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Reflections on the Importance of Indigenous Geography

RDK HERMAN

Using storytelling from his experiences with the Western Apache, Keith Basso elaborates the notion that “wisdom sits in places,” that is, the way in which social and cultural knowledge and guidance—wisdom—is based on experience. Because experience occurs in places, landscapes (and their stories and place names) can come to encode social and cultural knowledge.¹ This notion of geography as philosophy would not have been foreign to the ancient Greeks to whom the discipline is often traced, but geography today, with some notable exceptions, is only slowly returning to the quest for wisdom. As an academic discipline, geography must struggle against the limitations of the larger (post)modern episteme within which it is situated. A genuine engagement with Indigenous geography may open a pathway out of this fix.

What I call “modern geography”—meaning the Anglophone geography that has emerged during the past two centuries with influence from France and Germany—grew as both a tool and a product of the colonial era. The discipline helped map out the civilized and the uncivilized and the place of each in a world of empires. Its scholars at times justified territorial expansion with hints at world domination, laid out “scientific” justifications for racial inequality, or provided the technical tools and know-how for conquest and colonial rule. In the process, Western notions of geography—of space, time, and human-environment relations—were imposed on the rest of the world. The hegemonic power of the resulting modernist worldview continues to perpetuate in part through its intimate relationship with global capitalism. It is important to bear in mind that what is now held forth as a “rational” worldview has its roots in a European culture war—the Reformation. Although this worldview is accepted as common sense today, it embodies a distinct ideology that enabled the colonization of the world and the commodification of nature.

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To consider Indigenous geography on its own terms requires first that we destabilize and displace the edifice of “rationality” on which modern geography rests. This is an enormous project, but we can start with a specific target: what Max Weber called “the disenchantment of the world” that took place after the Reformation. This movement, seen as essential for rationalizing Christianity away from “superstitions” and the “magical” elements of Catholicism, resulted in far greater epistemological consequences.² Although the Reformation did not succeed in these goals, by the nineteenth century the steady push toward “rationality” that came with the Enlightenment—plus the impacts of Descartes, Darwin, and the power of capitalism—ultimately succeeded in the disenchantment described by Weber, Adorno, and others.³ Surprisingly—or not—this enormous shift receives little or no attention in contemporary histories of geography, leaving this shift invisible.⁴ Our inability—or unwillingness—to recognize that the dominant, disenchanted worldview is the result of specific historical and cultural forces and not a natural product of “rationality” prevents us from looking beyond the severe limits that worldview prescribes. These epistemological blinders border on ideology and pose an enormous obstacle for geography.

For geographic thought there are three important effects of this disenchantment. The first is the removal of any “spiritual” aspect to the world—that is, a reduction of the world into pure mechanistic materiality on the one hand and the mental realm of human consciousness on the other. This is where the term *disenchantment* comes from. Second, and related, is that by rendering nature as mechanistic, it loses any intrinsic values: values come to exist in the mind, not in the world. Third, this bifurcation of humanity and nature poses a conceptual distance and detachment that allows for the commodification of the material world essential for capitalism. These three are corollaries of each other, but it is worthwhile to examine them in turn.

The removal of “magic” from the world was prompted by the Reformation and spurred on by Descartes and the rise of modern science. As Scribner aptly describes, the Reformation and the Enlightenment contributed “to a process of secularization, often understood as the rationalization of modern thought-modes by the . . . elimination of magic from human action and behavior. This did not mean the repudiation of religious belief, but a separation of ‘magic’ from ‘religion’ in early modern Europe.” The Reformation took the “magical” elements out of Christian religion, “eliminating the ideas that religious rituals had any automatic efficacy, that material objects could be endowed with any sort of sacred power, and that human actions could have any supernatural effect. Religion was thus freed of ‘superstitious’ notions about the workings of the world and became a matter of internal conviction, enabling the rational human action characteristic of modernity.”⁵ The resultant separation of “spiritual” issues from science as a whole has had a profound impact on geography, which into the eighteenth century included a range of “esoteric” traditions including astrology, numerology, alchemy, and natural magic.⁶ Although the push to remove science from the purview of the Church was important at the time of the Enlightenment, the ongoing refusal of science to engage with the unmanifest world in any way

is now a medieval holdover well past its due date. It is an epistemological shift with distinct historical and geographic roots and is readily contested by sciences from other cultures.⁷

In Indigenous sciences, the world is often understood in terms of flows of energies (and sometimes entities) across a permeable boundary between manifest and unmanifest realities. Working relationships with forces deemed “superstitious” or “irrational” in modern science are significant aspects of social processes and healing practices.⁸ Maintaining these worldviews and practices is an uphill battle against the hegemony of modern scientific thought and the legacy of missionaries and educators who tried so hard to dismantle Indigenous knowledge systems. Even among scientists today, those who try to work outside the mechanistic paradigm in ways that approach Indigenous science are denounced as crackpots.⁹

