

Indigenous Taiwan as Location of Native American and Indigenous Studies

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Recommended Citation

Huang, Hsinya. "Indigenous Taiwan as Location of Native American and Indigenous Studies." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 16.4 (2014): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2576>>

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Volume 16 Issue 4 (December 2014) Article 2

Hsinya Huang,

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<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss4/2>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 16.4 (2014)**

Thematic Issue ***New Work in Ecocriticism***. Ed. **Simon C. Estok and Murali Sivaramakrishnan**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss4/>>

Abstract: In her article "Indigenous Taiwan as Location of Native American and Indigenous Studies" Hsinya Huang uses Taiwan as a specific intellectual crossroads to examine, both pedagogically and theoretically, transnational/trans-Pacific flows, as well as transnational indigenous formations which take shape across national/international/local American Studies in this key moment of heightened U.S./Taiwan interaction in the Asia-Pacific security zone. Huang argues that Taiwanese scholarship has helped reorient understandings of environment and ecocriticism and that it has provided significant impulses, especially in the fields of Native American and comparative indigenous studies. Moreover, Taiwan has contributed both in its own positioning and in its academic outreach to the recent methodological turns away from US-American exceptionalism by decentering the U.S. in global/transnational studies. Huang explores comparative indigeneity as experienced through the lens of Taiwan's aboriginal people and offers a comparative perspective on the teaching of Native American literatures in Taiwan. Huang's study reflects and refracts the diverse dimensions of empire and resistance surrounding Taiwan as a site of methodological and pedagogical shifts.

Hsinya HUANG

Indigenous Taiwan as Location of Native American and Indigenous Studies

In the study at hand I examine how island imaginaries in Taiwan's Aboriginal literature contribute to the international dialog surrounding a conversion from land/continent to ocean/island in the study of Native American and Indigenous literature of the world. Western scholars have long made assumptions about the Indigenous world, often based on the nation-states in which different Indigenous peoples reside(d). For instance, the United States, Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Canada were of primary importance as sites for locating Indigenous peoples in terms of historical comparisons, policy alignments and divergences, and networked global organizations. Latin American nations were next, followed by the Ainu people of Japan's Hokkaido, and the Saami peoples of northern Scandinavia (see Deloria). Taiwanese Aboriginal groups, however, have been absent from Indigenous studies.

Exploring Aboriginal Tau writer Syaman Rapongan's work, I focus on Indigenous formations forming across national and international boundaries in the study of transnational ethnic and Indigenous literature. Here I present an oceanic perspective to balance continental ways of thinking that dominate(d) the Western canon of ethnic and Indigenous scholarship. In so doing, I challenge the land-based literary canon of the West and supplement transnational approaches to imperialism, indigeneity, and globalization. By engaging Rapongan's work to reshape the concept of Indigenous Taiwan as crucial to our understanding of Indigenous modes of language, space, body, and culture, I underscore the significance of the message from Indigenous Taiwan: as the U.S. and China fall into constant strife over the Pacific, the Indigenous bloodlines originating in Taiwan and spreading across the Pacific open up a large world in which Indigenous peoples intermingle along numerous, interconnecting water routes unhindered by the boundaries erected by imperial powers.

Taiwan's sixteen recognized Indigenous peoples have survived waves of colonialism first by the Dutch, then the Spanish, the Japanese, and the Han Chinese. The Council of Indigenous Affairs of Taiwan, founded in 1996, forms a ministry-level body to provide governmental supervision of and support for Indigenous affairs while serving as an interface connecting the government and the Aboriginal peoples of Taiwan. The College of Indigenous Studies in National Dong-Hua University offers curricula on Indigenous languages and communication, Indigenous development and social work, and ethnic relations and cultures thus connecting Taiwan's Aboriginal cultures and peoples to the Indigenous world. The National Archeological Museum of Prehistory of Taiwan was commissioned to research, preserve, exhibit, and recreate the complexity and diversity of prehistoric and Indigenous cultures in Taiwan. This is not to say that Taiwan's Aboriginal peoples are powerful and successful, for, in most places the story is decidedly mixed. The Atayal people, with an eco-tourism business, revitalized community projects, and visibility through the film *Sediq Bale*, are relatively strong. The Thao people, although small in number, have asked serious questions about governmental recognition and treaties which provide the impetus for nation-to-nation relationships. Further, the island of *Lanyu*, also known as Orchid Island or *Pongso no Tau* in the Tau language, literally meaning "island of the people," was the site of anti-nuclear protests in the 1980s and the Tau people pose questions of political strategy such as what to do about the radioactive waste depository the government established on the island. Other questions arise from global comparisons and networked strategies between Taiwan's Aborigines and other Indigenous groups across the Pacific: how to press the case for culture reclaimed from the past? How to maintain Indigenous identities and voices? How to formulate resistant narratives based on Indigenous alliances across borders?

