 'Oceania' for the Pacific on the basis of cosmologies that share common themes (Hau'ofa, 2008; Waddell *et al.*, 1993). Continuing Wendt's use of 'Oceania', Hau'ofa's purpose was to replace a connotation of detachment of insignificant lands with one of engagement and exchange. Before turning to the four themes of the chapter, I want to examine the terms on which it can be claimed that Oceania is a civilisation as a way of supporting Hau'ofa's project and turning to the question of inter-civilisational engagement.

From a civilisational angle, Oceania is a larger world with reviving social and cultural resources despite the extraordinary disordering produced by colonialism. Where does it start and where does it end? For this question, no answer seems adequate. Geography has no single answer, but it does identify a number of distinguishing features. The Pacific has big horizons. Though there are many islands, there are also long distances. Its vastness puts everything else in perspective. The Pacific's surface area is larger than the planet's combined land surface. If space alone is taken as the criterion, most of the Pacific's islands seem tiny in this vast ocean. As the world's largest ocean basin, the Pacific is geologically and environmentally integrated by surprisingly few sets of seismic patterns and deep water flows. Geological integration aside, it is problematic to attribute unities to

Pacific worlds. The Pacific includes minuscule and disappearing atolls, but also the huge island continent of Australia and the large islands of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.

Generalisation would therefore seem hazardous, but that is exactly what European explorers did when they labelled diverse islander societies as Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. 'The Pacific' itself is a European construction of the very oceanic imagination discussed in the previous chapter as a counterpart to continental imagination. At the same time, a critical sensibility helps when navigating current-day uses of inherited geographical traditions. An interesting historical example is Matt Matsuda's incorporation of archipelagic Indonesia, the Philippines and the Malay Peninsula into his geography of a greater Pacific world (2012). In his analysis, South-East Asia was part of the nexus of engagement from the demi-millennium that interconnected other worlds with the Pacific basin. The geography of Oceania, in this alternative view, is inhabited by diverse peoples with lengthy shared and conjoined histories. There is no definitive nucleus; instead there are many cultural centres of an older polycentric civilisation. The shared and conjoined histories are discontinuous, however, and one of the main forces of discontinuity is capitalist modernity. Two centuries of integration into emergent capitalism, which has been consubstantial with subsuming colonialism, has transformed the meaning of the Pacific's geography. Arif Dirlik is right to highlight the discourse of the 'Rim' (1997: 129–45). But the discourse is neither all-powerful, nor pervasive. The Pacific's past is polycentric and its forms of memory embrace connected centres, a continuous mythology (both temporally and spatially), particular historicities and an unusual mode of inter-cultural engagement. For critical generalisation to be possible, an appreciation of this mode of engagement and its dimensions is obligatory.

An ancient world of migration

A next step in charting engagement is to summarise the migratory origins and patterns of the Pacific constellation. The Pacific had migratory routes favoured by intertidal systems that created a rim of sorts (Gillis, 2013: 33). Ancient patterns of Austronesian migration from New Guinea through to Tonga and Samoa, and then Hawaii in the north and New Zealand in the south, laid down maritime routes. Early experimental travels gained momentum somewhere around 1500 BCE, when Lapita peoples took a qualitative leap into the unknown by spreading through what is known today as Micronesia. They reached Fiji and then – as canny emigrants – spread further afield. In doing so, ancient navigators expertly

and methodically expanded in the last wholesale human migration (Fernández-Armesto, 2001: 281–9; Paine, 2013: 13–22; Scarr, 2001: 21–8).

Migration entailed interaction with seas and the ocean that became a model for interaction between peoples. It is indicative of a first Pacific imaginary. Connections to the sea are etched in the body of inter-cultural relations of exchange and in Polynesian cultural memory. Polynesian and Micronesian mariners were expert navigators and inferential learners. They could empirically assess wind and direction by literally ‘feeling’ the swells of the ocean. Taking their bearings from the sun and stars, they calculated positions on reed maps to slowly cover the remote Pacific. Familiarity with regularly travelled seas, reefs and island coasts gave mariners knowledge of ocean movements and the cycles of aquatic life.

The long-term pattern is not straightforwardly continuous, however. Periods of broken occupation of particular islands ended with fresh arrivals. Islander memory and myth records waves of migration such as these. There is evidence also in the archaeological record. Moreover, stratified chiefdoms created in a process of state formation were significant factors in the twelfth- to thirteenth-century shift in migratory patterns. Territorial polities cropped up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, Hawaii and Tonga. Stratified state organisations and practices emanated to smaller Polynesian islands with new migrants in a pattern of engagement in which patterns of polity-making were modelled for multiple island societies.