Indigenous sciences are not dead yet and may still offer vibrant worldviews in which human life exists in an environment of meaning. Modern meaninglessness has been attributed in part to the growth of rationality in modern society and the assumption that there is a necessary tension between rationality and transcendent meaning.¹⁰ When the manifest and unmanifest worlds interpenetrate, as they did in premodern European thought and as they do in many Indigenous worldviews, then activity and occurrences in the world are potent with meaning. Weber felt that in modernity, “as intellectualism suppresses belief in magic, the world’s processes become disenchanting, lose their magical significance, and henceforth simply ‘are’ and ‘happen’ but no longer signify anything.” Greisman points out that a new pantheon emerged to take the place of the old gods: competition, commodity fetishism, hysterical nationalism, and counterfeit religion.¹¹

There is such a thing as superstition, and it should be avoided through rational thought. This includes the belief in humanity as the sole conscious species on the planet and the bifurcation between humanity and nature, as much as it does the fear of black cats or walking under ladders. The failure of modern industrial society to engage with the world as a meaningful place results in a sort of philosophical hydroponics wherein people search for meaning in the detached sphere of ungrounded ideas, while the physical world is treated carelessly as a meaningless container for human life. It is because of the resulting social and environmental ills that I call this “rationality,” because the truly rational would see the folly of this and look toward a deeper, more holistic understanding of the world. Rationality cannot have epistemological blinders. The fact that contemporary scientists now (however grudgingly) give credence to traditional environmental knowledge shows the beginnings of a possible paradigm shift.

Particularly for Americans of three or more generations, who are detached from any geohistorical roots to an ethnic homeland and its associated premodern traditions, the notion of an enchanted world is alien. But many people still live in Indigenous and semimodernized societies in which older traditions still hold against the tides of capitalism and modernization. Part of the importance of Indigenous geography is in looking to (or, looking *through*) societies in which other value systems and integrated worldviews are

still operational. Rather than forcing moribund modernity on the rest of the world, perhaps we can learn from those who have not yet fully succumbed.

The separation of humanity from nature follows from the bifurcation of the world into mind and matter. It is an essential condition of capitalism that nature loses its animation and becomes mere raw material for industrialization. This commodification could not go forward as long as nature was understood and experienced as being part of the extended community imbued with consciousness. The Lakota notion of "All my relatives" is not a concept that jibes with capitalism. Adorno saw disenchantment as the culmination of bourgeois drives intent on manipulating and dominating all of nature.¹²

Inasmuch as Indigenous worldviews are not disenchanting, humanity and nature remain interrelated to greater or lesser extents. Gregory Cajete states that Native science is about mutual reciprocity, "a give-and-take relationship with the natural world, and which presupposes a responsibility to care for, sustain, and respect the rights of other living things, plants, animals, and the place in which one lives."¹³ Similarly, Vine Deloria Jr. wrote of Indian metaphysics as "the realization that the world, and all its possible experiences, constituted a social reality, a fabric of life in which everything had the possibility of intimate knowing relationships because, ultimately, everything was related. This world was a unified world."¹⁴ These sentiments have been echoed in my own experiences with Indigenous communities.

These issues are of little concern for most geographers today. Despite the discipline's eager genealogical linking-up with the likes of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, geography has become largely either a critical or a utilitarian discipline. Geography has, over the past several decades, struggled for meaning and social relevancy. Especially since the 1960s, the turn by some geographers toward Marxism, humanism, and feminism has opened avenues of resistance to the oppressive crush of modern capitalism on geographic thought. Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph elaborated the importance of meaning found in places and were influential in spurring a new humanistic geography in the 1970s, but such work lies on the outskirts of the discipline today.¹⁵

The critical turn in geography since the early 1990s has moved the discipline powerfully forward in critiquing the power relations in knowledge and representation as well as in spaces and places. In the manner that Habermas posed "critical" as "liberating," such work seeks to free us from those power relations by exposing them, empowering us through knowledge if not giving us clear paths of resistance. Feminism, critical race studies, and whiteness studies have done much to destabilize the taken-for-granted hegemonic stance and push geography toward genuine engagement with other viewpoints. The overall assumptions of modern rationality remain largely intact, and even geographers doing "postcolonial" studies remain largely unwilling to step out of their epistemological frameworks for a moment and consider different ways of understanding the world. Geographers engage readily with Foucault, Deleuze, and Hegel but not with Vine Deloria Jr. The colonial mentality holds: the modern worldview is "real" even if it is socially constructed; other worldviews are not. Thus the critical turn has yet to decolonize the discipline truly and still leaves us in a disenchanting world without inherent values.

