The resources of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans, I-Kiribatis, Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and Tongans, are no longer confined to their national boundaries; they are located wherever these people are living permanently or otherwise . . . One can see this any day at seaports and airports throughout the central Pacific where consignments of goods from homes-abroad are unloaded, as those of the homelands are loaded. Construction materials, agricultural machinery, motor vehicles, other heavy goods, and myriad other things are sent from relatives abroad, while handcrafts, tropical fruits and rootcrops, dried marine creatures, kava and other delectables are despatched from the homelands.

—Epeli Hau’ofa (1993)

The land is the people, is the money, is the phosphate, is the farm, is the grain, is the cattle, is the development and pollution of a nation.

—Katerina Martina Teaiwa (2005)

The above statements are not really lists. They are maps. Epeli Hau’ofa, in his essay “Our Sea of Islands,” wrote that Oceania—the lived-in and peopled Pacific Ocean—was interconnected, not disconnected, by the vast amount of water lying between islands and continents. Not only did Pacific Islanders move through oceanic space, but nature moved, too: “construction materials, agricultural machinery, motor vehicles, other heavy goods,” as well as “handcrafts, tropical fruits and rootcrops, dried marine creatures, kava and other delectables.” Oceania was animated and integrated by people and nature in motion. Movement, circulation, travel, production, and consumption mapped out worlds much larger and less isolated than the “tiny worlds” usually ascribed to the histories of Island peoples and Island
nature. One decade later, Banaban scholar Katerina Martina Teaiwa retold Hau’ofa’s tale, this time adding another dimension: the land itself. In “Our Sea of Phosphate,” Teaiwa meditates on the simultaneous, interdependent histories of human and non-human dispossession and dislocation as twentieth-century phosphate extraction pushed both Banaban people and Banaban land out to sea. People scattered and became migrant workers; capitalists turned the land into fertilizer and scattered it upon foreign lands. “The writing on diaspora,” Teaiwa notes, “focuses on the movement of bodies, labour, peoples, ideas and cultural productions, usually as a consequence of colonialism and imperialism, but rarely of land in its physical sense.” However, “the experiences of Banaban and Nauruan land mined, shipped, transformed into fertilizer and then literally scattered across the fields of Australia and New Zealand come close to the original meanings of diaspeirein.” Diaspora: the scattering and sowing of people, like seeds; the scattering and sowing of nature to seed someone else’s environment. Teaiwa writes, “The land is the people,” and Hau’ofa claims, “We are the ocean.” Movement, of both people and nature, animates the histories of Pacific Islands and Islanders, the ocean, the rim, and the world beyond.\(^1\)

This chapter argues that movement has been—and remains—a key variable in Pacific Islander lives. In the Pacific, people and nature moved as in no other world-historical region.\(^2\) More specifically, diaspora, as Teaiwa suggests, presents a useful lens for examining and analyzing the ways in which human migration is related to plant and animal migrations. In this chapter, I focus on Oceanian migrations and diasporas, with an emphasis on Polynesian historical experiences. The term “Polynesia”—meaning “many islands”—originated in early colonial definitions of Oceanic space; other terms, such as “Micronesia” (little islands) and “Melanesia” (black/dark islands), represent similarly colonial geographies. While some Pacific peoples have embraced these terms and others resist them, I want to suggest that these terms, even in their most literal sense, are simply inaccurate. Rather than thinking of Polynesia as “many islands,” we might consider the entire Pacific to be a world of many diasporas.\(^3\) There are Pacific Island people diasporas, plant diasporas, animal diasporas, even disease diasporas.\(^4\) Below, I examine several of these globetrotting natures. I focus on Pacific peoples whose histories reflect unique connections and active integrations of distant and disparate peoples, places, and processes through human and non-human movement, just as Hau’ofa and Teaiwa have suggested. Not only were Pacific peoples agents of epic transoceanic migrations in millennia past, but these migrations continue apace in the twenty-first century. Pacific Islanders have carried nature with them and rearranged Pacific environments all across the ocean, from the past
to the present, just as the environment has also guided and delimited the contours of human movement and migration upon the waves.³

The diasporic nature of Pacific environmental history is in stark contrast to two canonical ideas within both Pacific and environmental historiographies. These are, one, that outsiders rather than insiders effect ecological change; and, two, that Indigenous peoples’ histories largely unfold in situ, or in place.⁴ But the truth is that for the past one thousand years, Pacific peoples have been at the forefront of ecological change and biological transformations in the Pacific Ocean, and, although native to many islands, they have yet made the whole world their home, a world of many diasporas, a world made by people and nature in motion.