After millennia of expansion, Oceanian peoples had reached the edges of the ocean basin. New Zealand (Aotearoa), the hardest destination due to its unfavourable winds and a less hospitable climate, was reached at end of this period. Occupation of Aotearoa was a thirteenth-century watershed for connectedness in Oceania. The furthest reaches of the ocean were also occupied. Mariners were able to get to know it well enough to reach its eastern perimeter and settle on Hawaii and Easter Island/Rapa Nui. Both of these were, on the best assessments possible, mostly one-way migrations. At a considerable distance from their original sources, Hawaii and Rapa Nui were remote from the chains of engagement and the circuits of long-distance voyaging. Connections with the South American coast seem possible, but the evidence of links is, at best, inconclusive. By the time the first European explorers appeared, Hawaii and Rapa Nui were part of a far-flung network of knowledge centred on the learning houses of Raiatea in the Leeward Islands (Matsuda, 2012:132). Both sets of islands hatched outpost societies generally regarded as separate civilisations. Archaeologists, historians and to a degree anthropologists have marvelled at the achievements of the Rapa Nui and the Hawaiians and with ample reason. The extent of migration is evidence of the power of mobility in Oceanian civilisation.

Exchange as a paradigm of engagement

From the outset, travel by water was an indispensable part of relations between island cultures. The maritime talents of Polynesian and Micronesian mariners maintained contact between islands and within separate societies. With common Austronesian linguistic roots, communication between and amongst Polynesians and Micronesians generally presented few barriers. Regular and organised visits between islands supported exchanges, as well as communication. Exchange and ritual events, such as the Kula, were simultaneously economic, spiritual, strategic and societal. As represented in Malinowski's ethnography and Mauss's reviews in *The Gift*, the Kula and like rituals incarnated exchange and alliance-making (Mauss, 1969; see also Rundell and Mennell, 1998: 20–1; Sahllins, 1989). Through enactment and re-enactment of relationships islanders were able to reaffirm the links that integrated them. Indeed, the rituals bonded archipelagos and were important enough in some places to be enshrined in sacred platforms and statues. In turn, interaction on a larger scale between discrete cultures was defined by their reciprocal connections. The benefit of Malinowski's and Mauss's anthropologies of exchange is that they privilege the symbolic co-institution of social relations. Malinowski's ethnography examined islander reciprocity in isolation from other exchange circuits. Since Mauss explores the manifold nature of exchange by comparing different networks and their interactions, thereby casting reciprocity into a comparative frame, his model warrants further remarks.

Mauss's anthropology shows that exchange mediates non-commodified relations in intra-civilisational relations. His ethnographies of gifting boost understanding of the importance of exchange and the complexity of cosmologically constituted notions of obligation. *The Gift* (1969) reviews ethnographies of potlatch, Kula and other forms of reciprocity with a focus on the power of exchange in evoking obligation and sociability and in organising the consociation of different islands. While his comparison of such complexes in Melanesia and Polynesia – and with pre-Brahmanic India and north-west America as well – presents an internal picture, larger-scale interaction also appears. Pacific societies are characterised by a paradigm of organisation of material and moral life that empowered trade and exchange across greater distances and involving encounters of more clearly differentiated cultures. Though connections with societies around the edges of the Pacific were sporadic prior to the nineteenth century, Oceanians had a paradigm of connectivity that could be scaled up to larger encounters and longer journeys. In Mauss's discussion of inter-island rituals, elements of inter-societal relations are pieced together (Mauss, 1969: 24–8). Social relations created through an accretion of acts of reciprocity and exchange can be understood as an implicit model of civilisation-building. Islander societies were

allied in a larger consociation. In depicting the societies of the Pacific in this way, Mauss construes them as civilisations with rich cosmologies and capacity for reciprocal social relations.

The model of social relations that Mauss elucidated was at odds with prevailing conceptions of civilisation associated with colonialism. Though materially 'poor' to European eyes, Pacific social formations were constituted by fertile cosmologies that structured intricate bonds of obligation. The social relations of Pacific societies were enlarged in complex processes of entwinement of local economic practices of reciprocity with other civilisational varieties of capitalism connected with colonialism. The latter entailed logics of expropriation and imaginaries of exchange.

Expropriation of land and resources is well documented (Scarr, 2001) and a few points will suffice to summarise the principal patterns. Major exports of copra, guano, phosphate, sugar and coffee were at the heart of the plantation economy run by Western, Australian and New Zealand companies. Towards the end of the twentieth century, mining and logging reached unsustainable levels on many islands, especially Fiji, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. Any survey of the past of Oceania would be incomplete without recognition of the very dark history of 'blackbirding'. Islanders were seized or defrauded and taken with impunity into forced labour, a ruinous fate for islander social organisation and heritage. Depopulation took its toll on islands suffering this fate.