So let us consider Indigenous geography, its challenges and its offerings. My starting point is values in the world, and because “rationality” is fraught, my focus is wisdom. I define *wisdom* as decision making based on deep and abiding knowledge and understanding of long-term processes and aimed at maintaining balance and harmony in the world—bearing in mind both smaller and larger scales, both the present and the future. This is embodied in the Haudenosaunee philosophy that all major decisions of a nation must be based on a mindfulness of seven generations. Capitalism and its concomitant social and political formations foster decision making focused on individual gain, usually in the short term—rarely beyond one generation. Hence at the beginning of the Common Era’s twenty-first century, we live in a world that suffers the results of an acute and overwhelming shortage of wisdom. This is encoded into the hegemonic framework of how we understand the world.

On the collective level, societies develop communal wisdom amassed over generations from empirical observations and insights that teach us how to live effectively in the world and in our own societies. Such lore results also from a dialogue with the earth, because it is ultimately based on physical survival and the social and cultural structures that evolve in combination with the production of material needs. Traditional wisdom pays keen attention to the environment at the same time that it teaches of social order and personal development. Following Marx, one can argue—often effectively—that these social orders simply naturalize forms of domination. However, that throws out the baby with the bathwater. Social orders in modernity do the same, but few social critics argue for overthrowing the modern scientific worldview.

Geography as a discipline provides ways of talking about the interconnections between environment, modes of production, social and political formations, and cultural practices and values. Because modern geography maintains a mechanistic view of the world, perhaps we can look toward “Indigenous geography” to get a glimpse of knowledge systems that did not make this disconnect.¹⁶ Cultural and environmental knowledge, values, wisdom practices, and science remain holistically integrated. That this “Native science” is crucial to effective understanding of human-environment relationships for all aspects of social and cultural life is powerfully argued by Dan Wildcat and Vine Deloria Jr.¹⁷ That Native science is no less “scientific” than modern science is effectively elaborated by Gregory Cajete and increasingly recognized by mainstream scientists.¹⁸ Today the major initiative on climate change being developed by the US Geological Survey and other federal agencies involves working closely with American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

The time for Indigenous geography to be recognized as an important field of inquiry has arrived, not just for the colonized societies whose cultures are alternately extolled or dismissed, and whose lifeways are under threat from the power of global capitalism (if not the state), but also for the dominant society that suffers a shortage of wisdom. Now is a good time to reengage with traditional environmental knowledge on its own terms, to give us some blocks for building the levee against human-environment catastrophe. This is not to glorify Indigenous knowledge as a panacea for the ills of modernity or to suggest that there are no other paths to wisdom. Rather it is simply to say that inasmuch as

geographers have drawn avidly from other disciplines, it is time that geography did so with Indigenous science in an honest and meaningful way.

To elaborate the role of wisdom in Indigenous geographies, I draw on two projects I have been involved in since 1999 aimed at representing Indigenous geographies for Native and non-Native audiences. Both are Internet based for maximum distribution and are intended as educational at the same time that they serve cultural preservation. In 1999 I helped design and develop the pilot project for *Indigenous Geography* (or, *Geografía Indígena*) at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). I was involved with that project for less than a year before moving on to design and produce a similar, independent project for Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands called *Pacific Worlds*. Across these two projects, I have produced eight representations of Indigenous geographies for different communities and have developed curricula and hosted a dozen teacher workshops on this topic. I will use the lessons I have learned from these projects—*Pacific Worlds* in particular—as the vehicle for elaborating the importance of Indigenous geography.

Pacific Islanders represent the most widely scattered culture group on the face of the earth linked by an ancient heritage and a complex oceanic environment. They present a cornucopia of compact, distinct yet related cultures that were ruptured and divided by colonial administrations. The Pacific was one of the last frontiers of Western colonization, most of it taking place in the nineteenth century, with some islands relatively unaffected until World War II. Micronesia— islands from Guam and the Marianas to the Marshall Islands—fell under a UN mandate after the war and were administered by the United States, which (aside from conducting atomic testing in the Marshalls) largely left these islands alone until the 1960s (fig. 1).

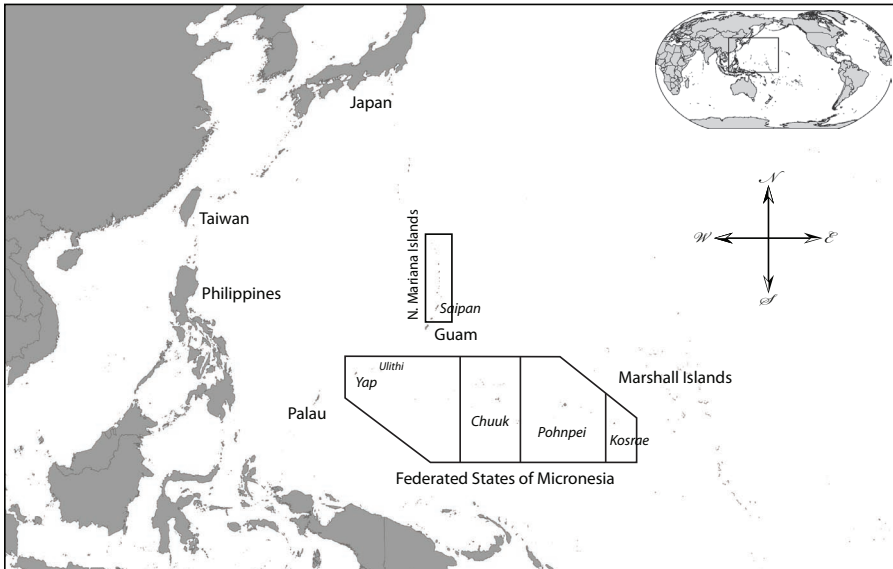


FIGURE 1. Map of Micronesia that shows entities that were managed by the United States under a UN mandate following World War II. Map by RDK Herman.

