

Indigenous Traditions and Sacred Ecology in the Pacific Islands

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“Our lives and the life of the sea are braided together...here we are islanders, we live because the sea lives.” (Living Sea, 1995)

For many primal religions, the land, sea, and all that exists are interwoven and interconnected in all of life's processes. The Pacific Islands and their people survive within a reciprocal relationship held with the land and are a perfect representation of an interdependent existence. Not only does seeing nature as sacred become a view of life, but a way of life as well. This can be seen in their myths, traditions, ceremonies, speech, and respect for the source of life (nature). In the following paper I will show how Pacific Islander's religious tradition effects, and is affected by, the land they inhabit. In addition, I will discuss what the Western world could learn from such interconnectedness.

I will begin by explaining indigenous religions and their view of sacred ecology on a broader basis. These 250 million aboriginal people see humankind and nature as inseparably linked, and themselves as guardians of the ecosystem. They believe that people belong to the land and not the land to the people; and with this, they have gained a strong sense of identity. They also see the land as a source of life: it nourishes, supports, and teaches; it is the core of culture; it connects people with the past (home of the ancestors), the present (provides resources), and the future (a legacy they hold and touch for the grandchildren).

A vast amount of knowledge is held in nature and those who work the closest with it (shamans/medicine (wo)men). Almost all trees and plants have a place in medicinal lore; and over 75% of the 121 plant derived drugs are found by observing indigenous medicine men. (Burger, 1990) The knowledge of healing is based on finding harmony with the natural world. When one is ill, it is often due to the severance of their relationship with nature, their creating a “taboo”, or ill-will wished upon by others.

Due to this close relationship between supernatural beliefs and social behavior, moral transgressions can create/trigger natural calamities. Disharmony with the community upsets the spiritual world, leading to illness and misfortune. Shamans aim to restore this cosmic harmony. To maintain such positive relations, one must act in accordance with the natural laws, respect the sacred ecology, and perform proper ceremonies or create the appropriate carvings, paintings, songs, etc...

For indigenous traditions, most myths aim to explain the origins of the world and to remind people of their place among the cosmos and of their connection with the past. These myths invest life with meaning, and explain the cycle of life in regards to the land in birth, continued existence, and death. This life process is always emerging and unfolding – a dynamic movement.

With the arrival of modern colonialism and the Europeans, major impact took place on the indigenous people. Fueled by consumerism, the colonizers brought with them invasion, disease, violence, loss of home, urbanization, discrimination, and an attack on cultural, religious, and personal identity. Soon to follow, the indigenous people become caught between their traditions and the changing surroundings. Not only was the impact felt on a humanitarian level, but it was detrimentally felt by the land and sea, through such actions as transmigration, deforestation, reaping of the resources, economic occupation, damming, logging, and mining.

For many, destruction of the natural environment equaled spiritual death. The outsiders desecrated the sacred places that hold spiritual power, they denied them cultural integrity, and they polluted both the land and the people. “When you take an aboriginal from his land, you take him from the spirit that is giving him life.” (Burger, 1990) Nevertheless, for many of those indigenous to the Pacific Islands region, seeing nature as sacred is still very prevalent. They continue to maintain great pride in their language, culture, and land, and they still hold strongly to the traditional myths and practices.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE ISLAND REGION

Humans everywhere actively modify and shape their world, yet they do so within certain constraints posed by the environments they inhabit. (Kirch, 44) The environment takes a large part in the way a culture develops, and this strong influence runs deep in every aspect of traditional life.

According to Jared Diamond, there are six environmental factors that directly contribute to the developmental differences of the cultures within the Pacific. These include: island climate, geological type, marine resources, area, terrain fragmentation, and isolation.