While the extractive logic of capitalism is inseparable from the historical inter-connection of Pacific and Eurasian worlds, the focus here is on exchange, for it is in exchange that we find a resilience of Oceanian civilisation. How historic patterns of exchange were interspersed with the capitalist imaginary of the colonial powers is not a straightforward problem. In Hawaii and throughout Polynesia, island societies negotiated the goods, networks and hierarchies of Western intruders (Sahlins, 1989). The governing chiefdoms absorbed new commodities and adapted them to existing patterns of reciprocity. By doing so, they stimulated new developmental spurts. The inter-cultural character of economic engagement continued to involve exchanges in values and obligations, as well as exchange of goods and services. There can be no naysaying the argument that, with time and the growing colonial presence of British, French, German, Dutch and then US and Australian powers, imaginaries of reciprocal exchange were subsumed under patterns of worldwide capitalist trade. Subsumption meant long chains of connection (Scarr, 2001: 104–6). The flow of information and goods washed over long distances through mediating ports. Well integrated into the circuits of world trade, 'Rim' societies of the Americas, Asia and Australia acted as points of accumulation and transfer of valuable cargo. Still there are limits to integration. The limited extent to which developmental patterns have taken over

the ways of islander life is attested to by the ongoing advice of economists at the end of the twentieth century that Pacific islanders need to embrace the capitalist spirit more (see Dirlík 1997: 129–33). If that is so, then it should be little surprise that processes of insertion of the ‘social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity – the core of all oceanic cultures’ into capitalism’s economic orders has been complex, incomplete and always producing a surplus of meaning in exchanges (Hau’ofa, 2008: 36). To have some grasp of those processes requires the context of colonial experiences.

Contested dominion: colonialism, discontinuous cultures and the quest for sovereignty

The confrontation of European and Pacific imaginaries that came with colonialism brought contrasting civilisations into contact, conflict and dissonance of understanding. Colonialism began when the Spanish, in an extension of their pursuit of paths to and through Asia, dealt a further blow to the Ptolemaic imagination by stumbling on the South Seas (Scarr, 2001: 13–14). The early centuries of exploration and trade were then dominated by Spain’s America–Manila trade, which took traders around a circum-Pacific circuit. Over two centuries, the trade became a multicultural enterprise integrating many sites and labourers in different aspects of the production, storage and transport of wealth (Matsuda, 2012: 115–23). But there was a distinct shift. Around the time that the ‘Spanish Lake’ ceased to be the trading domain of Spanish galleons, European colonialism altered sharply, and with it the consciousness of civilisation. The civilisational consciousness created by Europeans in the takeover of the Americas was extended and altered in the eighteenth century with the colonisation of Pacific societies. With an existing body of signs of civilisation carried over from colonial experience in the Western hemisphere, Europeans did not recognise the complexity of Pacific societies (Mazlish, 2004: 28–48). A patchwork of continuities and discontinuities resulted from the consequent violent cultural disordering of societies, traditions and peoples (Armitage and Bashford, 2014), a definite though incomplete process concentrated in what can be characterised as the long twentieth century of dealings between the imperial and hegemonic powers and the island societies of Oceania (Howe *et al.*, 1994).

Above all, the significance of patterns and impulses of migration that were remarked on by the ethnographically curious did not sink into European consciousness. In the early encounters of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, European explorers were in awe of the culture of unmatched navigational skill and migrating practices of Pacific island societies (Paine, 2013: 14). Such

admiration suited the hermeneutical animus of the age in which knowledge of the 'other' necessarily entailed striving to understand language, belief and custom (Mazlish, 2004: 34–5). Europe's explorers were charged to learn about the natural and cultural histories of the South Seas. There can be little question that island worlds began to impact on science, cartography, ethnology and art. The men who compiled drawings and ethnographic and botanic reports for Paris and London – Jean-François de Galaup, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, James Cook, Joseph Banks, George Vancouver and their entourage – also tapped into existing travel circuits by picking up Polynesian interpreters and navigators, utilising their expertise and transporting them far (Matsuda, 2012: 134–9). Through scientific and maritime reports, through maps, through artistic representation and by contributing to migration, explorers began to produce unusual constructions of otherness. It is difficult to distinguish amongst these with precision to what extent exploration and science were motivated by naive, genuine ethnological curiosity and to what extent this was civilising scrutiny. Furthermore, curiosity separates into art and science, which, though aligned, do not disappear into one another (Beilharz, 1997: 74–5). However, the grades of civilising scrutiny also depended on who was looking and whether their sponsorship was of an artistic, scientific, missionary, literary or philosophical nature.

Patterns of colonial design, inter-imperial competition and 'noble savage' representation took the place of inter-cultural curiosity. For the second new-world zone, Western colonialism was going to be a multinational affair that included Russians and Germans as late imperialists, as well as the United States in its colonial experiments. The British and French entered as the most expansive and experienced imperial powers. Imperial integration of the Pacific and linkages with other world regions only began in the late eighteenth century, even though voyages of exploration had begun 250 years earlier. By this stage, Europe's empires had formed modern visions of civilisation that framed myths of noble savagery. Two overarching myths of savagery operated in the primitivist imagination. Pacific lands presented to Western civilisation, first, as settled, serene and bountiful insights into a pre-civilisational stage of evolution. Second, they were construed as lands available to churches as missions, to the natural sciences and anthropology as laboratories of world history, to imperial governments as colonies and to business interests as sources of wealth.