**People in Diaspora**

At a time when “Western civilization” was confined simply to the Mediterranean Basin, the seeds of a diaspora that would stretch thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean in all directions took root in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. This triangle is known as the Polynesian homeland. Prior to the Common Era, Polynesian ancestors settled in these islands. They carried pigs, chickens, dogs, and other faunal stowaways, as well as over a dozen “canoe plants”: taro, sugarcane, breadfruit, coconut, and others.⁷ The first fifteen centuries of the Common Era were a time of both “rootedness” and “rout-edness” for Polynesian peoples. Complex societies developed in the homeland as well as in the Society and Marquesas Islands, while others continued to travel, discovering and colonizing islands as far away as Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the southeast, Hawai‘i in the north, and Aotearoa (New Zealand) in the southwest. These three points form the edges of what is known as the Polynesian Triangle, a cartographic representation of the world’s most expansive human diaspora on the cusp of global early modernity. Long before 1492 and the famous Columbian exchange, Oceania was a theater of its own transoceanic exchanges. Not only did Polynesian migrants settle upon so many islands across the Pacific Ocean, bringing their own “portmanteau biota” with them—canoe plants and all—but they also created “neo-tropics” in far-flung places such as Hawai‘i in the north and Aotearoa in the south (see figure 2.1).⁸

Pacific peoples also encountered the American continent and American nature. It should not be too shocking to imagine Indigenous Pacific Islanders sailing up to American shores before 1492. Polynesians were not the only maritime people in the Eastern Pacific Basin. For example, Chumash moved between the Channel Islands and the North American mainland for
thousands of years, and there were many other Indigenous maritime migrants up and down the American Pacific coast from Alaska to Chile. Europeans, too, sailed to the northern reaches of North America in the centuries before Columbus’ voyage. Rather than thinking of the Americas as a sealed vessel prior to 1492, historians are now recognizing the fluidity and mobility of peoples and natures in and out of the Americas in the centuries before Columbus sailed the ocean blue. In the case of the Polynesian Diaspora, researchers have found little convincing evidence that Polynesian peoples lived in the Americas before 1492—or that their DNA mixed with Indigenous Americans—but there is strong evidence that Polynesian animals came to South America before Spaniards did, and that a South American plant most certainly left the continent and traveled across the Pacific Ocean. The most cutting-edge research on these exchanges looks at what are called “commensal animals” and “commensal plants.” These are plants and animals theorized to have moved with, and because of, humans, but, where solid evidence of human migrations is irretrievable, researchers look instead for the lingering presence of certain DNA in local plant and animal populations that point to genetic intermixing of native and non-native species. For
example, researchers have studied whether Polynesian rats interbred with local South American rat populations in the period prior to Spanish conquest. Early evidence suggests they did. Whereas the “commensal” approach relies on genetic testing, archaeologists have also recently discovered strong evidence of Polynesian–South American contact in Chile in an even more tangible source: the existence of prehistoric Polynesian chicken bones. These bones have been dated to at least the early fifteenth century, if not earlier. The findings from these combined genetic and archaeological studies strongly suggest that Pacific peoples reached American shores prior to 1492. The Americas were just one node in the world’s greatest maritime diaspora.9

