Many of us believe that the place of human habitation is land, and that the oceans form vast, uninhabited barriers between lands and peoples. Perhaps that belief arises from the longstanding human practice of turning to the interiors of the landmasses called continents to seek opportunities, possibilities, and even renewals. Related to this idea is U.S. history’s “frontier hypothesis,” whereby the inland frontier levels class distinctions and summons self-reliance, an independent spirit, rugged individualism, ingenuity in the face of adversity, and a democratic spirit. The frontier offers rebirth and the realization of the American dream.

Many of us, in addition, see continents as lands rich in resources, favoring the rise of great civilizations, whereas islands represent tiny, isolated, insignificant specks of land. Scientists apprehend enormous diversity on continents, from geological formations to plant and animal life forms, which move, interact, and change. They understand islands, in opposition, as places of isolation, like laboratories, in which geologies and organic communities are simpler and not inclined to change as much as on continents. Charles Darwin, accordingly, studied the processes of natural selection and evolution on Pacific islands unconcerned with complicating external factors, while Margaret Mead described Samoan life cycles and sexualities unperturbed by interactions with other peoples.

Islanders might offer a contrasting vision, in which the oceans are extensions of lived, worked, and imagined spaces. Land and water form continuities, not separations. Coastal peoples on larger landmasses can easily agree with that point of view. Oceans can inspire the imagination and beckon with the prospect of innovation and transformation. Pacific
Islanders, as we will see, covered immense distances by island hopping, but they also saw their Oceania as encompassing places of production for sustenance, sacred spaces, homes for ancestors and divinities, and places for living and social relations.

Those representations of continents and islands involve intersecting concepts of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation—the social formation. As inferior peoples, islanders are racialized as nonwhites; as small, confined spaces, islands signify women; as places where nature’s abundance prevails, tropical islands exude unbridled, if not deviant sexualities; and as childlike peoples, islanders constitute a dependent class and conjure improbable nations. Those distinctions reveal the discursive power of continents over islands even as they exemplify how geographies, like the other elements of the social formation, are social constructs.

Continents, really, are also islands, surrounded as they are by water. The earth has but one ocean, which flows freely around the globe. Africa, Asia, and Europe form a single landmass, which the ancient Greeks called the “world island,” and in the geologic past, America was a part of Africa. Islands and continents rise from the same tectonic plates. From the world’s ocean emerged the Mediterranean, Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific worlds, whose waters formed conduits, not impediments, and sustained creativity, production, and systems of belief. Together, the earth’s waters and lands make up a shared space on which humans map and materialize their diverse and dynamic worlds.

In this chapter, we steer a course away from land to examine the connections between land and water. Those affiliations produced ocean worlds. We consider islands as significant places and island peoples as active creators of those ocean worlds. Finally, we come to understand Asians and Pacific Islanders as historical agents working their waters and lands long before the advent of Europeans and their engulfing world-system. Pacific Islanders and Asians devised technologies that allowed them to sail the oceans; they created far-flung, long-distance trade networks and flows of goods and labor; and they spread and modified languages, religions, and cultures, producing ideological and material changes. Asian and Pacific Islander lives were never static; they were always in motion, like the waters.

ASIA

Asia is immense, diverse, and mobile. In Asia and Africa—notably Persia, Egypt, India, and China—people built societies around vast and complex systems of agriculture. Those civilizations arose in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) and Egypt around 4000 B.C., in India around 3000 B.C., and in China around 2000 B.C. Their dominions expanded and contracted over time, and their peoples were a varied and mutable mix of indigenous folk and invaders. Their great rivers—Mesopotamia’s Tigris and Euphrates, Egypt’s Nile, India’s Indus, and China’s Yellow and Yangtze—and fertile valleys enabled the production of agricultural surpluses sufficient to feed the rise of cities and large-scale, complex social organizations.
Families were the basis of society, and social hierarchies were based on criteria such as class, gender, age, occupation, and education, which shifted from time to time. In most years, agricultural production provided sufficient food to sustain the population, though natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and plagues of locusts led to famines in which millions died. Grains like wheat (in the drier areas), rice, sorghum, and millet, along with buckwheat, beans, cabbage, eggplant, lentils, peas, peppers, squash, and taro, milk and milk products, fish, and chicken (native to Southeast Asia), supplied excellent nutrition. Spices, pickled vegetables, seaweeds, and fish sauces provided seasoning for otherwise bland staple starches, and specialists refined cuisines and devised distinctive food cultures.