Hence the older generation today still recalls the war and has observed the changes of culture since that time. Cultural decay has led to higher rates of crime, teenage suicide (highest in the world), and other social problems among island youth. This was clearly seen as due to the loss of traditional culture. Isaac Langel, an educator on Ulithi Atoll (Yap State, Federated States of Micronesia), remarks,

When people started to focus on Western education, then the local education kind of slacked off, because people pushed their children to go to school: "Never mind learning these [traditional] things, because in the future you will not need them. You go and attend school." Right now there is only one person on this whole atoll that can make canoes. But before, there were a lot of old people that made canoes over here. And this passing down of knowledge from father to son, it's almost non-existent now. I think education should try to maintain the culture. And they should have started back when the Western education got introduced to the island.

The situation on islands of the American Pacific differs from that of Indian reservations: Native governments have high levels of sovereignty over all of their islands (except in Hawai'i), but the forces of colonization—including the introduction of Christianity, capitalism and various new economic activities, plus the American educational system—continue to push these islands into global capitalism and modernity. Some islands, true, are more insulated by their remote locations, small sizes, and relative lack of material resources.

As is generally true of work in Indigenous communities, representing these cultures has to be done in accordance with a number of principles and protocols.¹⁹ These include, most importantly, the use of Native voice to convey the information, so the text of these Web sites is derived almost entirely from guided conversations with community participants. Because the purpose of this project is, in part, to build a comparative platform for Pacific Island Indigenous geographies, there needed to be a consistent format for presenting the information. I used a format of eight thematic "chapters," each structured internally with specific pages. Beyond this consistent template, there is room to squeeze in extra stories and information as well, and this I used increasingly. Each chapter represents a layer of information; these are not exactly chronological but mix time and space in a way that conveys movement and crossover from ancient origins to the immediate present and future. There is also an "entry" portion in which you meet the community guides and are oriented to the place you are about to explore. From there, the overall format explicates mythological understandings, human-environment relations, cultural landscapes and practices, historical impacts, and contemporary issues and mobilizations (see fig. 2). It is just one of many possible models. Here I will follow the eight themes of *Pacific Worlds* to consider the kinds of insights that Indigenous geography offers.

The first chapter, "Arrival," focuses on the origins and early peoples in each location—who they are and where they say they came from—as well as the legends concerning the place. It is the foremost statement of how

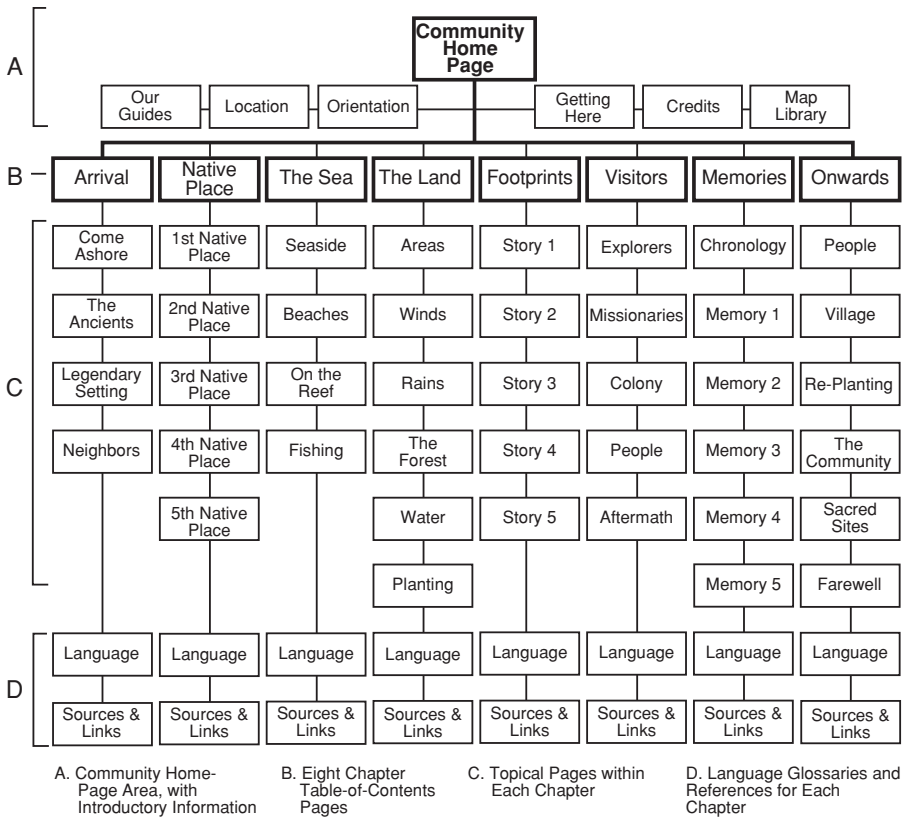


FIGURE 2. Basic Web-architecture template for Pacific Worlds community Web sites. Image by RDK Herman.