A SWEET POTATO DIASPORA

Evidence left behind by Polynesians in South America is somewhat limited, yet there is abundant evidence of South American natures in Oceania. Look no further than the humble sweet potato. It was likely no later than the twelfth or thirteenth centuries that the South American sweet potato began to appear on Pacific Islands all across the Polynesian Diaspora. The best explanation for this comes from evidence that Polynesian peoples were regularly moving throughout this human web, connecting home islands with distant islands and even continents. Within centuries a veritable sweet potato diaspora fanned out across the Pacific. This was an Indigenous-people-powered environmental transformation. Pacific Islanders adopted the sweet potato into Indigenous agricultural practices and foodways, growing it alongside such traditional tubers as taro and yams.10 While Indigenous Pacific Islanders moved rats and chickens, perhaps as far as South America, they also moved South American nature in the other direction, flipping the dominant historical narrative of continental empires exerting powerful influence over disconnected and powerless islands and Islanders. Long before Chile annexed Rapa Nui (Easter Island), the ancestors of the Rapanui may have come to Chile. That Pacific peoples moved their own natures throughout the ocean, but also moved other peoples’ natures across the ocean, demonstrates that the early Pacific was a world made and maintained by powerful Indigenous actors.

In the early modern era, the sweet potato diaspora continued. Spanish conquistadores brought potatoes to the Philippines, and from there, thanks to the Manila Galleon trade then dumping Spanish-American silver in Ming China (1368–1644), Spanish-American sweet potatoes got dumped on the Asian continent, rapidly making their way into the interior of China, where they played no small role in an agricultural revolution that displaced Indigenous peoples and contributed to rapid population growth and environmen-
tal change. In an early article on Pacific environmental history, John McNeill wrote, in 1994, that there “was no Magellan exchange” comparable to the Atlantic Ocean’s Columbian exchange. This is true—Pacific nature did not need Ferdinand Magellan to set it into motion. When he arrived on the scene in the early sixteenth century, many centuries of transoceanic ecological exchanges had already occurred. Although Polynesian transoceanic trading and the exchange of natures certainly quieted down in the centuries leading up to James Cook’s famous voyages of the 1760s and 1770s, Pacific nature was still on the move throughout the early modern period. It is easy to think of the Manila Galleons as a story of Spanish empire linked with Chinese empire. But as historians are starting to uncover, the galleons did not just move goods, but also Pacific peoples. Chinese migrant workers, and Indigenous Filipino laborers, came to New Spain (Mexico) as early as the sixteenth century. These laborers were involved in the movement of Pacific natures, a process already set in motion by Pacific Islanders.¹¹

A Breadfruit Diaspora

Magellan’s circumnavigation certainly expanded the spread and distribution of migrant natures; Captain James Cook’s late eighteenth-century voyages provided the next great push. After Cook’s death in 1779, Oceania was reanimated by new transoceanic migrations—human and non-human—in which Indigenous peoples again were central to effecting change in both local and global environments. Just as Polynesian peoples moved chickens and potatoes in the pre-Cookian world, in the post-Cookian world they moved sea otter furs, breadfruit, sandalwood, whale oil, and salmon. When Captain William Bligh of the ill-fated Bounty came to Tahiti for breadfruit in the late 1780s, Tahitian knowledge and Tahitian labor played a central role in shaping the coming breadfruit diaspora. Even Fletcher Christian and his mutineers were joined by Tahitian women who powerfully shaped the mutineers’ desires and aspirations. Tahitian breadfruit eventually made its way to colonial Jamaica to feed African-descended slaves. This was, on the one hand, a tale of British ecological imperialism, moving nature from one periphery to another. But African and Tahitian peoples were also part of the story. When Christian and his fellow mutineers fled to Pitcairn Island, the Tahitians who traveled with them re-created Pitcairn Island as a “neo-Tahiti,” planting yams, sweet potatoes, and other crops. This was a continuation of Polynesian-induced ecological exchanges in the Pacific. The colonization of uninhabited islands by Pacific peoples was a story that had begun thousands of years earlier and continued right up until the brink of the nineteenth century.¹²
Breadfruit continued to pop up in strange places. When German warships forced the Samoan leader Māliietoa Laupepa into exile in the late 1880s, he was held for a time on the coast of West Africa in German-occupied Cameroon. His captors fed him “bread, and tea, and rice, and bananas,” but Laupepa was most pleased, on a walk near the prison, to discover a breadfruit tree in an English garden. He offered to purchase fruit from the tree’s owner, but was met with the reply, “I am not going to sell breadfruit to you people.” Instead, the tree’s owner allowed Laupepa to take as many fruits as he wished at no cost. As Pacific peoples traveled the world’s oceans in the nineteenth century, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes as forced migrants, they not only carried nature with them, but also brought ideas, associations, desires, and nostalgias for natures left behind, including breadfruit. A plantation in Jamaica and a tree in Cameroon became part of the story of the Pacific’s many diasporas.13