Christian missionary work had complex engagements and a complex impact. Protestant missions sprang from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. On a contrary downward trajectory, Catholic fidelity faded as Spanish influence waned and French authorities and landowners increasingly resorted to tyrannical responses to local opposition. Missionaries and merchants departing from the shores of the British colonies in Australia and New Zealand were the first

to reach into Polynesia. Reports on the Pacific energised missionary zeal in Britain (Matsuda, 2012: 145). Informed by the objectives of Enlightenment and civilisation, different British missions found success and disappointment in native reinterpretation of doctrines of faith. Christian beliefs were adapted and truncated in order to fit the cultural preconceptions of islanders. Few introduced doctrines survived in an unaltered state. As Matsuda writes, 'Not schooled in the fine points of European theology and history, the teachers transmitted their own cultural heritages, metaphors, and stories in words and analogies that interwove foreign messages and island beliefs' (2012: 152). The doctrinal outcomes were syncretic due to the resilience of islanders' cultural universes. But it was not just a matter of mixed beliefs. The Bible gave access to written literacy in the Romance languages. As missionaries worked with the Bible, they found themselves using new terms in pidgin and thereby making subtle modifications to doctrinal beliefs. The mode of missionary work was also mixed, generally in combination with trade, but often also with the introduction of formal education and medicine. American missions to Hawaii in the nineteenth century exemplified the partnership of economic and theological exchange. They also had the benefit of learning from the carefully recorded observations of British explorers. Like the anthropologists who came later, missionaries often allied with colonial authorities, while on some occasions conflicting with them. Like later anthropologists, their observations add to an important ethnological record of life, albeit a problematic one.

Cultural anthropologists entered the field against the backdrop of imperial occupation. It is hard to imagine their enterprise without the mixture of collusion and conflict with colonial administrators that resulted from the imperial context. Overall, they fostered an imagination of islands as societies only lightly touched by modernity (Gillis, 2004: 116–18). None operated in a positivist paradigm-free utopia of transparent data (Scarr, 2001: 204–7). Collecting artefacts and reassembling them out of ecological context for museums and galleries, they also recorded ethnographies of custom and culture, which were important accounts of social organisation and a mode of civilisation. They added to the storehouse of data accumulated by Europeans about islands and islanders since the eighteenth century. Often ambivalent in relation to colonial power, anthropologists could contribute to debates on diversity and race as much as early ethnographic reports of the late eighteenth century influenced Enlightenment discourses on civilisation. Moreover, the most revealing ethnographies – Mauss's, Malinowski's, Franz Boas's, Margaret Mead's – had the virtue of disclosing phenomena unfamiliar to Western minds, however framed by primitivism those disclosures may have been. Hermeneutically, the effect of anthropology was to amend the conception of race and civilisation in social science and to expand the modes of understanding of Oceania.

Patterns of French colonialism were prominent in Polynesia. British interest enticed French reconnaissance and then strategic colonisation. Tahiti and surrounding islands, the Marquesas and New Caledonia fell under French rule, while the New Hebrides found itself poised in a *de facto* power-sharing arrangement between the British and the French. If government was a shared burden in the New Hebrides, heavy French investment ensured that its interests dominated the colonial economy (Scarr, 2001: 201). Metaphors and mirages of Polynesia stoked Gallic Romanticism, even while they condensed the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region. French administration brought regimentation to cultural identity, but also a trans-territorial economic sphere that fostered a nexus of exchange. Nuclear testing is seen by many in the region as the incarnation of colonial power and a techno-cultural manifestation of France's imperial imaginary. The human and environmental impact is incompletely documented. Nonetheless, the existing evidence is as alarming as colonialist denial has been obdurate. Support for a nuclear-free Pacific has also run deep and wide. Anti-nuclear groups had good links with the anti-war movements of Australia and New Zealand in the 1980s when the latter were very large. Though widespread across Oceania, the sentiment leans on specific historical experiences of, on one hand, American-dominated Micronesia and, on the other, French-colonial Polynesia. In the latter, it was a struggle around sovereign control of Polynesian affairs and it was not the only front on which independence has been sought. Nineteenth-century revolts against French rule were heroic episodes for nationalist movements in Tahiti and New Caledonia in the 1970s and 1980s. The past was summoned into the present when historic heroes were named and symbolised in anti-colonial movements. In New Caledonia, where French settler-colonisers were a majority, committed Melanesian (or Kanak) resistance was the most sustained, but waned in the 1990s. The past meant something different for the Francophone majority. France has persisted doggedly with colonial rule, unable, it seems, to relinquish its past status as a world empire (Scarr, 2001: 265).

The Caroline, Mariana and Marshall Islands and Guam – the area of Micronesia – had a shared historical experience of intensive inter-imperial rivalry. Spanish rule gave way, between 1886 and the end of the Pacific War, to German domination and then Japanese expansionism and emigration, ending in outright military takeover. American military occupation of Guam portended overall political domination of Micronesia mitigated by patterns of conflict and campaigns for autonomy and independence. Over several decades after the Second World War, the United States exercised strategic control of the entire zone by combining aid and militarisation in the administration of trusteeships. For the United States, the strategic value of the region has been paramount. Washington has insisted on retaining its military presence to ensure linkages in

its global network of bases. Continuing nuclear submarine visits have enlarged the magnitude of command that the United States has globally and regionally. Successive American administrations have invested in the objective of regional stability. Local patterns co-determine the balance of autonomy also.