All these questions are on the agenda of Indigenous studies. Even so, the world seldom recognizes Indigenous Taiwan with its intimate island geography and ecology as a significant site for Indigenous fieldwork and scholarship. For example, in his 2012 *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*, Chadwick Allen prioritizes "the global Indigenous" (xvii) by juxtaposing Indigenous texts from North America (i.e., the U.S. and Canada), Aotearoa/New Zealand, Hawaii, and Australia, engaging these texts in close conversations to "acknowledge the mobility and multiple interactions of indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and texts" (xiv). Despite the wide range of texts covered, Allen's work centers predominantly on Native American and Māori literary and cultural production. He touches on indigeneity across waters, but he does this by diverging from the land or continent as the

center of trans-Indigenous encounters. In fact, what is under-represented is the Pacific world of indigeneity. Small islands of the Pacific (including Indigenous Taiwan—a world of people connected to each other through narratives of oceanic connection, contiguity, and affiliation) remain obscure.

In teaching Native American literature in Taiwan, I start with a reflection and reconsideration of the land/continent as the center of trans-Indigenous encounters. It is crucial to engage Native American and other Pacific Indigenous peoples, ideas, cultures, histories, and economic-political conditions as sites of difference and contestation. For instance, N. Scott Momaday's sense of place pivots around "the immense landscape of the continental interior [laying] like memory in [the] blood" (7). By contrast, for Taiwan Aboriginal Tau writer Syaman Rapongan, as well as for Tonga writer Epeli Hau'ofa, "Oceania" refers to the Indigenous space where people are connected to each other through "the sea [as] our pathway to each other and to everyone else": "the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us" (50-58). Furthermore, losing the star, as Allen quotes in his chapter, represents a deep wound in the Native American psyche (193), whereas the implication of the "heavenly eyes," for example, the navigating stars in the Polynesian context, denotes positive significance and defines islanders' destiny, settlement, survival, resurgence, and continuous movement and flow at the present time. Allen sees earthworks not only as technologies but also as a form of indigenous writing which "inscribes knowledge not simply on the land but literally through the medium of the land itself" (201). Through the land, human beings are placed in "a matrix of relationships" (Allen 213) with each other, the natural, and the spiritual world. Allen, however, fails to recognize that this relational, mutual interconnectivity is also conveyed through the flow of the sea currents and waves and the migration of Indigenous islanders and oceanic species, and most important of all through *waka* (canoe), which serves as the container of cultural memories and native science of the Pacific (see Huang, "Rev.")

Thus, when teaching Native American and Indigenous literatures, I look at how Pacific indigeneity embodies knowledge that differentiates itself from that of the land-based Native Americans. I draw on a comparative paradigm which not only traverses the American hemispheric borderlands, but cuts across the imperial mapping through movement of the *waka*. Drawing on cultural experiences from Indigenous Taiwan, I formulate a network among multiple dimensions, interlocking history and modernity and turn students away from the obsession of land-based Native American literature in English. It is crucial for Taiwanese students in English, US-American, Canadian, and New Zealand literature to recognize and acknowledge the stories of the survival and revival of traditional seafaring practices, which, as much as Native American stories, provide an indigenously-ordered, anti-colonial praxis. It is crucial for these students to analyze and comprehend Native American stories in comparison and contrast with stories and images from traditional Oceanic voyaging. The land-based discourse of indigeneity has long been dominant in contemporary Indigenous Studies and should be challenged and re-oriented. As Hau'ofa observes, Western colonialists have long conceived of the Pacific as a smattering of disconnected, insignificant islands in a far sea, emphasizing their smallness and remoteness. From this perspective, the islands are tiny, isolated dots. Around these dots, men from the continents—Europe and the Americas—drew imaginary lines, inscribing colonial boundaries that confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces (144).