A SALMON DIASPORA

In the long nineteenth century, Native Hawaiians were recruited en masse to work on European and Euro-American ships. Perhaps as many as ten thousand Hawaiians left Hawai‘i prior to 1876 to work on ships at sea and in foreign lands.14 Many traveled to the Northwest Coast of North America to hunt sea otters. The furs of these animals were sent to Guangzhou, the great emporium of Qing China (1644–1911), where they were sold at a great profit. Toiling alongside the Columbia River, Hawaiian migrant workers developed a taste for a local food source: salmon. The fish were almost always on the move, hatching in the rivers, feeding in the great ocean, then returning to their riparian homelands to reproduce and die. In the early nineteenth century, the Hudson’s Bay Company, which employed hundreds of Hawaiian men, salted and barreled salmon for export to distant places including Honolulu. Two centuries later, Hawaiians still eat lomilomi (“massaged”) salmon as a popular dish. The reason salmon became part of Hawaiian cuisine is related to this history of Polynesian migrant labor and the way Indigenous migrant workers bridged two worlds, Hawai‘i and the salmon-spawning Northwest Coast of North America.15

By the late nineteenth century, canned salmon had entered Polynesian foodways both near and far. Native workers consumed it on Hawaiian sugar plantations, linking their bodies with a diasporic ecology of salmon and sugar, just as the cane they were cutting was likely consumed by Hawaiian brothers and sisters living and working in San Francisco and in Sacramento.16 Meanwhile, in Samoa, itinerant writer Robert Louis Stevenson thought it “curious” that “the common food of one race should be the delicacy of the
other.” As he sat on the coast of Tutuila eating pig, taro, and miki (coconut sauce)—all Samoan foods—his Native comrades lay “upon their sides, eating tinned salmon from home [North America].” But this was not strange. Centuries earlier, Polynesian peoples had incorporated the South American sweet potato into their diasporic foodways. In the nineteenth century, Pacific peoples encountered American shores for a second time and brought home yet another American nature: salmon.17

**Diasporic Stories and Ideas**

The nineteenth-century whaling industry presents yet another theater of Polynesian movements and transoceanic migrations. Hawaiian men worked on American whaling ships in prodigious numbers; as many as three thousand likely worked aboard American vessels at the industry’s peak in the 1840s and 1850s. In Hawaiian-language newspapers, these migrant workers wrote letters home describing the things they had seen. Most notably, their stories and songs of distant and foreign environments circulated throughout a workers’ diaspora. Whales, ice, snow, gale force winds, and contact with Inupiat peoples in Alaska became part of a Hawaiian national (and transnational) geography as migrant workers’ experiences were translated into print and oral media that not only returned to Honolulu from distant points of production but also recirculated upon the ocean’s currents—to California, to guano islands, and wherever Hawaiian-language newspapers were sold.18

Not only did Hawaiian migrant workers experience sea otters and cattle in Alta California and whales and ice in the Arctic, but they also experienced nature that was on the move. Wherever whales moved, whaling followed. Hawaiian whale workers came to know the ocean through the act of following prey across the waves, throughout the seasons, and in the momentary chase of the hunt. As guano miners, Hawaiians encountered seabirds on the move: seabirds that flew thousands of miles away to capture energy from the ocean and then bring that energy back in the form of feces—guano—to nesting islands. Pacific nature moved both because people moved it but also because of the agency of whales and birds themselves, as well as ocean waves and wind currents. Pacific workers intimately knew and reported upon these various movements and migrations.19