a community understands its origins and its place in the world, including its relationships to nearby communities. The parallel section on NMAI’s *Indigenous Geography* project is called “Origins.” In both cases, these tales have cultural lessons that tie the people to the place and, in some cases, clearly spell out the relationship between the people and the world as a whole.

There is no better example than the origin story of the Hopi. After two previous destructions of the world due to human depravity, the Hopi emerge in the Grand Canyon and encounter the being Maasawu. As told by Ferrell Secakuku,

When they came here, Maasawu gave them the name “Hopi” because they chose the original way of life where they become closer to the earth by surviving in the most rugged and most desolate area. Maasawu said, “You must be humble, and being humble is going to bring strength to you. You must live by prayer and by all the rituals (*wumi*) that I have taught you.” Maasawu reminded the people that

this land is hard to survive on and repeated the conditions. “This is a harsh land, so you must have water, and know how to use the seeds and planting stick in order to survive. You must abide by the conditions given to you.”

Throughout the course of *Indigenous Geography*'s Hopi Web site, one learns how the Hopi manifest this exhortation to live properly in the world in order to ensure their survival, and of the intimate cycle of rituals and practices that link the spirit world, the natural world, and Hopi society. The message, like that of Noah's Ark, reminds us that living out of balance—living unwisely and selfishly—leads to destruction.

In the village of Airai, Palau, the origin stories focus on the local trickster god, Medechiibelau:

Medechiibelau and his friends the gods went out on a boat or a canoe one day. They were going to eat something and he saw a fish going by so he caught the fish and filleted one side of it. Only one side. And he said “Maybe I can still save this one-sided fish.” He put the fish in the water and it began to swim on one side, and he noticed that it had only one eye, so he created another eye for it, and said “I am going to name you *rrai*.” And so today, *rrai* is a local fish, a flounder. One side was removed by Medechiibelau, and today that fish remains the same: one-sided with two eyes on top, and was named *rrai*, because Medechiibelau is from Irrai (Airai). It's flounder. We have them in Airai.

“Arrival” and “Origins” stories also elaborate on the relationship with neighbors. The *sawey* system, for example, presents a complex relationship of reciprocal responsibility between Yap and its Outer Islands, with people on larger islands being responsible for people on smaller, more vulnerable islands, and tribute flowing both ways. Legends explain the origin of this practice, but the existence of such a system serves all involved and comes into play particularly when crises (such as a typhoon) strikes. Thus in these stories we see lessons that lay out ways to achieve balance.

The second chapter, “Native Place,” looks at a handful of anthropogenic sites (a later chapter looks more at legendary sites). Each of these speaks of specific practices that maintain the social order—even when such sites have been strongly conditioned by Western influence. Here, Rosa Castro, an elder from Tanapag village on Saipan, discusses the Catholic cemetery:

When I was small, and somebody died in the village, we took the body to the cemetery. And we couldn't shout or talk, because of deep respect. And when a lady has her time of the month, she could not go in, she had to go back home, out of respect for the people who already died—the ones who were first buried there, and the others thereafter. That is the custom: we cannot shout, ladies cannot go in when they feel that one, they cannot go to see who's buried there. That is the

custom. In these times, they don't know how to be respectful. Some people go and they shout and make noise. But before, we didn't talk, we just went quietly, because we really respected the custom for the cemetery.

Similarly, Chipper Wichman describes the ancient hula school (*halau*) at Ha'ena, Kaua'i:

It was not for the faint-hearted to enter into scholarship at this *halau*. It was expected that you would dedicate your life to learning. And I mean literally dedicate your life, because there were many strict *kapu* (taboos) that governed the protocols of being a student in the *halau*. There was a *manō*—a shark—that lived off the beach, and part of the graduation ceremony was that you had to swim from this point, around the channel and into the beach at Ke'e. And you might have fooled all your students and you might have fooled your *kumu* (teacher), but you couldn't fool the shark! He was supernatural, and would devour any students who had not followed all the protocols of the *halau*.