Limitation in natural plant and animal foods helped to shape the subsistence economies of Pacific people, and variations in soil, rainfall, and climate necessitated most communities' adaptations to their horticultural practices. In addition, winds and currents along with the islands' distances, have influence their development of navigational methods and their infamous seafaring skills. The following section will briefly discuss the geographic and climatic factors in the Pacific, and how they affect the varying cultural contexts. There are four types of islands in the region: the island-arc islands, the high islands of the midplate hot spot origin, the coral atoll islands, and the makatea islands.

- The island-arc islands are also known as the continental islands. They are the largest in the Pacific and are found in the Western margins of the Pacific basin. They exhibit varied habitats with the interior dwelling people having no direct experience of the coast of the sea (just with trade) to others who solely depend on the coast for their resources. The islands also generally offer a wide range of lithic resources, which are used for the manufacturing of stone tools. Examples of such islands are the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Fiji, and New Zealand.
- The high islands are of the midplate hot spot origin and are in the early stages of the evolutionary cycle and will eventually sink beneath the ocean's surface to create atolls or seamounts. They consist of basalt (hard, dense stone) used to make adzes and other implements and they often lack water sources. Islands such as this include Tahiti, Tutuila, and Pohnpei.
- The atolls are the most precarious environments settled by the Pacific people. They are too vulnerable to inundation by waves and storm surges during cyclones to adequately inhabit. There are also no streams, but dwellers learned that a thin lens of fresh water floats on the heavier salt water within the sand body of the motu and can be tapped by excavating shallow wells. The islands are remarkable for rich marine resources, and the people are at sea as much as they are on the land. The area also lacks stone, so they adapted the material culture by using coral and various species of shell (such as giant clams) to make adzes and such.
- The makatea islands are atolls elevated above the sea level, like Mangaia. They are coral reef atolls that have been uplifted or have emerged through tectonic activity. They are marginal environments for human habitation, because they lack surface water (though it is recorded that prehistoric Polynesians maintained settlement for 600 yrs. on Henderson Island).

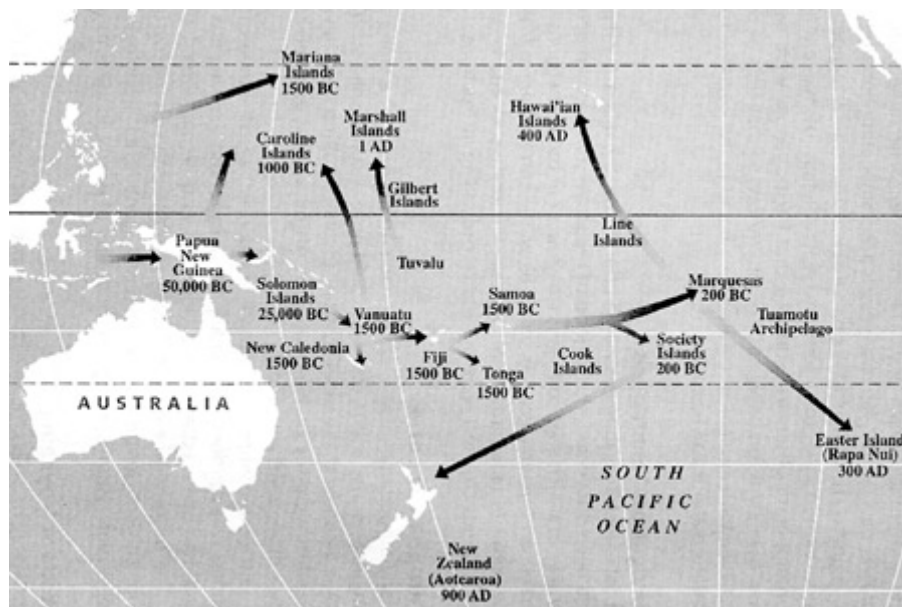
HISTORY AND CULTURE

Initial Spread

The expansion and development of the cultures of the Pacific Islands occurred much more recently than in the most parts of the world. Archaeological research indicates that Homo sapiens reached the island of New Guinea as early as 50,000BC during an ice age when lower sea levels exposed land bridges between the islands and narrowed sea crossings, thus facilitating migration through the Indo-Pacific. The following table and map show how man's expansion into the Oceania may have spread.