In an age of increasing scientific racism, European and Euro-American employers of Pacific Islander labor contributed to misunderstandings of indigenous movement and mobility. Employers contended that Polynesian men, for example, were only fit for work in tropical and maritime environments and were unsuited for work in the cold or on land. Employers sought to bind Pacific peoples in place: to fix their “nature” in situ as “tropical” and
brand them as “amphibious” peoples.\textsuperscript{20} Unsurprisingly, Pacific peoples fought back. Hawaiian workers, told that they were unsuitable for work in the Arctic whaling industry, actually proved themselves better than their “Yankee” counterparts, according to one US Navy admiral. Similarly, European-descended peoples in the California Gold Rush wrote to newspapers asserting that Hawaiian migrant gold miners were unfit for the Sierra Nevada environment, but Hawaiian working-class authors responded. They refuted these claims, asserting their own narratives of success (and adventure and perseverance) in the gold fields. By the late nineteenth century, even the sovereign Kingdom of Hawai‘i was convinced that Native subjects were unfit for labor in a modern, globalizing, capitalist economy. The Hawaiian state sought to save the Indigenous people yet replace them with foreign contract laborers. Once again, Indigenous workers fought back. They struggled against essentialist discourses that regarded their bodies as weak and immobile, and they struggled—through words and sometimes through fists—with rival workers at worksites near and far. They were defending not only their pride and their masculinity, but also an expansive history of Indigenous exploration, discovery, and power in the Pacific World—a narrative of Indigenous peoples on the move, moving nature with them, and facilitating the rearrangement of the world rather than falling victim to the rearrangement dreams of others.\textsuperscript{21}

**Twenty-First-Century Diasporas**

In the late nineteenth century, Pacific Islander circulations and Indigenous diasporic formations—especially those based on extractive, maritime industries such as whaling and the fur trade—were in decline. But these were replaced by new circulations: the coerced migration of Chinese contract workers (the “coolie” trade) to Hawai‘i, California, Peru, and elsewhere, and the forced migration of Melanesians (“blackbirding”) to the cotton plantations of Queensland, Samoa, and beyond. New labor regimes opened up new worlds of Indigenous mobility and encounters with local and foreign natures. Chinese migrants encountered Hawaiian sugarcane and California minerals. Melanesian migrants encountered Australian cotton. Indian “coolie” workers encountered Fijian cotton. Banabans encountered phosphate mining. Pacific peoples continued to move, and Pacific nature moved in turn.\textsuperscript{22}

When Epeli Hau‘ofa wrote his essay “Our Sea of Islands” nearly thirty years ago, his motivation was to decolonize the way that Pacific peoples saw themselves. Following a long twentieth century of European, Asian, and American empire in the Pacific, Hau‘ofa sought to convince Pacific Islanders that they could make it on their own despite the impression that their newly independent countries were like thousands of tiny islands in a far sea.
Decolonization necessitates reimagining Oceania as an interconnected “sea of islands,” he wrote. Hau’ofa turned to history—the history of epic trans-Pacific migrations, island settlements, and inter-island exchanges—to show that Pacific peoples have always been on the move and have always been influential agents of historical change. Pacific peoples were global actors in the second millennium, and they will continue to be so in the third millennium.23

In this chapter, I have built upon Hau’ofa’s idea. Whereas he sought to demonstrate a continuum from migrations past to the movements and circulations of the present, I have similarly sought to show how a thousand-year history of diasporic lives, of people and nature in motion, has led to a diasporic present. Migrations of human and non-human natures continue apace in the twenty-first century and show no signs of letting up.24 This is revealed by the spread of yet one more Polynesian nature: tuna.