Buddhism, which emerged in India at about the time of ancient Greece, linked India with Southeast Asia. Trade between the two regions also carried with it Hinduism and other aspects of Indian civilization. Conversion to Islam, which arose in modern-day Saudi Arabia in the seventh century A.D., connected diverse peoples, including Arabs, Africans, Persians, and Turks. It transformed philosophy, politics, jurisprudence, commerce, and art, which had been dominated by Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians until at least A.D. 1000. Muslim military states emerged and occupied key areas, such as the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria; the Safavids in Persia and Iraq; the Timurids in Central Asia, who later became the Mughals of India; and the Ottoman Empire in Turkey and the Balkans. Those states struggled over religious, commercial, and political power, but they also built empires, established public order, and promoted economic prosperity.

FIGURE 2
An example of Islamic architecture, the Taj Mahal in Agra, India, built 1630–33. National Geographic magazine, 1888.
Islam was the vehicle for commerce between Muslim Arab and Indian traders and merchants, and the new religion made inroads as far east as the coast of China. Islam was especially appealing to peoples in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia and the Philippines, and many Islamic sultanates arose in that vast region of islands and seas. The people of Southeast Asia in turn influenced Islam, changing it into a religion that affirmed many of their pre-Islamic beliefs and cultures, such as greater gender equity; stressing Islam’s tenet that all persons are equal before God; and modifying rules and observances governing diet, fasting, and prayer.

Centuries before the advent of Europeans, thus, Asians and Pacific Islanders created and inhabited ocean worlds in the waters later named by Europeans as the Indian and Pacific oceans. Their peoples, called “races” by Europeans, interacted and mixed without those distinctions.

THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD

The Indian Ocean world, spanning the globe from eastern Africa to Asia, consisted of numerous coastal lands and peoples, who thrived on farming both land and sea. Because of the vagaries of the weather and agricultural production, the waters and their bounties may have provided a more reliable source of sustenance than the land.

On the western edge of the Indian Ocean world, maritime communities lined the East African coast, where a large portion of the population engaged in fishing and in trade for foods, raw materials, and articles not readily available locally. Exploitation of land and sea along those shores began between two thousand and three thousand years ago, and human activity there was noted in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*.

The Red Sea and Persian Gulf carved inroads from the Indian Ocean toward the Fertile Crescent, which stretched from Egypt through Syria to Mesopotamia. The waters of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf thereby connected the civilizations of the Indus River, the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Nile. Grains, cloth, pottery, ivory, resins, beads, and metal objects were among the commodities exchanged in maritime trade. These stimulated the growth of crafts and manufacturing, along with the development of specialists, merchants, and elites who handled and profited from the trade between Asia and Africa.

Refining their shipbuilding and navigational techniques over time, South Asian sailors navigated eastward to the sprawling network of islands in Southeast Asia and to Burma and Vietnam, introducing not only trade goods but also cultural and religious forms. In turn, Southeast Asian mariners in large outriggers journeyed westward, carrying Chinese and Southeast Asian commodities to entrepôts in southern India and the small islands of Sri Lanka. From those ports, Arabian and Persian ships took the goods to destinations in the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and the Mediterranean.

That long-distance maritime traffic helped to structure Asian and African social formations. Those material and cultural exchanges passed through port cities to reach far inland. Traders and then immigrants from Southeast Asia sailed to Madagascar, off the
southeast coast of Africa, bringing important crops like yams, bananas, taro, and sugar-cane, along with the chicken, while Arab and African sailors and traders settled in port cities on India's west coast. Cultures and languages remained distinct, but they also conducted transactions in a common language. Swahili, for instance, a language of the East African coast, is essentially of the African Bantu family but includes many loan words and structures from Arabic and Gujarati, a language of India.

While ancient Greece and Rome spun myths about a distant, desirable, exotic, and antagonistic Orient, for Asians Europe was not a destination of much interest. More important were the Indian Ocean and its circuits of goods, labor, and culture. The Mediterranean world, in fact, reached toward Asia as a supplicant: the Red Sea was a door to the Indian Ocean world.