Facing different, but definite, combinations of consent and coercion, the trust territories have shown a varied appetite for independence. The United States has also varied its strategies of accommodation of traditional structures and practices – for example, by being more obliging in Samoa than in Guam. The American presence was a singular influence on subsequent trajectories of development. Using federal aid, education and welfare programmes as incentives, the US government resituated the Mariana Islands in its sphere of influence. In 1979, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands went their separate ways, when the former voted for assimilation into the United States, while the latter two opted for partial independence (full independence coming in 1991). The split is significant, but both new states remain in the US sphere of influence – willingly so, it appears. Meanwhile, defiance of US policy has had an anti-nuclear inflection in Palau in the western Carolines. More generally, US governmental arrangements in themselves have demonstrated the tension of a democratic state at home maintaining hegemony abroad by combining degrees of free expression of political will with the absence of citizenship. At its apex, American control encompassed the Philippines, American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii and the Mariana and Marshall Islands. In the 1950s, nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands must have been the worst expression of the logic of neo-colonial domination. In the twenty-first century, Marshall Islanders live with its radioactive after-effects. In the years in between, resisting movements for independence, the United States has managed to hold on to all territories in its regional sphere of influence, except for the Philippines and parts of Micronesia. Hawaii warrants separate mention. It is closest to the United States institutionally and in popular culture, though the final say over its laws and administration rests with Washington. Demographically, its population reflects the flows of Oceania, with Hawaiians and descendants of Chinese and Japanese immigrations together constituting a majority. Japanese investment, aid and tourism have influenced economic relations since the 1970s; so also have Chinese interests since the turn of the century. East Asian influence in the North Pacific is a reminder of the multi-civilisational context of Oceania.

By contrast, other Western powers have left the field. Decolonisation proceeded in two major phases. First, New Zealand and Australia in the 1960s retreated from trusteeships in, respectively, Western Samoa and the Cook Islands and Nauru and, a little later, Papua New Guinea. Most of the initiatives of the second phase (the 1970s) were led by the British. Fiji gained its

independence; Kiribati and the Solomon Islands entered the regional stage as independent states. The end of joint British–French rule of the New Hebrides was in sight by the mid-1970s and pressure from the Pacific’s most powerful nationalist movement forced the issue. Led by Walter Lini, the independence movement declared the sovereignty of Vanuatu in 1980 and immediately faced armed insurrection fomented by retreating French interests. The rear-guard action was short-lived. Vanuatu has since looked like one of the most independent states in the region. One cannot help thinking that the fact that neither the French nor the British could individually dominate the New Hebrides – and that they, in a way, counter-balanced each other – is part of the reason why there was space for a robust force for independence to emerge.

Oceania after colonialism faces unsustainable developmental logics, the legacy of nuclear testing and militarism, highly strategised foreign policy regimes and past and current projects in mining, logging and fishing that wreck terrestrial and marine environments. In spite of this, the paradisiacal South Sea Islands are still a figure of tourist discourses and popular cultures that faintly echo earlier Romantic depictions of islander cultures. Needless to say, tourist soft-sells are at odds with the actual fate of many Pacific societies (Howe *et al.*, 1994; Waddell *et al.*, 1993). This is hardly unusual, except that twentieth-century tourism is uniquely more important for the Pacific than anywhere else (Matsuda, 2012: 350–1). Is it possible to imagine other patterns of development? It is time to look at different memories of its pasts and how they are marshalled in contemporary projects of renewal.

Revival and memory

Looked at on a larger scale and from the perspective of revisionist historiography, the Pacific world looks like a region teeming with life rather than a sparse place of remote islands (Armitage and Bashford, 2014). Oceania is populated, not empty, and has watery highways known in cultural memory, not uncharted seas of a last frontier. The Pacific’s creative cosmologies telescope a past of high interaction into the present. It is important to foreground myths, the patterns of engagement, reciprocity and creation to compensate for the inherited cartographies of ‘emptiness’ bequeathed by colonialism and reproduced in current-day discourses of the Pacific Rim. A paradigm of inter-civilisational engagement is evident in these patterns, even though connections with civilisations outside Oceania may have only fully come in the eighteenth century. There are resources for renewal in the cosmologies of connection and engagement.