As opposed to the dominant view of "islands in a far sea," Hau'ofa defines the Pacific (or "Oceania," to use his term), as "a sea of islands with their inhabitants" (32). Heading this agenda is a strong intention to redefine the Indigenous experience and living place of the Pacific. The ancestors of "ocean peoples" have lived in the Pacific for over two thousand years. Their view of their world as "a sea of islands" is a holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships (Hau'ofa 31), where "Oceania" becomes a collective body. People raised in this environment are at home with the sea: they play in it as soon as they can walk, they work in it, and they fight upon its surface. They develop both great skills for navigation and the spirit to traverse the large gaps that separate island groups (Hau'ofa 32). Hau'ofa prefers the word "Oceania" to the geographical, Western colonialist-named "Pacific" and in his "Our Sea of Islands," originally published in 1993, Hau'ofa "offers a view of Oceania that is new and optimistic" by assuming the perspectives of "ordinary people" rather than those of "macroeconomics and macropolitics" (27). He concludes the essay with this stirring exhortation: "Oceania is vast, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are

the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom" (39).

In the widest sense, Oceania includes the entire region between continental Asia and the Americas. Drawing on a similar geographical imaginary, the Taiwan Tau writer Syaman Rapongan likewise represents Oceanic peoples as custodians of the sea who reach out to other people who share the task of protecting the seas for the general welfare of all living things. Rapongan was born and raised in *Pongso no Tau*, the home island of the Tau people, located forty kilometers southeast of Taiwan, where people continue to live close to their oceanic tradition, which is part of the larger Austronesian culture. Rapongan left *Pongso no Tau* for school when he was a teenager, remaining abroad for decades to work in the city as an urban Indigene. In the 1980s, he participated in the Aboriginal demonstrations, of which the most significant was the Tau-led protest against the storage of nuclear waste on *Pongso no Tau*. Afterwards, Rapongan returned to *Pongso no Tau* to learn from the elders tribal traditions of boat-building and fishing. Despite a long and formative absence from his culture, he awakened to an oceanic perception of transnational island community. Rapongan's work on Oceania in the Northeastern Pacific including the autobiographical fiction *黑色的翅膀* (Black Wings) represents his vision of an archipelagic region which reshapes Taiwan as a space linked to Austronesian (if not Polynesian) modes of language, space, body, and culture: "What does the 'world atlas' mean? A chain of islands in Oceania. The islanders share common ideals, savoring a freedom on the sea. On their own sea and the sea of other neighboring islands, they are in quest of the unspoken and unspeakable passion toward the ocean or maybe in quest of the words passed down from their ancestors" (164).

In my previous work, I note that the rich culture of the ocean deterritorializes implicitly the arbitrary and hegemonic boundaries of colonialism (see "Representing," "Towards Transnational" <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1744>>). Rapongan depicts a hugely Oceanic perception of place and space not only via an evocative sensibility for the ocean, but also through a quest of the ancestral words passed down as bodily codes. He reframes the ocean into an immense formation, and *Pongso no Tau* is part of the interconnected islanders' heritage of Oceania. Rapongan's Tau ancestors used to move freely in the Pacific Ocean, following the migratory route of the flying fish, which was subject to the flow of the *Kuroshio* (Black Current). This north-flowing current on the west side of the North Pacific drives the flying fish migration, which in turn shapes and reshapes the migratory route of the island Indigenes. Because of the regular annual movement of fish among the islands, the islanders conceive of an extensive, communal body of solidarity following the pathway of the current. As Rapongan's people feed on the flying fish and center their rituals and calendars on the movement of the fish, both humans and fish traverse the Pacific thus deterritorializing the ocean. At the very outset of *Black Wings*, Rapongan writes that "the dense schools of flying fish dye patches of the wide and vast ocean black. Each school consists of three or four hundred fish, swimming about fifty to sixty meters apart. They stretch unbroken for one nautical mile and they look like a mighty military force going into battle. They follow the ancient course of the Black Current, gradually heading toward the sea north of Batan in the Philippines" (5). By connecting his island with Batan, Rapongan in effect envisions a spacious Austronesian family that sails and savors the waves. Recent studies suggest that the ancestors of Taiwan's Aborigines may have been living on the islands for approximately 6,000 years before the major immigration of Han Chinese began in the seventeenth century (see, e.g., Fischer 11-12). Taiwanese Aborigines are Austronesian peoples with linguistic and genetic ties to other Austronesian ethnic groups such as the peoples of the Philippines. In tracing the history of the Pacific, Steven Roger Fischer contends that the Austronesian people originated on the island of Taiwan and that their descendants sailed south to settle in the Philippines, then west and southwest to establish settlements on the Malay Peninsula and on the islands of Borneo, Sumatra, Java, and so on. Other Austronesians sailed further south of the Philippines to southern islands such as Western New Guinea. As Fischer notes, Micronesians and Polynesians owe most of their genetic and cultural make-up to Austronesian ancestors (11-12).