By 1405, when the Ming Dynasty admiral Zhenghe left China for India, Arabia, and East Africa, the Indian Ocean trade was more than a thousand years old. Zhenghe's seven expeditions were notable for their scale and technological achievements and were probably the first systematic contacts between China and East Africa. For twenty-eight years, some sixty vessels, including the biggest ships ever built up to that time—four hundred
feet long, with four decks, double hulls, and watertight compartments, and equipped with compasses and detailed sailing directions—plied the seas. They carried up to five hundred soldiers and cargoes of silk, porcelains, and other export goods, and they returned to China laden with spices, tropical hardwoods, giraffes, zebras, and ostriches. The voyages ended in 1433, perhaps because of their great expense, but they are a reminder that the Indian Ocean was alive with commerce long before the Portuguese finally rounded the Horn of Africa and entered the Indian Ocean, and then, with the help of African and Asian pilots, managed a landing in India in 1498.

THE PACIFIC OCEAN WORLD

Before the advent of humans, the Pacific was like the planet’s other waters, unmarked and mingling indiscriminately with other bodies of water that were later named the Atlantic, Indian, Arctic, and Southern Oceans. In reality, Pacific waters are unbounded, flowing freely among other oceans and mixing with seas now named the Celebes, Coral, Japan, South China, Sulu, and Tasman, among others. Its major currents move in opposite directions north and south of the equator and are complicated by vertical convections. The Pacific can be mapped variously by its shrinking size—about an inch each year, due to plate tectonics—its fluctuating surface temperatures, its swirling winds, and its variant salinities, as well as its widely divergent topography of immense mountain ranges, called “chains,” seamounts, and precipitously deep trenches. Its life forms, the most varied of all the planet’s waters, offer another way of conceiving of the Pacific. Although plants and animals throughout the Pacific are related through recurrent migrations, they are also particular to specific habitats, such as the rich coral reefs in the ocean’s tropical zone and the equally prolific kelp forests of its temperate zone.

Perhaps as long as one hundred thousand years ago, hunter-gatherers crossed the shallow seas from Southeast Asia to Indonesia, New Guinea, and Australia. As sea levels rose with the end of last glacial period, those peoples, speaking languages of the Austronesian family, developed maritime skills to travel among their island homes. (An alternative theory places the origin of Austronesian peoples on China’s southern coast, associated with Hemudu culture some seven thousand years ago.)

One of those groups of Austronesian speakers, the Malayo-Polynesians, was particularly successful in migrating; some of them sailed westward about two thousand years ago to populate Madagascar and thereby people the Indian Ocean world. Others voyaged eastward into the Pacific and Oceania, which reaches from Southeast Asia to America. In that way, Austronesian speakers spanned over half the planet, bridged the worlds of the Indian and Pacific oceans, and gave rise to remarkably divergent cultures, from Madagascar in the far west to Hawaiian in the northeast.

The racial category *Malay* was created by the European taxonomer Blumenbach in 1795. In the 1830s, a French traveler, Jules Dumont d’Urville, created the arbitrary divisions and groupings of Pacific Islanders as Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians,
based on alleged skin color (Melanesians) and the size and numbers of islands (Micronesians and Polynesians). Although we retain these categories, the truth about those islanders, like that of the waters they inhabit, is far more complex, varied, and nuanced than those externally imposed classifications.

By 2000 B.C., Malayo-Polynesian single- and double-hulled sailing canoes, fitted with outriggers, were crossing the waters of Southeast Asia for trade and long-distance migration. Island hopping toward the rising sun, these Malayo-Polynesians settled in New Guinea around 1500 B.C. From there they spread into Melanesia and Micronesia, and around 1000 B.C. they arrived in western Polynesia. Throughout the Pacific, the people who came to inhabit a certain island or archipelago were not a single group of migrants but the result of multiple voyages from different directions.

Like the maritime peoples of the Indian Ocean world, the Polynesians built and improved on canoe technology and accumulated immense navigational knowledge of the sea, its currents, and the celestial bodies to steer their vessels to destinations known and unknown. From Tonga and Samoa in western Polynesia—the Polynesian homeland and center of further dispersion—they sailed eastward to the Marquesas and to Rapa Nui (Easter Island). As early as A.D. 300 they headed north to Hawai‘i, crossing the equator to the Northern Hemisphere, where the location and arrangement of heavenly bodies appeared different from their familiar setting.
As they moved from island to island, they took with them linguistic, social, and religious ideas and practices, while also abandoning some and developing others. Cultures diffused but also interacted and modified in the engagement with other peoples and with different lands and seascapes.