Myth is particularly important. Oceania's cosmology is a storehouse of collective memory, condensing in its creation stories deeper relations with seas and islands and between peoples (Hau'ofa, 2008). Stories and myths incarnate Oceanian historicity – the sense of how weighty the past is. Islander historicity might have much to offer revisionist historiography (Borofsky, 2000), but my interest is in memory's broader relationship with the Oceanian imaginary. How does the imaginary sustain travel, relationships and memory? There are several imaginary significations with which islanders populated and made the Pacific world. The myths of Pacific civilisation are infused with images of land, ocean, horizon and sky. The point of the horizon conjoins the cosmos and the extended seas, reminding the denizens of ocean societies of both cosmological meaning and the material environment of the ocean. The combination of opposites – cosmic and mundane, vast and small, aquatic and atmospheric – is an outstanding feature of an oceanic world made out of migration and interaction between islands. The power of the imaginary is evident in the craft of travel, which are always similes of social relations as well as the means of transport. The horizon contextualises the mythological heritage of the Pacific.

Oceania's myths make up cultural memory across four themes (Mills, 2005: 374–81). First, the divergences in Polynesian, Melanesian and Micronesian oral tradition are variations on common elements. General threads can be discerned in otherwise diverse stories without denying the differences in their structure and content. One thread is that myth mediates the worlds of gods and of humans. Islands themselves could be gods. Gods merge into demi-gods to form hero figures. Hero narratives and romances have generic plotlines that speak of everything from episodes of cosmic creation to the mundane struggle for resources. Common symbols are littered throughout different sets of myth: volcanoes, fire, plants, sharks, fish and sea-monsters, heroic creatures and canoes are found in all the oral traditions.

Second, Oceanic myths narrate the cataclysmic origins of the world. Stories of the origins and emanation of peoples feature a motif of fishing redolent of buoyant ecologies. There is nearly always an archetypal creator. Other features of the landscape, sky and ocean were used to signify different classes, skills and creativity. The chiefly aristocracy appears as the powerful sun, while the popular classes are depicted as the underworld. Particular features of land and sea are used to denote specialist artisans, voyagers and pilots. Metaphors of the topography of islander societies have come down to contemporaries via prior reconstructions of memory.

Third, myths communicate conflict and consociation in the cosmos and in society, echoing the combination of opposites noted above. They symbolise original cosmic, social, class and cultural cleavages in stories of formative struggles.

Conversely, the structure and content of myths also represent the ties of different groups, for example in inter-dynastic connections between the aristocracies of distinct archipelago cultures. We can add that inherited mythology also speaks of an imaginary sustaining, first, travel and relationships between peoples and, second, open relationships with the past and with ancestors (see Shilliam, 2015).

Finally, art is an especial condensation of the cosmological elements. Depictions of the wars of the gods in heaven and in the underworld parallel the symbolically constituted inter-dependence of cultures and the conflicts within societies. Art preserves ancestral traditions of seafaring and fishing and harvesting resources. Where Western civilisation assimilated the myth of the landlocked Garden of Eden from Hebrew origins, Oceania's myths situate humanity's gardens on the shoreline, in the shallows and the reefs, and out in the aquatic depths (Gillis, 2013: 8–9). They are motifs of Oceanian art as an especial mode of cultural endeavour. Contemporary film and documentary makers, dancers, actors, poets and writers also engage cosmological traditions. Elements of myth with common archetypes are present in their performance and representation.

History as a domain does something similar. Some Oceanic histories posit a nexus between the Pacific's cosmologies and the engagement of islander societies (Hau'ofa, 2008; Matsuda, 2012; Scarr, 2001). Relational histories of Oceania, such as Matsuda's and Shilliam's, highlight post-colonial features as well as trying to reconstruct evidence of the inter-cultural character of islander life before the late eighteenth century. Many aspects of the post-colonial era also speak to engagement and not detachment. The Pacific is connected economically, by its navigable seas, and through shared resources in education, the arts and culture. Additionally, connections are stressed when regional unity is found around the common problems of nuclear testing, expanding regionalism, militarism, security and climate change. Understanding the connected present through the lens of engaged pasts calls for conceptualising the whole world region as a civilisation. In Hau'ofa's eyes, the objective is to put Oceania's histories at the service of islander traditions, rather than accepting the historical narratives bequeathed by Western states (2008: 60–79). At stake here, as Dirlik writes in respect of the Tongan intellectual's significance, is 'the historicity of the indigenous peoples themselves and, therefore, their contemporaneity' (Dirlik, 1997: 140). The past is not fully recoverable, but islander values are and they can be pressed into the service of contemporary movements for sovereignty, viable development and cultural renewal (Dirlik, 1997: 141). Remaking Pacific memories reconfigures power as much as any constitutional assertion of sovereignty. Refusing the historiographical closure left to the Pacific by colonialism, Hau'ofa sees for the peoples of the sea of islands relationships that are large, extensive and cosmological. The present needs to be linked to *this* past:

if we look at the myths, legends, and oral traditions, indeed the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe comprised not only land surfaces but their surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it and the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deeds in epic proportions ... Islanders today still relish exaggerating things out of all proportion. Smallness is a state of mind. (Hau'ofa, 2008: 31)

Organic ecological and genealogical histories can best fathom Oceanian pasts and temporalities, fusing their horizons with those of the present. History-telling as a genre of Oceania is calibrated by genealogies of ancestors (Jolly, 2007). Modern representations of harvesting the ocean and travelling over the seas involve reminders of the ancestors. For instance, Maori encounters animate the ancestors by invoking them in the inter-cultural modality of meetings between peoples of ostensibly different cultures. The Maori who meet do 'not treat these visitors as aliens or "others" but as peoples who already share a relation that must be creatively retrieved because it is not just individuals who are meeting but their ancestors too' (Shilliam, 2015: 2). When cross-colonial connections are made by contemporary indigenous movements in the Pacific, the ancestors are invoked in many ways that ontologically enliven the common elements of Oceanic cosmology. As a mode of historical memory, indigenous cosmologies and myths in the Pacific are mobilised in the cause of political restitution and cultural recovery.