Australia, Papua New Guinea (from Asia)	50 000 BC
Solomon Islands (from Papua NG)	25 000 BC
New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga (from the Solomon's) Marianas (from Philippines)	1500 BC
Caroline Islands (from Vanuatu via Nauru)	500 BC
Society & Marquesas Islands (from Samoa)	200 BC
Marshall Islands (from Fiji)	1 AD
Cook Islands (from Society Is.) Easter Island (from Marquesas Is.)	300 AD
Hawaiian Islands (from Marquesas Is.)	400 AD
New Zealand (from Marquesas, Society Is. & Rarotonga)	950 AD

(Kirch, 2000)



(Kirch, 2000)

The influx of hunter/gatherers continued until the sea level rose again at the end of the ice age, about 11,000 BC. By this time, people had spread all over the region, and had divided into thousands of groups developing their individual cultures and territories.

They shared many common beliefs about man's intimate relationship with nature and social structures as a whole, yet the fragmentation into a multitude of small tribal units also gave rise to a number of languages and cultural differences.

After thousands of years of isolation, these people were followed by more advanced societies who had developed the seafaring skills that enabled them to cross the open seas and migrate through the now flooded region. They introduced new languages, new tools, new subsistence patterns, new styles of dress, and new ways to socially interact.

Indigenous Cultures

In the following section I will try to give a brief overview of the principle characteristics that distinguish the four types of groups existing in the region: Polynesian, Micronesian, Melanesian, and Papuan.

The Polynesian cultures evolved with very little outside input, and are believed to be the descendents of Southeast Asian peoples. They were strongly hierarchical with chiefs, nobles, commoners, and slaves as well as

specialization (healers, priests, navigators, boat builders). Land was owned communally, but its use was allocated according to social standing. In addition, they experienced a wide range of environmental conditions, causing subsistence to range from hunter/gatherer to slash-n-burn farming, to intensive food production. They survived off of various mixes of fishing, gathering wild plants and shellfish, hunting terrestrial sea birds, and food production. Yet, most of the islands were unsuitable for hunter/gatherer lifestyles due to the lack of water, quality soil, and inadequate climate.

Most original Micronesian cultures are related to the Polynesian cultures as they can both be traced back to Asia through the Lapita people in the Vanuatu-Fiji area around 1000 BC. The Western islands of Palau, Yap, and the Marianas were populated much earlier from that of the Philippines and Indonesia (around 1500 BC and perhaps as early as 2000 BC). They were generally very skilled navigators, and made long sea voyages in their canoes. The strongly hierarchical Micronesian societies were made up of clan groupings, with the family identity traced through the mother (except on Yap and Kiribati). Land was also traditionally owned by the clans, and they were able to claim such a position because they traced their lineages back to the island's original settlers. Clan groupings could extend across islands and were sometimes joined in confederacies.

Several Melanesian cultures resulted from various degrees of interbreeding and cultural exchange between the ancient black skinned Papuan speaking tribes that had settled in New Guinea around 50,000 BC and in the Solomon Islands around 25,000 BC, and some of the light skinned Austronesian navigators who started to arrive in the coastal areas of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands as early as 2000 BC. Their skin color thus varies greatly from dark brown to very black (hence the name). They gained their seafaring skills and language from the Austronesian, but mirrored the social organization of their Papuan ancestors based on the predominance of the "big man" who had the most power, but could always be contested. Their societies were not stratified and there was no individual ownership of the land (communal). The three cultures of Papuan, Austronesian, and Melanesian existed side-by-side for a long time in the "New Guinea – Solomon Island – Vanuatu" region from which several migratory waves departed to populate Polynesia and Micronesia. The Papuan tribes that lived off of hunting and farming remained mostly isolated in the valleys of Guinea's highlands. The Austronesian newcomers were navigators and fishermen. They remained on the coast of New Guinea and on the shores of the islands as they developed the "Lapita" pottery style that characterizes their culture. And, the new Melanesian civilizations evolved for some time in the same central region before spreading eastward as far as Fiji.