Pago Pago, capital of American Samoa, has one of the Pacific’s most prized harbors. In the nineteenth century, one writer described it as the “safest port” in Samoa; another wrote that its “shelter cannot be equaled in the world.” Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in the 1890s that the “tongue of water sleeps here in perfect quiet.” The harbor’s “colour is green like a forest pool,” surrounded on all sides by “woody mountains.”25 Today Pago Pago’s harbor is ringed on one side by huge metal containers stacked up to fifty feet high along the wharf with Danish and German names splashed upon their sides. On the other side of the harbor stand crumbling tuna canneries guarded by a painted statue of Charlie the Tuna. The US Navy administered American Samoa as a military colony for the first half of the twentieth century. Then, following closure of the US naval installation at Fagatogo in 1951, commercial shipping and industrial fishing rose to become the centerpiece of a new post-military-industrial economy. Van Camp (also known as Chicken of the Sea) established a tuna cannery in Pago Pago in 1954. StarKist followed in 1963. American Samoa became the center of a new global tuna diaspora (see figure 2.2).26

Five decades later, Pago Pago in the late 2000s was described as “one of the largest sites of canned tuna production in the world.” The StarKist and Chicken of the Sea canneries then employed approximately five thousand workers, representing almost half of the territory’s total workforce. Thousands of men and women were migrant workers from the neighboring state of Samoa. Samoan nationals came to Pago Pago to make wages of over three dollars an hour; their remittances flooded home with the smell of tuna-derived wealth. In American Samoa, the cannery workers spent part of their wages each month on housing, food, and entertainment. One study even suggested that tuna workers and their expenditures accounted for 80 percent of the territory’s private-sector economy. In this tuna diaspora, millions of
fish caught in the waters off of Samoa, Fiji, Niue, and other Pacific Islands were carried to Pago Pago’s canneries, from which they ended up in American children’s lunchboxes—including my own—in the 1980s and 1990s. On the other hand, while the Samoan group is the ecological homeland of this tuna diaspora, economically, their role and rewards are peripheral to the global industry. Increasing labor costs in the territory, along with the threat of multilateral “free trade” agreements between the United States and tunacanning countries, such as Ecuador and Thailand, have pressured companies such as Chicken of the Sea to leave American Samoa, as they did in 2009.

Pacific peoples have never been the sole agents moving Pacific nature. Foreigners have brought colonialism and capitalism and set people and nature in motion in their own ways. But the Pacific’s many diasporas continue, and Indigenous people are part of this twenty-first-century process. Diners in Brooklyn today can choose between either a basic tuna fish sandwich, made with canned tuna and mayonnaise, or eat Hawaiian-style poke at a new hip restaurant in Williamsburg. Not only does tuna move—from the hands of Pacific Ocean fisherfolk to Samoan cannery workers to California longshoremen to Jewish delicatessen owners in Brooklyn—but so do Polynesian ways of thinking about tuna: Hawaiian poke, Samoan oka, Chicken of the Sea, have your pick. The labor of Polynesian workers is embodied in

Figure 2.2. Twenty-First-Century Shipping Containers, Pago Pago Harbor, American Samoa, 2015. Photograph by the author (Rosenthal).
these goods. American Samoa’s congressional representative reminds us—as we chow down on Pacific Ocean tuna—that “the U.S. tuna industry was built on the backs of Samoans and our workers are among the best in the world.” Tuna’s stories are Polynesian in nature, and yet they are diasporically spread out across the world’s many ships, seas, and stomachs.29

Epeli Hau‘ofa noted in the 1990s that “at seaports and airports” the “delectables” of the world are moved by Polynesian hands. While living in Honolulu in 2015, I kept a P.O. box at my local post office where I regularly witnessed Hawaiians shipping coconuts to the US mainland and Micronesian residents sending coolers jam-packed with goods, sealed with packing tape, to places such as Saipan and Guam. In Samoa, one ship a week and five flights a day shuttle family members and their goods across the International Date Line between Samoa and American Samoa, separated by just seventy miles. Today’s customhouses reveal what nineteenth-century customhouses also showed: Polynesia is more than a sea of “many islands”; it is a sea of many diasporas. From canoe plants to sweet potatoes to breadfruit, salmon, and tuna, Pacific history is the history of powerful Indigenous peoples effecting ecological change and environmental transformations both at home and abroad.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have sought to provide a brief overview of a longue durée environmental history of the Pacific, focusing specifically on Indigenous peoples and natures in motion. While environmental historians have adequately catalogued the movements, mobilities, and migratory natures of elite European and Euro-descended peoples over time, there remains a tendency to neglect non-elite and non-white peoples as somehow locked in place, as in situ. These are the people “in nature,” fighting back, yet somehow stuck in space and time. In Oceania, Pacific scholars such as Epeli Hau‘ofa and Katerina Martina Teaiwa, among others, have railed against this racist discourse, recognizing how such narratives are a perpetuation of a centuries-old “Western” conception of Islands and Islanders as isolated and as passive victims of global economic change and colonization. This view not only deprives Islanders of their agency, but also of their history.