Accordingly, Taiwanese literary scholars have appropriated the Austronesian heritage of Taiwan's Aborigines to construct a "New Taiwan" identity. They relate the question of Taiwanese indigeneity with Taiwan's national discourse, which is based on oceanic linkage so as to sever Taiwan's historical

and cultural connections to the Chinese Mainland. That is, as the Indigenous people seek to restore their oceanic cultural heritage, indigeneity in Taiwan becomes a royal avenue to re-nativizing Taiwan, turning it into a counter-mainland site aligned with Oceania and separate from China. Among other scholars of Taiwanese literature, Kui-fen Chiu contends that the self-representation of indigenous people in Taiwan "converges with the Taiwanese reclaiming of native roots in the forging of a Taiwanese identity" (1072). As a result, indigeneity turns out to consolidate Taiwan's contemporary connection with oceanic frameworks that would unsettle territorial ties to the Chinese Mainland and it reframes this de-centered island site as connected with the Pacific Ocean. Rapongan's work has been central to this nativist Taiwanese discourse, which has been gaining currency in Taiwan since the mid-1990s. Even the Puyuma scholar Dachuan Sun (Paelabang Danapan), a leading Aboriginal intellectual and the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in Taiwan, regards Rapongan's writing as "oceanic literature" and claims that it makes a great contribution to the discourse of "oceanic Taiwan" (Sun qtd. in Chiu, "The Production" 1076; see also Chiu, "Cosmopolitanism"). In fact, the effort to unsettle the ties between Taiwan and the Chinese Mainland has been enormous, materializing in 2006 as a series of maps presented by the Council for Cultural Affairs (now the Ministry of Culture) of Taiwan to "look at Taiwan from different perspectives." The series, named 換個角度看台灣 (Mapping the Perspectives of Taiwan), consists of seven new maps—我們的東亞鄰居 (Our East Asian Neighbors), 南島朋友們 (Our Austronesian Friends), 重海底看台灣 (Exploring Taiwan from Below the Ocean), 來自巴丹島 (From Batan Island), 唐山過台灣 (The Heroic Pioneer), 台灣的主張 (Declaration of Taiwan), and 天涯若比鄰 (We are the World/So Far Away, yet So Close in Spirit)—each with a new perspective of Taiwan (see Tu <http://www.taiwantt.org.tw/tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5474&Itemid=1>).