The Papuans trace their roots directly to the first humans who settled in New Guinea. They were probably light skinned when they first arrived from Southeast Asia but natural selection had enough time to adjust their skin color to be much darker considering how near they are to the equator. Population pressure in the area has led to endemic intertribal fighting and cannibalism (they didn't have the seafaring skills to release such tension through migratory expansion). Their social levels did not extend beyond the level of clans or tribes led by a "big man". The isolation resulting from the rugged topography of the Guinea highlands, led to the development of more than 800 languages and dialects belonging to some sixty distinct linguistic families. Little is known about the pre-contact religions of New Guinea because of the drastic shift in spiritual practice upon the arrival of the Catholic and Protestant missionaries.

RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK

One of the most defining attributes of culture is the religious/spiritual worldview the society chooses to follow. Worldviews include patterns of thought and attitudes towards life. They are a conception of time, a mental picture of what ought to be, and most importantly, people's understanding of their relationship to the "unseen", to the order of things, and to the view of self and of others. There are a number of factors common to most, if not all, indigenous traditions; this includes the overlying label of humans as guardians of the ecosystem.

Participants of primal or indigenous religions hold with them a strong sense of identity, and they believe that people belong to the land, not the land to the people. This relationship with the land is fundamental in all aspect of life, as it is the source of life. With this deep connection to the land, is the perception/awareness that all living things are connected. This means that all that lives has sacred meaning, and that both the material and spiritual worlds are woven together in a complex and dynamic web.

Another aspect where we find the notion of 'sacred land' in primal religions is the development of myths to explain the origins of the world and to remind people of their place in the universe and their connection with the past. The myths invest life with purpose and the rich symbolic meaning associated with them brings the sacred to everyday life. Through the individual community's myths and worldviews, they strongly bring power to the notion that, "the primal world is a single cosmo that sustains its embryos like a living womb." (Smith, 1991)

Religion plays a very crucial role in all societies; and it is often times the core from which a community revolves around. It influences entire worldviews, which are thus connected to economic, social, and political modes of functioning. For spiritual traditions that incorporate nature into their beliefs, the notion of sacred land can be seen on many levels, including rituals, myths (cosmos), symbolic meaning, and shamanism (medicinal lore).

Indigenous traditions largely incorporate rites of passage, processions, and ceremonial ritual into their religious practice. Evidence for this can be seen in how nature plays a role in such activities of the Pacific Islands communities. Where it can be the most obvious is when looking at the art and creativity produced. Life and its processes were often depicted in the poetry, stories, arts, and crafts. We find rock art of various animal species and landforms, as well as high spirit figures taking manifestation in animal-like forms. In addition, dances of religious statements at ceremonial times were always accompanied with songs that evoked myth, a close connection to the animals and birds of the cosmos, and generative power or the ability to easily handle tensions between groups.

Religious rituals are also vital in nurturing and protecting the cosmic powers and vital essences of the natural world. For this reason, making offerings and breaking particular taboos can be very crucial for oneself and one's society. Many have secular food taboos; for example, the Baktama of New Guinea are not allowed to harm or even touch sanok and eiraram (marsupical mice) or it will bring upon great danger. The Hawaiians refer to these taboos a *kapu*, in which sacred prohibition is placed on natural resources. For instance, some species of fish are prohibited from being hunted during certain seasons. The Maori also believe in *kapu/tapu*, in which enchanted trees of prestige and power cannot be destroyed or cut down without great consequences.

Where taboos create imbalances and uncertainty with the natural forces, offerings in the form of dance, song, prayer, chants, and gift giving do the opposite; they reassure the vital balances, channel positive energies, and open communication with the spirits. The Hawaiians refer to this as *Lokahi*, a unity, balance, and harmony between people and nature maintained through ritual.