The technologies required for this immense, global dispersal illustrate the complicated routes created and traveled by Pacific Islanders. For instance, many features of their canoes indicate an Indonesian origin, but they also exhibit local modifications and improvements. The initial groups of migrants from Indonesia, who settled in the western South Pacific, perhaps journeyed in square-sailed, double-outrigger canoes, whereas subsequent mariners, traveling in larger double canoes rigged with sails of a different design, settled in the islands of the eastern South Pacific.

The canoes of Oceania carried migrants and their food supplies over vast distances. Canoe making involves a host of variables, including the choice of wood and its carving and sealing, the dimensions and curve of the hull, ropes for bindings and lashings, booms to lash two parallel canoes, platforms to support passengers and their belongings, the designs and rigging of sails, and the size, length, and shape of the paddles. These material assemblages, through their distribution and spread, reveal clusters of common derivation and retention, invention and divergence through space and time. Canoe making also involved cultural and religious sanctions and requirements.
Much as the ocean's corals, seaweeds, and fishes dispersed across the ocean over time, evolving and adapting, migrant people adapted to particular places, evolved in isolation, and experienced recurrent migrations and interactions. Motion is a matter of perspective. For instance, Polynesian voyagers navigated by thinking of their vessels as stationary while islands, seen and unseen, moved past them.

The sweet potato, developed by American Indians, was distributed throughout the islands of the eastern South Pacific before the arrival of Europeans, suggesting long-distance contact between American Indians and Polynesians. Similarly, the coconut, probably of Southeast Asian origin, was established along the Pacific coasts of Panama and Colombia before the Spaniards arrived, indicating travel and contact in the opposite direction, from islands to continent. Both plants are unlikely long-distance ocean travelers, so their transplantation almost certainly involved human activity. The distribution of those essential food crops, along with the sailing technologies required to move them such long distances, suggest mobility and human agency on the part of Pacific Islanders, contradicting the histories of isolation, seclusion, and paralysis ascribed to dreamy island worlds by Europeans.

On their vessels, the islanders of Oceania traversed immense distances, and for many voyaging was a preferred way of life. In this sense, the people were of both the land and the sea, which was a “sea of islands,” as poetically phrased by Epeli Hau‘ofa. The peoples of Oceania formed affiliations with and drew resources from both the land and the sea and all their material abundance and spiritual manifestations.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Here we consider the islands of Guam, Hawai‘i, and Samoa because these became a part of the United States. They and their peoples, accordingly, form aspects—some would argue central figures—of American history.

GUAM

Over five thousand years ago, skilled proto-Austronesian-speaking mariners, perhaps from the Philippines, steered their outrigger canoes northward, following the ocean’s currents to the Mariana Archipelago and the island of Guam in the western South Pacific. These same currents had earlier carried algae, corals, fishes, and seeds from Southeast Asia to the islands, and migratory birds and windborne insects found and made homes there. Life forms on those islands thus carry features of the distant biotic communities whence they originated.

The proto-Austronesian speakers who first settled the archipelago named it “land from the sea,” accurately describing islands that literally emerged from the ocean’s depths some sixty million years ago through the collision of tectonic plates that produced a mountain range, the tips of which form the island chain. The proto-Austronesians
adapted and changed through innovation and frequent encounters with continental and other island peoples to become the Chamorros.

Accomplished navigators and canoe designers and makers, the Chamorros traveled widely to fish and trade, and they engaged in both peaceful and hostile contact with foreigners who visited their islands. The sophisticated Chamorro canoes were light, swift, and graceful, seeming to skim the water’s surface. The plant foods the original migrants from Southeast Asia had brought with them, such as bananas, taro, rice, breadfruit, yams, and coconuts, were cultivated in the islands’ interiors, where the soil was relatively rich and freshwater was available for irrigation.