In contrast to the orthodox mapping of Taiwan after 1945 that stresses Taiwan's close tie to Mainland China, the Mapping the Perspectives of Taiwan series positions Taiwan as an island in the Pacific Ocean. Traditionally, Taiwan appeared in the shape of a small yam on the south-east margin of China. The new series turns the orthodox map counter-clockwise to situate Taiwan above the Chinese Mainland and make it face the Pacific. A horizontal vision of Taiwan first appeared in Joannes van Braam's and Gerard onder de Linden's 1726 *Kaart van het Eyland Formosa en de Eylanden van Pescadores*. This map groups the main island of Taiwan—and the approximately twenty affiliated islands surrounding it—with the sixty-five islands of the Pescadores. Mimicking this format, the new map entitled Our East Asian Neighbors locates Taiwan at the center of the west coast of the Festoon Islands in the Pacific Ocean. The map also shows the Ryukyu Islands approximately 600km away and the 200km-long Taiwan Strait, which divides Mainland China and Taiwan. In the east are the Philippines divided by the Bashi Channel with the enormous Pacific Ocean to the north. The map locates Taiwan, significantly, in the center, connecting the cardinal points in the Pacific region. In addition, another map of the series, Our Austronesian Friends, projects Taiwan as the northern-most point of a vast network of the Austronesian language family, while We are the World/So Far Away, yet So Close in Spirit shows Taiwan at the center of expanding concentric circles. However, *Pongso no Tau*, a 45 square kilometer volcanic island forty miles off the southeastern coast of Taiwan and home to the Tau people, appears in only one of the seven new maps, in From Batan Island. It is through the small island of *Pongso no Tau* and its connections with the Austronesian world (including Batan) that Taiwan claims to be one of the first islands which populated the bloodlines of the Austronesian family. In other words, through the mediation of *Pongso no Tau*, the map series re-view Taiwan from the Indigenous angle and implicated in the context of Austronesian cultures which expand from Easter Island to Madagascar and from Hawaii to New Zealand. For instance, the map From Batan Island looks at the relatively "big" island of Taiwan from the vantage point of the small island *Pongso no Tau* and utilizes its Indigenous connection with the Austronesian world to formulate an ocean-oriented identity and, thus, to diminish Taiwan's territorial tie with the Chinese Mainland. In so doing, Taiwan re-nativizes itself strategically into a counter-mainland locus.

In response to the nativist approaches to Chinese imperialism, Rapongan calls for de-Sinicization and recuperates Indigenous cultural traditions and histories. Embedded in his creative writing is a critical methodology for global Indigenous studies which challenges us to think beyond the national borders of contemporary (settler) nation-states to focus instead on Indigenous-to-Indigenous relationships instead. The Indigenous Pacific/Oceania becomes a powerful metaphor and material base for stories and identities of the trans-Indigenous islanders. Rapongan does not just oppose the contain-

ment and incorporation of Taiwan as aligned to the mainland/continent, but he also acts and writes against the strategic appropriation of the "big" island identity politics. His cultural writings link the Tau to the Pacific transnational frameworks of counter-national and trans-Indigenous belonging and to a contemporary connection with oceanic frameworks that reframe his seafaring and sea-savoring people as part of the Pacific Indigenous communities thus disrupting the mainstream discourse of Taiwan as a nation-state. In my study on the work of Rapongan I note that "through their own lived experience, as well as that of their island kin, Rapongan and Hau'ofa conceive of Oceania as a communal [sea] body, through which they can ultimately resist the imaginary political lines drawn by colonial powers. Their narratives turn hyper-modernized Pacific islanders [like themselves] back towards a perception of bodily identities as individual projects in intimate connection with Oceania" ("Representing" 5). Indeed, Rapongan's poetics and politics are connected to an oceanic body, a counter-conversion from land to sea that is the mode of his people's belonging, through their "sea-loving genes": "my great-great-grand father and all my forebears lived in this small island. The moment they were born, they fell in the love with the sea, entertaining themselves by watching, worshiping, and adoring the sea. The sea-loving genes are already contained in my body, passed down from generation to generation. I love the sea fervently, almost to the degree of mania" (*Black Wings* 80; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by Roy Wu [National Sun Yat-sen U]).

In Rapongan's formulation, the Indigenous body has the capacity to represent the hidden past and repressed memory and he invokes the body as a site of vibrant connection and Indigenous knowledge. A sense of ancestral immediacy and intimacy, made manifest as memory in the body, permeates Rapongan's narrative, while the rich culture of the ocean deterritorializes arbitrary and hegemonic national boundaries. Like "the dense schools of flying fish," the diverse island inhabitants pass over the ocean, following the natural rhythm of the Black Current. They recognize no borders and adhere to no nation's territorial sovereignty thus calling into question the very idea of Taiwan-ness. This act of border-crossing characterizes Rapongan's tribal Indigenes as it does the inhabitants of other Pacific islands. As Hau'ofa makes explicit in *We Are the Ocean*, "[the islanders] cannot afford to believe that [their] histories began only with imperialism ... [they] cannot afford to have no reference points in [their] ancient pasts—to have as memories or histories only those imposed on [them] by [their] colonizers and the present international system that seems bent on globalizing [them] completely by eradication [of their] cultural memory and diversity, [their] sense of community, [their] commitment to [their] ancestry and progeny, and individualizing, standardizing [them], and homogenizing [their] lives" (76). Rapongan subverts hegemonic borders as do Indigenous writers of the Americas such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Anita Endrezze, Margo Tamez, and Gloria Anzaldúa. Those who move through imperial confines reset borders as lines of dispersal, escape, and resistance. As they trespass, they also transgress challenging the rigidity and normality of border constraints. Bound together by history, memory, land, and spirit, Pacific islanders exert their power of resistance by deterritorializing and obviating national borders. The Pacific connections expand from within to beyond, from Oceania to "Asia, to the Americas, from Australia and New Zealand in the southwest to the United States and Canada in the northeast" (Hau'ofa 39). Rapongan follows the Black Current of the ocean to move beyond his isolated island. His work represents a voice from the margin, and ends up configuring an Indigenous geography: a sea body of interconnectedness that bypasses the boundaries of the nation-state and re-envisions the trans-Indigenous as a relationship of center to center.