Since natural species, such as birds, mammals, and padnaus (plant) are viewed as vehicles for communication with those spirits residing in the land, it is important to have unfaulted respect for them, and the space they inhabit. Rituals are a way of showing this respect and of reminding the people of their place in the universe and their connection with the past.

When looking to the stories of origins and the myths of the cosmos, we find nature and its dynamic creation at the core. Manuke Henare states, "myths and legends are deliberate constructs employed by ancient seers and sages to encapsulate and condense into easily assimilated forms, their views of the world, of ultimate reality, and of relationships between the Creator, the universe, and humanity." (Grim, 2001)

Each community has their own explanation of the cosmos, yet they all have the common thread of the three dimensions: sky, earth (land and water), and the spirit world united – creating an alive and dynamic universe, a Gaia. From this combination, all of life emerged; everything is created with its own nature that fits perfectly in balance with the larger whole. Humans are thus direct descendents of the earth mother, not separate from, and they too have a role to fulfill.

The water (a pivotal element of the Oceania societies) and man are part of a continuum with all living things. According to many traditions, all are inextricably one (united and dependent), held together by ancient rules of the universe set at the time of the sky father and the earth mother (Papa).

Sky gods are usually seen as male, and manifest as sun, lightning, and thunder. Where as, the earth (land and water) are viewed as being under the guardship of the earth goddess. Most tell the origins of the vast sea from which land was born. The Maori believe that all living things are of the sea and were created from/within the ocean. They refer to the sky father as Raki, and the earth mother, Papa (as most do). The sons and daughters of these creator gods become the spirits that brought life to the earth forms: Tane covered the earth with forests and grasses; Takaroa looks after the ocean; Tupai has power over the air (wind goddess); Rehau is the god of the sun; and Marama the god of the moon.

In Melanesia, they believe the first beings, *Gainjin*, came from the sky. From there, they made and released the sea, and created the sacred lands: such as particular localities, conspicuous landmarks, and geographic features where spirits were placed. Because of the cosmos being created in such a way, spirits reside all over, throughout the land, sky, and sea (so landmarks are/represent various spirits). And, because all is created under the same accord, spiritual power is in all things and is of the same influence, whether a tree, or a shark, or a human, or a god. The same energy force pervades all (*mana*); man's life is devoted towards maintaining and understanding this energy. In turn, when we look to the landscapes of these islands, we can see the events of myths and can learn the stories of the cosmology as symbols of life.

Because all of life is interwoven, the land and its living creature can be viewed as symbols. Spirits permeate matter and animate it; and the rich symbolic association brings the sacred into everyday life. Each landscape dwelling, such as a forest, cave, mountain, or island is like a chapel for a higher life. Ancestors and spirits may

remain or take form in these natural formations, as well as the sun, clouds, moon, or sea. In Hawaii, for example, Kilauea volcano on Oahu is associated with the goddess Pele, and Maunakea (a mountain) is the abode of Poliahu, the snow goddess. There is even a well-known song for the dwellings of the god Kane.

- O Kane-Kanaloa
- O Kane of the great lightening flashes in the heavens
- O Kane the render of heaven
- O Kane the rolling stone
- O Kane of the whirlwind
- O Kane of the rainbow
- O Kane of the atmosphere
- O Kane of the rain
- O Kane of the heavenly cloud
- O Kane standing before the pointed clouds
- O Kane standing before the heavenly clouds
- O Kane in the cloud above
- O Kane in the cloud floating low
- O Kane in the cloud resting on the summit
- O Kane in the cloud over the low hills
- O Kane of the heavenly star
- O Kane of the dawn
- O Kane of the clouds on the horizon
- O Kane of the red rainbow
- O Kane of the great wind
- O Kane of the little wind
- O Kane of the zephyrs
- O Kane of the peaceful breeze
- O Kane of the great thrust...

With the presence of gods all around, one gains a constant sense of religious encounter.