In their creation story, which solidifies their claim to these lands, Chamorros hold that the first people, two men, emerged from a rock, the Lalas Rock at Fouha Bay on Guam Island. One of the men turned into a woman to enable reproduction and the start of the Chamorro lineage (the Chamorros trace their ancestry through the mother’s line). Forming kin groups, or clans, Chamorros lived in settlements along Guam’s coast and in the interior. As the population increased and lineages branched out to establish their own villages, social stratification and conflict both within and among kin groups developed. Higher classes tended to live along the ocean’s shores to control and profit from interisland commerce, while commoners worked the island’s fertile interiors. Unique to Guam, noble families lived in structures built on posts or latte from three to sixteen feet tall: the higher the house, the more powerful its owner.

Patriarchies ruled the clans and lineages, and ancestor veneration helped to link and solidify kinship associations that were otherwise divergent and increasingly distant. Labor was divided by gender. Women generally collected wild fruits, shellfish, and seaweeds; wove mats and sails from tree fibers; and tended the vegetable gardens. Men helped in plant cultivation, and they were the fishermen and seagoing traders. Rice growing is distinctive to Guam, and Marianas red-ware pottery has features characteristic of local Marianas ceramic traditions while also resembling Lapita ware, which is associated with the earliest spread of proto-Polynesians from Southeast Asia.

Chamorro society produced specialists such as priests, designers and builders of canoes and houses, and men engaged in interisland trade and warfare. Chamorros remembered histories to secure their claims to the land and waters, and they accumulated and conveyed navigational knowledge and skills from centuries of seafaring and observations of celestial bodies, ocean currents, and winds. Through an ideology of reciprocity and obligation, Chamorros spun a web of social cohesion and affiliation that continued through the sixteenth century and the first European contact.

SAMOA

As was the case with the people of the rest of the Pacific Islands, Samoa’s peoples descended from proto-Austronesian speakers who sailed from Southeast Asia to other islands, and they formed an eastern branch, grouped later by Europeans as Polynesians.
About 1000 B.C., the Polynesians developed languages and cultures distinctive to the eastern South Pacific, centering on the islands of Tonga and Samoa.

By A.D. 300, the people of Samoa had moved inland away from the initial coastal settlements. They cleared the forests to build their villages, and eventually ceased making Lapita-style pottery and switched to wooden containers. Those changes had profound social consequences because ceramic technologies held material and spiritual meanings, and their manufacture required craft and religious specialists. Permanent settlements, population increases, and structures such as houses, stone walls, and roads suggest evolving social hierarchies and specializations, and oral histories confirm wars and raids among islands and peoples.

Samoans, along with other Polynesians, were superb horticulturalists, as shown by their inland villages located on fertile, arable soil. Their pottery and wooden vessels suggest the permanent settlements that farming required. Although agriculturalists, Samoans were equally at home on the sea, as demonstrated by the frequency and astonishing distances of their travel to other islands.

It was from Tonga and Samoa that Polynesians mariners sailed to find and settle the Marquesas Islands, and their voyages ranged as far as Rapa Nui. From the Marquesas, they achieved their northernmost reach, Hawai‘i. Their highest achievement in farming and navigation was perhaps the Polynesian settlement of Hawai‘i.

HAWAI‘I

For over a thousand years before the advent of Europeans, successive waves of Polynesian voyagers and settlers arrived in the Hawaiian Islands. Over thirty million years earlier, like Guam and other Pacific islands, the Hawaiian Islands had emerged as the tips of a mountain range that grew from the ocean floor not from tectonic plate collisions but as volcanic formations that reached skyward. The *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian song of creation, describes that mating of sea, land, and sky and their biotic communities.

Amidst the abundance of the islands, the voyaging Polynesians gave rise to the Hawaiian people. By the late eighteenth century, the Hawaiian Islands supported the largest, most densely populated society of all the Polynesian islands, supported by the productivity of its lands and waters. Horticulture was the mainstay of the economy. The primary unit of land was the *ahupua‘a*, a narrow, wedge-shaped area, marked off by an *ahu* (altar), that started from an apex in the highlands and widened out toward the coastline. With this design, producers had access to all of the land’s resources, from the tall trees and colorful birds of the higher elevations to the lowland fields for crops and the bounty of the ocean’s shores, reefs, and deeps.

The windward, better-watered side of the islands allowed intensive cultivation of taro, the staple, in terraced fields and wetlands. On the leeward side farmers grew dry-land crops such as sweet potatoes. Like other seafaring Polynesians, migrants to Hawai‘i brought in their canoes taro, yams, sweet potatoes, gourds, bananas, sugarcane,
coconuts, and breadfruit along with small animals like dogs, pigs, and chickens. Family groupings, connected to ancestors and deities, were the basis of the society, and lineages shared and cared for the resources of the land and sea.