“The Sea” and “The Land” then each look in depth at the intertwining of cultural practices and values with the environment. In both cases, the stories emphasize holistic environmental understandings, the need for appropriate resource management, and sociocultural practices that benefit the entire community. “Respect” has been a consistent theme. Anne Perez Hattori, a Chamorro historian at the University of Guam, explains that

When you enter any jungle area, you're supposed to ask the spirits' permission. And then you're not supposed to over-harvest or anything like that, because if you abuse the environment, it won't come back to you, but if you respect it, then the next time you go, there will still be some there. This connects to a value called *inafa'maolek*, which means “to make things good.” The philosophy is very broadly that what you do to others, it will happen to you, so you need to have respect and balance. The whole concept of *inafa'maolek* is about respecting your family, respecting elders, and respecting the environment.

Similarly, Native Hawaiian anthropologist-geographer Hannah Springer talks about conservation practices in old Hawai'i: “We did evolve the *kapu* system, which included natural resources management based on empirical science: making that observation regarding the health of the resource's population and acting accordingly. In some cases it was to make a certain species of resource unavailable for harvest in a specific region, for a specific amount of time; continuing to make observations, and then lifting the *kapu* prohibition on the taking of that species. Surely this was in response to what they learned through successive generations, living with limited resources.” In several cases, we hear about communal fishing practices. Here is Bill Paulino, regarding Guam:

Commercializing the catch was unheard of. As a family you gathered there and you waited your turn to get your share. It was all divided by the number of families; even if one was not there, somebody was supposed to be responsible to take care so that fish got to the family. There is no such thing that you didn't get your share because you didn't go there. The thing about sharing is that the one who actually does the most catching usually ends up with the least, because that was the person who was responsible. You know, "Take it, please take it" and before you know it, you don't have much to take home!

In all cases, it was regretted that these customs were changing. "Now we've seen the dollar sign," says Ben Sablan on Saipan, "and lots of people like to go and sell their own fish." Barney Maremang on Ulithi speaks of the impact of freezers, which suddenly permitted the accumulation of fish: "When we come back, then we divide for our own whole village. But not these days." Given the acknowledgment that the traditions were being lost, the importance of documenting them and presenting them in an educational format is all the more important: perhaps something of these lessons will be taken up by the next generation.

"Footprints" returns the focus to the legendary, exploring "storied places." The title "Footprints" denotes *footprints of the ancestors*: particular locations or landscape features that have mythic tales associated with them. As Carlos Andrade explains, "Stories provide lessons, examples through the words and through the eyes of our ancestors. Place names themselves are messages from the ancestors that contain warnings, or urgings to look at something important there. They're stories about how to live":

In this story, there is a large cave and a lot of people living in it. At the time, these people had just brought in a large catch of fish, and are cooking them. [The goddess] Pele is wandering down the coast and seeing them, goes in to the cave and asks them for some fish to eat. But they deny her the fish. As she's walking away from them, on the outskirts of the cave itself there's an old man and he's cooking fish for himself and his grandchild. And as Pele walks by, he calls her to come and eat with them. His invitation is the most *pono* [proper] Hawaiian behavior: whenever you see someone pass by, you call to them to come and eat, and even if they don't respond or say "no, no thanks," it is your obligation as a host in Hawaiian culture to invite a stranger to come and eat with you. And so he calls her to eat, and they share the little fish that he has with her. Then before she leaves, Pele tells him not to stay in the cave that night—to go somewhere else. And later that night, when all the people are all satisfied, fat and sleepy from their big meal, the cave collapses and kills them, all of them.

In some cases the message is not so clear, but here is where Keith Basso's observations about places and stories come into play: these become statements

in a larger discourse that can be mobilized situationally to produce specific meaning. As physical places, they provide a hermeneutic substance: one can actually see or visit the place in question and be reminded of the story and its relevance.

“Visitors” is then the first of two sections examining historical transformation following “discovery” by the West. This one explores the different waves of non-Pacific outsiders (explorers, missionaries, and colonial powers) and the impacts that they had on island life. It is important to note that people reading the Web site—assuming they started at the beginning—are now in the sixth of eight chapters, and the foreigners are just now arriving. This is an intentional counterpoint to Western history that begins with explorers and the first written records. Thus here, when the changes of colonization are revealed, they are that much more jarring. Kathy Kesolei, a history teacher on Palau, recalls, “My grandfather was a houseboy for the Catholic priests here during the German period. And when I talked to him, he said, ‘Well the first thing they do is cut your hair short and give you clothes to wear,’—no more grass skirts, no more loincloths that men wear. That’s how clothing really is an influence of the missionaries, and that’s pretty late. My grandmother was wearing grass skirts at the turn of the century, so clothing was really new here.” Mariano Laimoh, an educator on Ulithi atoll, tells another story of the German period in Micronesia (1899–1914):

Domingo Wataaoriuy was nicknamed “Six Moon.” “Six Moon” was the name of a German vessel that was used to capture and transport Ulithi men to work as slaves in different places under the German administration, possibly in phosphate mines. It was said that Domingo wore a magical force around his body so that during every German raid, even if he was spotted in hiding, the German troops never came closer to him. So he was never taken to work for the Germans. Thus he came to be known as Six Moon—named after that German ship. Mr. Six Moon died, a legend, around the age of 100.