Symbolism is found throughout the land and in all societies. In Polynesia, the coconut tree is referred to as the great provider: leaves for baskets, husks for sennit, shells for containers, flesh for food, milk for drinking, and oil for the body. In Micronesia, some animals are labeled as tricksters, especially the rat, land crab, and turtle of which humans have everlasting enmity with. The Melanesians view snakes as relatives as well as god, and they symbolize fertility. Not only are they life giving, but also destructive; having control over the rain, they can cause floods and droughts.

One of the most famous ways for expressing symbolism is totemism. This amazing art form evolved from animism and particular clans claiming themselves to be related to a specific animal species. The signs and symbols on totems represent the value of the society, and what they view as important. A similar form of totemism can be seen on Easter Island, which is known for its wooden carvings and petroglyphs of stylized birds and birdmen. From this, a 'bird cult' was eventually formed here. Makemake, the principal god of Rapa Nui (better known as Easter Island), was worshipped in the form of sea-birds. His material symbol, a man with a bird's head, was carved into rocks at a number of villages. He was also found in wooden images found during feasts, in which human sacrifices were made in his honor.

Though generally not focused on one particular figure or form as it was on Rapa Nui, dedication to the land and creatures associated with spirits is found throughout the Pacific Islands. And, few knew more about the knowledge held in nature and its symbols than shamans.

In many Oceanic societies, as well as indigenous traditions in general, there is a strong presence of a shaman as a central role in the community's dynamic. The shaman is highly respected, and is often seen as the intermediary between the natural and supernatural; and they have an intense and deep relationship/knowledge of the land. For, the shaman more so than anyone else, is nature seen as sacred.

The original form of human spiritual expression is animism, and shamanism can be viewed as applied animism, or animism in practice. (Devereux, 1993). The shaman is deeply connected to 'genius locis', those places inhabited by spirits, and were thus seen as sacred: such as hilltops, rocks, trees, waterfalls, caves, etc... Not only was energy, spirit, and life found in humans, but in all of life (animals) and sometimes in sacred locales as well.

Thus the shamans were viewed as intermediaries between the spirit world and the human community; by entering a trance-like or altered state, they can make contact with the supernatural and find answers, guide spirits, and see the past and into the future. And, in order to travel through time and view distant events, one must assume the form of an animal, a bird, or have an out-of-body experience (ecstasy).

In addition to this role, the shaman was also seen as a healer, a 'holyman', and/or a solitary religious focus for the tribe. For all these, an intense relationship with, and knowledge of, the surrounding land was necessary. They can be seen as a living wisdom, and they, too, use nature as a spiritual teacher. As Timothy Freke states, "the shaman is the only one who continues the perennial teachings that may save the modern from asphyxiating itself with the toxic byproducts of its own ignorance." (Freke, 1999)

WHAT THE WESTERN WORLD HAS TO LEARN

Due to globalization and modern colonialism, many of the world's indigenous traditions have been lost or are currently dissolving. This trend is also apparent in the islands of the Pacific; and with this detrimental progress comes the suffering of indigenous people and the land they inhabit. Yet, as the western world directly or indirectly forces modernization and capitalism upon these ancient cultures, we see ourselves falling deeper and deeper into a hole on a spiritual, emotional, and environmental level. There is much the world can gain from if they were to become more aware of themselves and their actions. When we view the land and all beings as sacred, and not as inferior to ourselves, all will benefit and live in surplus.

Modern colonialism, as mentioned earlier, is often fueled by consumerism and capitalism, and it takes its detrimental toll on all that lies in its path on a material, natural, and personal level. With this taken into consideration, such greed and prosperity appears immature and unnecessary. Many cultures have been moved to marginal lands, only to be replaced by industries and agribusiness, which they later must succumb to work for.