The narrative put forth in Rapongan's work provides an outstanding model of Indigenous resistance against (Western) colonial imposition of human reason, values, and world views. For example, his recent novel *天空的眼睛* (*Eyes of the Sky*) is a good example. In *Eyes of the Sky* two narratives are interwoven: one is the mythic, pre-modern tale of the jackfish, and the other the realistic, post-colonial text of the human. Unlike Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* which depicts an epic battle between the (lone and singular) old fisherman and a large marlin, Rapongan's story of an old fisherperson gestures toward ecological and planetary collectivities and connectivities, engaging both the human and the jackfish or flying fish in sustained dialogs: "if there is no ocean, there will be no fish and thus no wisdom" (29). This wisdom involves intimate and innate relationships among the ocean currents, the moon, the tides, the microbes, and fish (28) and places history itself among the forces of nature. The ocean serves as a displaced site for the imagination of planetarity.

The phrase "Eyes of the sky" (or *mata no agnit* in Tau) refers to the stars which guide the course of navigation for the islanders. The islanders plot their courses by using the sky as a map for the world below and to identify one's sky-eye is a way of conceptualizing or fixing one's place in the open ocean. The islanders' technology of identifying their positioning in the ocean by following star maps enabled them to traverse over three fourths of the globe's southern hemisphere millennia before Europeans ventured into the Pacific (see Diaz 26). In the preface of *Eyes of the Sky*, the whale, named Bawong, takes Chekwaga on his back and continues to swim underwater. The narrative hinges on the Tau traditional calendar. The event takes place in May, during the Tau fishing season from February to June when many large predatory fish swim beneath the schools of flying fish. Bawong teaches Chekwaga the names of the large fish, one by one—tuna, yellow fin tuna, ulua (jackfish), blue fin trevally, barracuda, dolphin fish, black marlin, and swordfish (ix-x)—opening up his view to a world of multispecies dynamics under the water. Chekwaga covers Bawong's eyes and lets him float up to the surface, also allowing himself some fresh air. In this communion, both human and whale traverse the biosphere and become whale-human. Rapongan depicts Bawong floating up slowly like a balloon as "the whirlpool created by his tail movement triggers the plankton into radiant colors" (x). Venturing into the realm of microbiota that rarely figures in discussions of biodiversity, Rapongan enlivens the politics and emphasizes the value of food, presenting a multispecies world in which humans do not merely connect to animals but to microbes, hence an ethnography that newly imagines the relationship between ocean microbes and human life. The young boy witnesses the saturation of human nature by other natures, marvels at the ocean energy and dynamics, and says emphatically "may my soul be strong" (x).