The transformations that took place during the colonial period affected different places in different ways. “Memories” continues looking at the historical trajectory set in motion during the colonial period, focusing more closely on twentieth-century events as seen by the elders. For example, Hawaiian lands were privatized in 1848, and the monarchy overthrown in 1893, setting the stage for contemporary struggles there. In Micronesia, where Japanese rule had followed the Germans, every place has stories about World War II—some of them horrific (for example, the torture and murder of Father Dueñas on Guam), some of them poignant, as in this story from Johnson Toribiong on Palau:

There were a number of Japanese people who died in Palau, and after the War you could see dead bodies all over the place, and nobody cared. There were some Korean and Japanese orphans who became Palauans because their parents just gave them to the local people. So

when we became independent, they had to be adjudged Palauans, because they had no blood connection to Palauans, yet they were raised as Palauans. It's a sad story. Some families were split—half of the kids remained in Palau with their mothers, the others went to Japan and never came back.

And some speak of wisdom. Alphonso Luguliol relates this event from Ulithi atoll:

At that time, we listened to our chief, because he was the one who negotiated with the Americans. We were lucky in that, the former chiefs that we had, they didn't allow anyone to use any of those kinds of boat that the Americans left, or any vehicles. There were a lot of vehicles left behind. And a lot of fuel. So, what I respect the old chief for is that, what if he didn't stop us, and we came to depend on what the military had left behind, and suddenly, that runs out—then where are we? So we were lucky that we didn't adopt the use of all those things. Instead, we started making canoes.

Finally, "Onwards" looks at current community efforts to mobilize the cultural resources and historic sites to reinvigorate traditional values in a modern setting. This invariably speaks of taking the values of the past and moving them into the future. Mel Kalahiki on O'ahu, Hawai'i talks about visiting the ruins of Kamehameha III's summer palace in the forest above Honolulu:

One day I was asked to come to Kaniakapupu by a preservation group. When I came into that area, I saw faces on every rock, big and small, and all of them were sad. It's hard to explain what happens to me when I'm up there. I understand what happened [in the past], so the *kaumaha* (weight) is on me. I have the responsibility up there to make things *pono* (proper, balanced). The spirits of our ancestors are really present there. That's some of the driving force that makes people volunteer, hands-on, doing the work to preserve this site.

Ku Kahakalau explains the philosophy of Kanu o ka 'Aina Hawaiian Charter school in Waimea, Hawai'i:

We don't have anything against people going into business, but not with a cut-throat kind of a mentality of "How many people can I step on to get to the top as fast as possible." But instead, looking at business as economic development where everybody gives and takes and we all grow and prosper, rather than "I'm becoming a billionaire and you're going to be cleaning my toilets" type of a mentality. So in that way, we have been designed specifically to prepare students to become leaders in the twenty-first century.

Johnson Toribiong on Palau presents similar sentiments:

All in all, the kids here have to learn how to fish, how to husk coconut, how to grow taro, how to survive on a subsistence basis. Because once you set that as the basic foundation, then you can go modern. But if things fail, like the bubble economy of Japan, or Enron and WorldCom, and if things fail, and if you know how to survive at the most basic level, you're all right. . . . We have to learn how to survive at the subsistence level, and that brings in our tradition: cooperation and conservation.

Finally it is essential to emphasize the enormous importance of language. Indigenous understandings of space and natural phenomena are encoded in language, so each chapter of any *Pacific Worlds* or *Indigenous Geography* Web site provides a thematic glossary in the Indigenous tongue, showing the nuances of meaning linked to cultural understandings. Faustina Rehurer, director of Palau's National Museum, emphasizes that "as long as you have the language, the language will in a way be a core of maintaining the culture. Because if you use the language, you use the culture—as long as we have the language and the names of villages, the names of estuaries, the names of reefs, the names of taro patches, and so on." Every chapter also concludes with a bibliography of reference texts and links to relevant Web sites with more information on the topics.

I have compared the multichapter format of these projects to geographic information system (GIS) layers. Here, however, we are getting not only layers of information but also layers of meaning. As noted, in *Pacific Worlds*, it is chapter 6 ("Visitors") when Western explorers show up. By the time readers reach this chapter, they have already been through five layers of Indigenous knowledge and practices, from the ancient legends to traditional sites to winds and rains and fishing and farming. It is hoped that by chapter 6, readers have a feeling for the layers of Indigenous history and understanding that are imbued in the land and the culture, and are better able to understand the postcontact landscape as a thin veneer resting atop these other layers.