Political economy is another sphere of the restitution of Oceania. The picture is not as bright here, however. A regionally integrated economy binding Papua New Guinea to Sydney and Auckland to the Cook Islands to Samoa and on to San Francisco involves a great inequality between the wealthy centres on the edges and the islands in the ocean. There is also significant intermixture taking place and the lines of inequality are not simply between places, but starkly within them. But another side to the regional political economy is less often acknowledged. Hau'ofa highlights it. In the 1990s, he repudiated the fatalism of post-colonial dependency and the elites that are resigned to it (Hau'ofa, 2008: 30). In his project of New Oceania, the emphasis falls on the unbounded character of contemporary Oceania (Waddell *et al.*, 1993). Hau'ofa speaks of economic self-reliance, mutual ownership of land, movement and connectivity as a millennia-old identity. In displacing the deficit image of the Pacific, Hau'ofa inserts a vision of a densely connected and crowded world, an 'enlarged world' of engagement (Jolly, 2007: 529–30). Moreover, it is a world on the move, so to speak. The

values, practices and relationality of Oceania are extended to Australia, New Zealand and California by diasporic migration, greater travel and communication, acquisition of property and jobs and a popularisation of the visual arts, film, literature and music (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 166–8). At the end of the twentieth century, Oceania had the greatest percentage of international immigrants of any world region (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 1). Short-term circular visits are a hidden part of migratory movements and may be as significant as tourism (Hau'ofa, 2008: 17). While the lion's share of those are travelling to New Zealand and Australia, migration moves in all directions and not only to the wealthy centres on the edges. Moreover, large Polynesian regional networks are sustained by the circulation of goods and monies between island homes and emigrants living in the United States' west coast states, New Zealand and Australia's eastern seaboard. Not only is money remitted – which, if alone, might be a sign of dependency – but a vast array of objects, technology materials and symbolic foodstuffs flow back and forth in consignments. The informal trade circuit is reminiscent of the 'old' Pacific more than new developmental strategies (Scarr, 2001: 271). The general pattern recreates elements of the reciprocity of economic and cultural engagement of Oceanian civilisation.

Identity is also a matter of memory. What to call Oceania in the wake of decolonisation is a living issue. The change of designation of the South Pacific Forum to the Pacific Islands Forum reflects the shift in the whole frame of geopolitics since the late 1980s. Despite its *raison d'être* of open regionalism, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) is a creature of the Pacific Rim states, and not its oceanic sovereignties. It is not just about bloc-making or broad alliances; this is a problem of epistemological and conceptual understanding of the civilisational character of Oceania, its imaginary and its engagement with other world regions, including its neighbouring ones. But, in turn, this raises the question of who should be included in conceptions and discussions of Oceania. I end the chapter with the proposition that Australia is 'in' and 'out'.

In and out of place: Australia in Oceania

Amongst the islander cultures of Oceania that feature such practices, Australia is a peculiar case that calls for more comment. I can see three reasons to treat Australia as a distinct world. The historical conquest of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civilisation has given new world Australia a sharp and contrasting other. No treaty on which a contest of sovereignty could take place was ever settled. For a long time, Aboriginal civilisation was utterly suppressed in the historical memory as a result of the multifaceted war upon it. To be sure, the position

of the two civilisations inhabiting the southern continent has been quite remarkable. Moreover, limited immigration from the Pacific until the 1980s constrained sentiments of belonging to Oceania in this context, unlike New Zealand. Second, the British colonised the continent in its phase of exploration, as part of the movement into the Pacific. Britain had models of colonialism to work with, but all derived from contexts outside Oceania. The new colonies were a laboratory for experiments in institutional formation and Victorian-era order. Rapid and designed urbanisation was the creative mark of the British colonies on the mainland continent. The legacy for the Anglosphere was an image of a dream-land – a frontier of capitalist development, but also an escape from capitalist modernity (Dirlik, 1997: 130). Finally, Australia assumed a neo-colonial role in the region with Federation and increased independence from Britain. The region's largest state continued in that vein in alliance with the United States from the 1950s onwards. As a middle-power in world terms, Australian governments enjoyed an excess of influence.