I have shown not only that Pacific peoples moved nature—such as sweet potatoes, breadfruit, and salmon—but that Pacific peoples have also moved through, in, and with natures—such as with whales and seabirds—and how disparate environments both near and far have shaped Pacific Islander movements. While I argue that Indigenous peoples have been at the forefront of ecological exchanges in the Pacific Ocean for one thousand years, I have
not shied away from the fact that European explorers and colonizers have also influenced these Indigenous relationships with the natural world. For example, resource extraction and labor migration, propelled by changes in political economy and diplomacy, were key factors in the expansion of Hawai‘i’s diaspora in the nineteenth century. Although Indigenous Islanders have effected great ecological change across the ocean for over a millennium, some of these changes have been harmful to both humans and nature. Many of the processes examined in this chapter resulted in the decline of plant and animal species, the spread of disease epidemics, and the devaluation of Native lands. These ecological transformations, in turn, occasioned yet more human migrations and the creation of yet new diasporic ecological formations. Capitalism and globalization have increasingly shaped the nature of human and non-human diasporas; yet anti-colonial frameworks such as Hau‘ofa’s and Teaiwa’s also point toward the continued resistance of Pacific peoples to foreign domination.

Today, in the twenty-first century, billions of people bounce around from place to place, living neither here nor there. This may be especially true of marginalized peoples: the poor, the displaced, the dispossessed; Indigenous peoples and migrant workers. The story of the Pacific’s many diasporas is a reminder for twenty-first-century humans that migration and economic and ecological globalization are nothing new. Indigenous peoples have been and remain mobile actors in global contexts, notably as workers, and they have exercised an ability to effect transformations in environments near and far. Similar stories continue to unfold around the world, and these tales rightly deserve our attention.

Not all environmental historians will be inspired to unfix that which seems fixed: to see people and nature in motion. But to not do so is to ignore a key element of the human experience as well as a huge swath of humanity who, right now, as I write these words, are on the move, moving between and among natures and moving nature with them. When Epeli Hau‘ofa wrote “we are the ocean,” he referred not only to a contemporary understanding of Pacific Islander lives, like seeds, spread far and wide across the ocean, but also to an incredible history, spanning one thousand years, of Indigenous relationships with oceanic nature—a world of many diasporas.

Notes


4. On disease histories, see Madley in this volume; also, Seth Archer, Sharks upon the Land: Colonialism, Indigenous Health, and Culture in Hawai’i, 1778–1855 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).


9. This research is collected in Terry L. Jones, Alice A. Storey, Elizabeth A. Matisoo-Smith, and Jose Miguel Ramirez-Aliaga, eds., *Polynesians in America: Pre-Columbian Contacts with the New World* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2011). The most relevant chapters are Alice A. Storey, Andrew C. Clarke, and Elizabeth A. Matisoo-Smith, “Identifying Contact with the Americas: A Commensal-Based Approach,” 111–138; and, Alice A. Storey, Daniel Quiroz, and Elizabeth A. Matisoo-Smith, “A Reappraisal of the Evidence for Pre-Columbian Introduction of Chickens to the Americas,” 139–170.


17. Stevenson, *Vailima Papers*, 64.


24. On contemporary migrations and diasporas, see Grant McCall and John Connell, eds., *A World Perspective on Pacific Islander Migration: Australia, New Zealand, and the USA* (Kensington, Australia: Center for South Pacific Studies, University of New South Wales, 1993); Paul Spickard, Joanne L. Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright, eds., *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and across the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002). For reflections on Hawaiian diaspora, specifically, see Rona Tamiko Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).