So what is the value of these projects? In Micronesia, it was easy to see how Americanization and globalization were eroding cultural values by eroding the practices on which they are based. In Hawai'i, the loss of sovereignty in 1893 put Native Hawaiians at the mercy of American public schools, in which their cultural values were largely disparaged, and they were banned for decades from speaking their Native language. In both cases, efforts to promote Indigenous culture and environmental understandings serve these populations as they navigate into the twenty-first century and work to reconcile where they stand in relation to the world and to maintain or recapture values and practices that were lost. Putting such information on the Internet in a formal, educational manner where it is seen as valuable crosses the divide between tradition and postmodernity. For American Indians whose traditions may be more intact, and who control the education of their youth, there is still that danger of retention as young minds wander into the Ethernet.

At the same time, it serves us all to be reminded of the wisdom of all our ancestors, and the practices and frameworks they developed for producing and maintaining balance in society and with the environment. Just as Muslims pray five times a day, it serves us all to be reminded, as often as possible, where the path of wisdom lies. Modernity does not offer this information up to us, so as Dan Wildcat says in his forthcoming book, “What the world needs today is a good dose of indigenous realism.”²⁰ For those who are not Indigenous, or who are but have lost touch with our cultures, we need to understand that life in the world is a web of relationships and responsibilities—that like these small islands of the Pacific, we are on a planet with finite resources, where we all need to live together in harmony with each other and with our surroundings. Indigenous geography gives us lessons on how this can be done.

NOTES

1. See the excellent discussion by Keith Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape,” in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1997), 53–90.

2. See Robert W. Scribner, “The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the ‘Disenchantment of the World,’” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 475.

3. See Han van Ruler, “Minds, Forms, and Spirits: The Nature of Cartesian Disenchantment,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 3 (2000): 381–95.

4. There is no mention of this topic in these well-known histories of geography: David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (London: Blackwell, 1992); Tim Unwin, *The Place of Geography* (New York: Longman Scientific and Technical/John Wiley and Sons, 1992); Geoffrey Martin, *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

5. Scribner, “Reformation, Popular Magic, and the ‘Disenchantment of the World,’” 475.

6. The term *spiritual* is fraught; because of the distinction between science and religious phenomena in the modern episteme, using the term *spiritual* makes one a virtual target for those who insist on this bifurcation. The spiritual is, by definition, not scientific. However, there are really no good terms to use to describe an animated (“enchanted”) world. The hegemonic power of scientific discourse has obviated any ability to talk about the range of spiritual phenomena in any way that sounds reasonable. Livingstone (*Geographical Tradition*) uses the term *esoteric* to describe such approaches in premodern geography.

7. In this piece I differentiate between modern Western society and premodern European and Indigenous societies. However, when using the word *Indigenous*, in the broadest sense, I include the traditional science and knowledge systems of India, China, and other non-Western cultures, where the world is still understood in both material and energetic terms.

8. Vine Deloria Jr. details many accounts of such phenomena in his book *The World We Used to Live in: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006).

9. A good example is the work of British biochemist Rupert Sheldrake, whose theory of morphogenetic fields has led skeptics to question whether he deserves to be

called a “scientist.” The Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s interview with him on its Web site notes he “was once a respected Cambridge botanist” and asks, “Is he still a scientist to be taken seriously?” Dr. Robert Todd Carroll’s online “Skeptic’s Dictionary” more pointedly asserts that “his continued pose as a scientist on the frontier of discovery is unwarranted.”

10. Kelly Besecke, “Speaking of Meaning in Modernity: Reflexive Spirituality as a Cultural Resource,” *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 3 (2001): 365.

11. Weber is quoted in H. C. Greisman “‘Disenchantment’ of the World: Romanticism, Aesthetics and Sociological Theory,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 4 (1976): 496–97.

12. *Ibid.*, 495. Greisman notes (pp. 500–1) that Adorno observed the way many modern people attempt to create an aura of enchantment in their lives—through popular music, wilderness adventure, or by looking romantically at premodern society (the Internet had not yet been created)—but argued that attempting to revive a presumed preindustrial arcadia would not solve the problem. Rather, capitalism must founder on its own contradictions. I agree, but I argue that the disenchantment is one such contradiction, and Indigenous societies can exemplify what it means to live without that contradiction.

13. Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).

14. Vine Deloria Jr., “American Indian Metaphysics,” in *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, ed. Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat (Golden, CO: American Indian Graduate Center and Fulcrum Resources, 2001), 2.

15. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974); E. C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976).

16. For a discussion of the mechanistic paradigm in science and its relationship to both traditional knowledge and advances in the sciences, see Stanislav Grof and Marjorie Livingston Valier, eds., *Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

17. Deloria and Wildcat, *Power and Place*.

18. Cajete, *Native Science*.

19. Details of the protocols and processes for doing this project are found on the following page of the *Pacific Worlds* Web site <http://www.pacificworlds.com/homepage/principl.cfm> (accessed 16 July 2008). What is important to know is that the text derives from interviews conducted with knowledge bearers in each community. In every case, the text was woven from these interviews into a single narrative, and each informant had the opportunity to review, edit, or change the text before it was published. In several cases, the final project was reviewed by a recognized culture-bearer outside the circle of informants.

20. Daniel Wildcat, *Red Alert! Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2009).