Over time, and with new migrations arriving from Tahiti roughly between 1100 and 1400, occupational specializations and social hierarchies developed. A chiefly class, the ali’i, ruled over commoners, maka’ainana. The priests, or kahuna, tended to spiritual and ceremonial matters. With the installation of the kapu system, or rules of conduct, which specified privileges for the elite and restrictions for the masses, the social hierarchy gained legitimacy and power. The chiefs levied a tax on the labor of commoners and therewith built extensive taro terraces, irrigation networks, fishponds, and temples. Still, people shared the bounties of land and sea, both of which were considered sacred, and there was no concept of private property. The ali’i might hold the land, but the masses made it productive. As Hawaiians note, “The land remains the land because of the chiefs, and prosperity comes to the land because of the common people.”

THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC WORLDS

The Atlantic world intruded into the Pacific with the making of the Spanish empire. In 1513, Spain’s Vasco Nuñez de Balboa traversed Panama’s isthmus, waded into the Gulf of San Miguel (after having waited for hours for the tide to come in for a choice moment), gazed across the Mar del Sur (the South Sea), and issued the grandiose claim of “real and corporeal and actual possession of these seas and lands and coasts and ports and islands of the south, and all their annexures and kingdoms and provinces to them pertaining . . . in the name of the Kings of Castile present or to come . . . both now and in all times, as long as the world endures until the final day of judgement of mortal man.” The South Sea was renamed the Pacific (peaceful) Ocean in 1520, when another of Spain’s taxonomists, Ferdinand Magellan, emerged from the turbulent straits at the southern tip of the American continent that to this day bear his name.

Despite Balboa’s claim, the Pacific remains Oceania, a Pacific Islander world. Before arriving in the islands he called the Philippines in honor of his patron, Philip II of Spain, Magellan first landed on the island of Guam in 1521. The islanders boarded his ships and took what they wanted; in retribution, Magellan dispatched forty armed soldiers to burn and sack the islanders’ homes and killed seven of them. Three days later, he set off for the Philippines, where in 1565 the Spaniards built a trade colony as a terminus for their Manila galleons.

Originally, the Spaniards had named the string of islands that included Guam the Islas de los Ladrones, meaning, in contempt for their native peoples, “islands of thieves.” Later, as they colonized the islands, the Spaniards renamed them the Marianas, after the seventeenth-century Spanish queen, Mariana. This reference to a ruler half a world away stood in sharp contrast to the islanders’ own name for their home, “land from the sea.”
Largely because of its strategic location as an approach to Manila, Guam became an outpost of the Spanish Empire centuries before Europeans conquered other Pacific islands. Guam remained free despite being claimed by Spain, and from 1565 it was ruled by Mexico’s viceroy. Guam's Chamorro islanders traded with visiting Spanish galleons and with English and Dutch vessels throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1668, the arrival of Jesuits tightened the Spanish colonizers’ hold, and in 1676, a Spanish administrator took up residence on the island.

The invaders tried to systematically dismantle and replace the islanders’ web of social cohesion and affiliation. They induced conflicts between the Chamorro nobility and commoners, tempting the elites to form and exploit alliances with the crown and Church, while the islanders as a body resisted conversion to Catholicism, at times through the force of arms. A brutal “pacification” campaign began in the 1670s, in which a common strategy was the forced breakup and relocation of Chamorro and other recalcitrant island communities. By 1695, when the wars ended, only five thousand Chamorros survived of the estimated fifty thousand original inhabitants, as a result of both Spanish killings and a devastating smallpox epidemic. Following the Spanish-American War, the United States obtained Guam, along with the Philippines, from Spain in the Treaty of Paris of 1898.

European oceanic empires featured profitable commerce, extractive colonies, and naval bases to enforce their claims. Interest in establishing military bases in the Pacific to protect the shipping lanes with Asia drew the United States, Germany, and Britain to Samoa, in the eastern Pacific, for its fine harbor at Pago Pago. In 1878, the U.S. secured a treaty with Samoan chiefs for a naval station at Pago Pago and for a hand in Samoa’s foreign relations. For about a decade, the foreign powers competed for dominance in the islands. In 1899 they agreed to divide the islands between the United States and Germany and to compensate Britain with other Pacific islands, all without the consent of the governed.