That is a brief summary, which calls for more elaboration. The lure of the Antipodes had a different purpose than the Romanticism associated in the European vision with the South Sea Islands. Many of the latter were 'discovered' on the way to find the dreamt-of Great South Land. None being found, Terra Australis became a substitute. It would be British, but other than Britain; Oceanian, but a huge continent, not an island; connected through its north, but populated in a different and much older migration than the voyaging patterns that created Polynesia. Before Britain established a beachhead in Botany Bay, an immensely diverse Aboriginal civilisation had flourished, enriched by relations into the north. The 'empty' state of the uninhabited lands was a condition that haunted antipodean sensibilities in colonised Australia, in part due to the undeclared war on the peoples, signs, semiotics and Dreamtime cosmology of Australian Aboriginal civilisation. Civilisation-making in Euro-Australia has occurred as a strange condition of uncertain and ambivalent belonging (Beilharz, 1997). In Australia, modernity is in part a problem of how to combine a denied Aboriginal old world with a new world that has no antiquity, no Middle Ages and no revolutionary foundation. Contrasting the deepest temporality imaginable in the Dreamtime – with its stories of Creation from land and sea – is a Euro-Australian historical memory of a short two centuries. Of course, what Australia had as a background were two foundational British myths (Rundell, 2004). The initial myth was that Australia was *terra nullius* – an understanding that was derived from field reports from Cook's exploration. The signs of civilisation familiar to the British in Asia and the Pacific could not be found in Australia and the potential for comprehending the complex Aboriginal civilisation was outside of Britain's imperial imaginary. As it became the official doctrine of British

colonialism in Australia, *terra nullius* directly informed colonial rule and later the creation of a federated polity. More importantly the doctrine of *terra nullius* was inscribed deeply into Australia's cultural life. When combined with the second foundational myth – that the southern continent would host a 'new' white society based on an imported British constitutional tradition – the basis for racism was set.

Traditions formed in colonial and then federated Australia entailed the subjugation of indigenous memory. Deep ambivalence epitomises cultural perceptions in Australia, partly as a result of the occlusion of Australia's colonial conquest. The two myths have slowly come unstuck as Aboriginal social movements asserted the living presence of an indigenous civilisation and as Australia's population diversified. With the adoption of multiculturalism, the persisting foundation of Australian racism was put into question and contested. However, Euro-Australia still has a damaged historical memory with gaps that, at most, have been irresolutely filled. Moreover, heroic nationalism pervades commemoration of major wars as the mainstream of collective identity, while darker pasts have to be persistently reasserted.

As part of the long process of problematising but not dissembling myths, Australia's post-war turn from British allegiance in foreign policy to alliance with the United States has shaped its place in the western Pacific. Relations with island states are imbued with an imaginary of state and capitalist power. Australia assumed a role of regional power acting in close proximity to US interests. In the wake of decolonisation, Australian policy cast the Pacific as a zone of few economic prospects, heightened political instability and impending environmental decline. Australia's development, aid and foreign policies are guided by fears of the Pacific's absolute marginalisation from globalising processes (Jolly, 2007: 526–9). The developmental model advocated by a succession of national governments and foreign policy experts contains several components of the Australian figuration. Pacific states 'need to open their economies; effect structural change and good governance; abolish customary land tenure and inappropriate, undemocratic traditions; and connect with the dynamism of Asia' (Jolly, 2007: 527). The entire vision of the Pacific in the middle-power strategy centres on Australia leading Pacific states to a viable developmental path. As Jolly observes, Canberra's national policies in trade, security, foreign affairs, immigration and aid have Australia 'both as model and saviour of the Pacific, its future and its prophet', with aid programmes to replace the ceased welfare programmes offered to communities affected by nuclear testing. The inconsistencies in policy directions are amplified in Australia's demonstrably cruel practice of shipping asylum-seekers to off-shore detention centres in Nauru and in Papua New Guinea, while expressing

support for aid and development strategies in the region. Australian governments project ambivalence about their role, reflecting a more general ambivalence of place.

Conclusion

If the first new world of the Americas still wants for attention from civilisational analysis, then second new-world societies are overlooked almost entirely. In this chapter, I argue that Oceanian civilisation exhibits patterns of deep engagement and connection. The willingness to travel and the proficiency to migrate over vast distances are emblematic of Oceania, as well as constitutive of its island societies. The byways of travel also served for contact and communication, exchange and alliance between islands and up and down archipelagos. Richly diverse, yet with shared components, cosmologies of Oceania conjoin peoples with the ocean environment and with each other. Islander societies have practised inter-cultural engagement with remarkable adaptability to new circumstances. Into these Oceanian worlds colonial powers intruded, stimulating inter-civilisational engagement, including with its most ruinous consequences. Though damaged, Pacific cultures have invoked their own counter-imaginary in closer proximity to past islander experiences. Collective memory – whether continuous or reconstructed – provides resources for coping with critical issues. The cultural fund of memory can also help with thinking differently about climate change and other environmental problems facing the region. Latin America is on the eastern edge of this context also. As another new world, for Europeans, it is the next substantive case examined, as we start to modestly address evident gaps in contemporary civilisational analysis.