The journey into the interconnected world of the ocean climaxes in an eco-dynamic spectacle: "Hundreds of thousands of flying fish leapt out of the sea, flying and dashing forward ... More fish jumped into my boat! Wow, wow! I was hit by thirty or forty flying fish ... Wow! This was a hunting-feeding ceremony of large predatory fish, and that was the flight of scared fish. Also there was the fleeting wave-cloud that I was lucky enough to witness on my first voyage out. Wow, I cried out to myself hearty words of good fortune and amazement. Hundreds of thousands of flying fish leapt out of the sea once, twice, and for a third time, and then the sea and flying fish all became perfectly silent and peaceful. The wild and magnificent spectacles are left only to the natural men who fish with primitive tools" (xvi). Creatures appearing previously as part of the seascape, as food for humans and as symbols, now emerge into the foreground alongside humans in the realm of *bios* (with legibly biographical and political lives) as creative agents and active participants. Rapongan's texts constitute not merely an encyclopedia of the Pacific fish, but as a biography or, rather, as an auto-ethnography of these sea creatures. The fish become the epic hero of a battle in the water while the human, standing in the line of the extended, multispecies Tau family, witnesses the epic event and becomes amazed and enlightened. The fishermen do not have active agency in catching fish: in the Tau cosmology, the flying fish offer themselves to the human as a seasonal ritual when predatory fish chase them. It is only in this particular season that Tau fishermen go out to sea to fish. By the end of the flying fish season, the tribal people then follow the natural rhythm and switch to coral reef fishing, waiting for the flying fish to return along with the north-flowing Black Current (30). The Black Current transports warm, tropical water, which sustains the microbes and coral reefs, thus bringing a variety of marine organisms which flourish in the eddies as they live out their lives (on *Eyes of the Sky* and other Pacific Islanders' texts, see Huang, "Toward Trans-Pacific").

Interweaving humans, sea creatures and other organisms in these currents, Rapongan bases his narrative on Tau traditional ecological knowledge to formulate a network spanning the ocean. Rapongan does not merely decentralize the human: he de-familiarizes the written text. The Tau do not have a writing system, but by inserting Romanized Tau language into his Chinese text, Rapongan de-familiarizes the Chinese language and reinvents a logic that pertains to ocean aesthetics and ethics. He renames the bio-community from an oceanic/nonhuman viewpoint where the regenerative energy of primordial planetary belonging can lead the Tau to become born-again natives of the ocean. His poetics is an ecologically interconnected, planetary and re-nativized counter-conversion to island and sea space. The jackfish inspires Tau boat-building: the Tau build their boats by modeling *Panowang* on the body of the jackfish to ensure that the craft can cut through currents while retaining the primordial aesthetics (8; on oceanic boat-building see, e.g., Hornell). Rapongan does not just show the ocean-

sailing tactics of the Tau people, but depicts the boat as a carrier and container of Tau culture and bases his poetics on his renewed awareness of native and natural knowledge, which emerges from the nonhuman multispecies communities of the Pacific Ocean.

In conclusion, Taiwanese Aboriginal authors such as Rapongan reveal in their work the coalition and sovereignty of Pacific islanders. The Pacific islands and their adjoining waters often get caught up in geopolitical power struggles; national territoriality arbitrarily demarcated these islands and waters. And yet, as the largest body of the waters necessary to sustaining life and well-being on this planet, the Pacific Ocean could become the catalyst for the envisioning of ecological solidarity: it could elicit consent and inspire people to imagine co-belonging and care. In my 2011 article "Towards Transnational Native American Literary Studies" I interpret Native American literature in a transnational/trans-Pacific context, using emerging Native American scholarship in Taiwan as a point of departure. There, my purpose was to formulate transnational indigeneity, based on teaching and reading Native American literature on the border, which in turn feeds back into local traditions of indigenous Taiwan. There were, however, oversights: I considered local Indigenous traditions only from the perspectives of Native American cultures and traditions, which are a major subject matter of English-language education in Taiwan. This subject position based on the study of the American (ethnic) canon should be questioned. In teaching US-American literature in the transnational context, we often talk about decentering the nation-state, but in fact this goal is not so easily achieved—at least not in abstract terms. The personal experience of Pacific islanders such as Rapongan allows us to consider exactly this in order to realize that such decentering could happen in many contexts. The Pacific islands are "small," but smallness is both aesthetically pleasing and intensely practical. Even more significantly, they form "our sea of islands," an immense sea body without confines, as Hau'ofa puts it (35). Rapongan reflects on the oceanic Indigenous cultural milieu and ways of life to address the past and future nature of islands. In this vision, places like *Pongso no Tau* become central rather than peripheral and Indigenous people become teachers to be engaged rather than objects to be known. I hope that a sense of urgency regarding the culture of the Pacific Indigenous changes our perspective. Such a perspective allows the lessons of places such as *Pongso no Tau* to help us see ourselves as oceanic citizens and as earth-dwellers. Consequently, global Indigenous studies will become less instrumental and teachers and students in literary and cultural studies will envision more equitable comparisons and inter-island networks.

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