Hawaiians discovered Europeans when they spotted the ships of British Captain James Cook off the island of Kaua‘i on the morning of January 18, 1778. Unlike the Polynesian navigators who sailed to find land and settle Hawai‘i, Cook made landfall by accident on his way to search America’s West Coast for a Northwest Passage that connected the Atlantic with the Pacific. Cook placed the Hawaiian Islands on European maps marked by grids of longitude and latitude and named them the Sandwich Islands in honor of the Earl of Sandwich, the first lord of the Admiralty. Although he failed to find a Northwest Passage, Cook’s cartography led to European and American landings in Hawai‘i, resulting in enormous changes to the waters, lands, and peoples wrought principally by American missionaries, traders, and whalers from New England’s Atlantic seaboard. The Atlantic, indeed, inundated the Pacific.

**SUGGESTED READINGS**


**PRIMARY DOCUMENTS**

**DOCUMENT 1**


Born in 1795 on the Big Island of Hawai‘i, Davida Malo trained early in Hawaiian history, literature, and dance. He learned from noted specialists like Auwai, a chief under the first king, Kamehameha, and a genealogist, an authority on law and religion, and Hawaiian culture. Malo also received instruction from Christian missionaries; he converted to Christianity and was ordained as a minister. Despite general contempt for Hawaiian culture among missionaries, Malo was an avid collector of materials on precontact Hawai‘i, and he coauthored the first “Moolelo Hawaii” (Hawaiian history) in about 1835 or 1836. He also completed a biography of King Kamehameha, which is now lost, and wrote *Mo'olelo Hawaii*, which was published as *Hawaiian Antiquities* in 1903. Written in Hawaiian by a Hawaiian scholar, the work is one of the few sources on precontact Hawai‘i.

In Hawaiian ancestral genealogies it is said that the earliest inhabitants of these islands were the progenitors of all the Hawaiian people.

In the genealogy called Kumu-lipo it is said that the first human being was a woman called Lailai and that her ancestors and parents were of the night (*he po wale no*), that she was the progenitor of the (Hawaiian) race.

The husband of this Lailai was named Ke-alii-wahi-lani (the king who opens heaven); but it is not stated who were the parents of Ke-alii-wahi-lani, only that he was from the heavens; that he looked down and beheld a beautiful woman, Lailai, dwelling in Lalawaia; that he came down and took her to wife, and from the union of these two was begotten one of the ancestors of this race.

And after Lailai and her company it is again stated in the genealogy called Lolo that the first native Hawaiian (*kanaka*) was a man named Kahiko. His ancestry and parentage are given, but without defining their character; it is only said he was a human being (*kanaka*).

Kupulanakehau was the name of Kahiko’s wife; they begot Lehauula and Wakea. Wakea had a wife named Haumea, who was the same as Papa. In the genealogy called Pali-ku it is said that the parents and ancestors of Haumea the wife of Wakea were *pali*, i.e., precipices. With her the race of men was definitely established.

These are the only people spoken of in the Hawaiian genealogies; they are therefore presumably the earliest progenitors of the Hawaiian race. It is not stated that they were
born here in Hawaii. Probably all of these persons named were born in foreign lands, while their genealogies were preserved here in Hawaii.

DOCUMENT 2


Lili'uokalani, the last monarch of the Hawaiian kingdom, translated the *Kumulipo* while being held captive by usurpers in Iolani Palace and had it published in 1897. The queen cited in her introduction several reasons for the *Kumulipo*’s importance. The translation, she wrote, “will be to my friends a souvenir of that part of my life,” and is of “inestimable value” because language changes, “and there are terms and allusions herein to the natural history of Hawaii, which might be forgotten in future years without some such history as this to preserve them to posterity. Further, it is the special property of the latest ruling family of the Hawaiian Islands, being nothing less than the genealogy in remote times of the late King Kalakaua,—who had it printed in the original Hawaiian language,—and myself.” In this sense, the *Kumulipo* validates the kingdom’s rightful claim to sovereignty set against the illegal, forcible takeover by white conspirators and their U.S. ally.

One verse in the *Kumulipo* describes the creation of the Hawaiian islands from the sea:

Filling, filling full  
Filling, filling out  
Filling, filling up  
Until the earth is a brace holding firm the sky  
When space lifts through time in the night of Kumulipo.

In subsequent verses, correspondences emerge: the “seaweed living in the sea” and “fern living on land,” the “fragrant red seaweed living in the sea” and the “succulent mint living on land,” and the “manauea seaweed living in the sea” and the “manauea taro living on land.” The people too, the *Kumulipo* tells, are of the sea and the land.

Another, separate document, a praise song, presents another cosmogony for the islands. It describes how the famed fisherman Kapuhe'euanu'u (the large-headed octopus), snagged and pulled up the islands of Hawai'i from the sea:

A land found in the ocean,  
Thrown up out of the sea,  
From the very depths of Kanaloa,  
The white coral in the watery caves  
That caught on the hook of the fisherman,  
The great fisherman of Kapahu,  
The great fisherman, Kapuhe'euanu'u..

The following excerpts are from the *Kumulipo*:

**THE FIRST ERA, OR AGE FIRST VERSE**

At the time that turned the heat of the earth,  
At the time when the heavens turned and changed,
At the time when the light of the sun was subdued
To cause light to break forth.
At the time of the night of Makalii (winter)
Then began the slime which established the earth,
The source of deepest darkness.
Of the depth of darkness, of the depth of darkness,
Of the darkness of the sun, in the depth of night,

It is night,
So was the night born.

SECOND VERSE

Kumulipo was born in the night, a male.
Poele was born in the night, a female.
A coral insect was born, from which was born perforated coral.
The earth worm was born, which gathered earth into mounds,
From it were born worms full of holes.
The starfish was born, whose children were born starry.
The phosphorous was born, whose children were born phosphorescent.
The Ina was born Ina (sea egg).
The Halula was born Halula (sea urchin).

Shell-fish.
The Hawae was born, the Wana-ku was its offspring.
The Haukeuke was born, the Uhalula was its offspring.
The Pioe was born, the Pipi was its offspring (clam oyster).
The Papaua was born, the Olepe was its offspring (pearl and oyster).
The Nahaweke was born, the Unauna was its offspring (mussel and crab in a shell).
The Makaiaulu was born, the Opihi was its offspring.
The Leho was born, the Puleholeho was its offspring (cowry).
The Naka was born, its offspring was Kupekele (rock oysters).
The Makaloa was born, the Pupuawa was its offspring.
The Ole was born, the Oleole was its offspring (conch).
The Pipipi was born, the Kupee was its offspring (limpets).

Kane was born to Waiololi, a female to Waiolola.
The Wi was born, the Kiki was its offspring.
The Akaha’s home was the sea;
Guarded by the Ekahakaha that grew in the forest.
A night of flight by noises
Through a channel; water is life to trees;
So the gods may enter, but not man.

THIRD VERSE

Seaweed and grasses
Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,
The Akiaki was born and lived in the sea;
Guarded by the Manienie Akiaki that grew in the forest.
A night of flight by noises
Through a channel; water is life to trees;
So the gods may enter, but not man.

Fifteenth Verse
A husband of gourd, and yet a god,
A tendril strengthened by water and grew
A being, produced by earth and spread,
Made deafening by the swiftness of Time
Of the Hee that lengthened through the night,
That filled and kept on filling
Of filling, until, filled
To filling, it is full,
And supported the earth, which held the heaven
On the wing of Time, the night is for Kumulipo (creation),
It is night.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

5000 B.C. Hemudu culture
3000 B.C. proto-Austronesian speakers settle Guam
1000 B.C. Malayo-Polynesians settle Samoa
A.D. 10 Austronesians settle Madagascar
50 Periplus of the Erythraean Sea
300 Polynesians settle Hawai‘i
11th–15th centuries Italian city-states and Mediterranean world
1100 Polynesians from Tahiti arrive in Hawai‘i
1405 Admiral Zhenghe leads Chinese expedition to Africa
1498 Vasco da Gama reaches India
1513 Vasco Nuñez de Balboa gazes on the Mar del Sur
1520 Ferdinand Magellan lands on Guam
1521 Magellan names the Philippines in honor of Philip II of Spain
1565 Manila galleon trade begins
1778 Hawai‘i mapped by James Cook
1878 U.S. treaty with Samoa for Pago Pago
1898 United States acquires Samoa