There is a similar level of destruction occurring to the earth as well, with transmigration, deforestation, the reaping of resources, damming, logging, mining, etc...And these outcomes affect not only indigenous communities, but all lives. When land is taken and destroyed, it is believed to create unforeseen problems. The view of the world that the indigenous cultures hold, keeps them in tune with nature, the self, and all that goes on around them. It makes their spiritual lives and life in general, richer, fuller, and more complete. Where we lack satisfaction, peace of mind, and knowledge of self, they thrive. "Indigenous People see the physical world as a reflection of a more complex, subtler, and more lasting, yet invisible entity called energy. It is as if they are the shadows of a vibrant and endlessly resourceful intelligence, dynamically involved in a process of continuous self-creation." (Some, 1998)

While the western world is colonizing and destroying indigenous cultures, they truly crave something more, something lasting, something beyond the material world; they hunger for a spirit. Our isolation from nature has isolated us from ourselves. The western world, by societal definition, fears letting go and not having full control. But, because full control is never accomplished, we are never fully satisfied. In addition, we are too busy analyzing and contemplating all that is happening, rather than simply experiencing and taking action in life.

Malidoma Patrice Some feels that the West has a crisis of personal identity and purpose. Our lack of connection has brought us to a point where we don't know of a way to express our unique qualities, and because of this we falsely strive for individuality. We maintain a concept that being part of a group or community means that we lack a self or freedoms. But, just the opposite happens, without community connections, we starve for self-acknowledgement and support. So, we rely on ourselves, yet we lack the means and methods to gain such confidence.

This estrangement from our communities is also seen in our long separation from nature. Nature is home to us all; it holds the wisdom of the cosmos, and humans would do well to learn from its wisdom and healing powers, not to simply destroy it. Indigenous cultures are very aware of the qualities nature holds, and they establish them deeply in all aspects of their life.

Both the indigenous and western worlds seek to understand the intricacies and complexities of the world we live in. They have simply taken different routes to find the answers they seek. Where the indigenous world seeks to harness and work with nature's energy, the western world seeks to control it and profit from it. A definition of technology to indigenous cultures would be that which keeps the individuals and the relationship between individuals and nature healthy. This opposes the western view, in which they are indebted to their technology and style of technology. They have become a servant to it. In turn, where they feel they are gaining power and knowledge in some respects, they are also losing it.

Another aspect in which "modern" society has to gain from indigenous traditions is in their spiritual outlook. Westerners generally have a narrow horizon of vision, only believing what they see...what is palpable. But, the

narrower our perception is and the less space we allow for dynamic life processes to occur, the less accessible the spirit is. Having that inner energy and spirit is what drives us; it gives us passion and a purpose for living. We, in the west, have a tendency to find happiness in monetary value and material items, but as we close in on the end of our lives, we often realize that these things are of no importance or lasting value; and we begin to wonder what "it" was all about. We go through our whole lives feeling lost and alone, yet never realizing it. Western society demands so much of its citizens that we put to the back burner that which is truly important. All that we seek to gain in life of wealth, prestige, and power is the exact opposite of what indigenous communities seek to obtain. Throughout their lives, they have established a connection, a purpose, a selfhood, and a community; and with this, they find true happiness and strength. They find that the purpose of humans is to bring beauty, harmony, and communion to the earth, and to find a sense of fullness and quality of life. This purpose becomes not only their job, but their opportunity, and work is done with pride and is taken as an art. Where as most of us go through our days mindlessly counting the minutes until we're done with our work, and always asking "why".

When one establishes a deeper connection and understanding of nature, everything in life can be found to have great meaning. Knowing one's origins and feeling a part of that process creates an everlasting love of life and the land. The western world sees things in a dualistic fashion, everything as black and white, always separating themselves, and with this viewpoint true connection and a sense of closure can never be found.

This dualistic way of seeing the world has made much of the human population believe they are separate and superior to the rest of the world's beings and inhabitants. And here, in lies the root of our destructive tendencies. We've created religions that teach us that we're "number 1", and to control and reap the land. We have created lifestyles based on greed and wanting more, causing us to abuse and diminish natural resources. And, our lack of spirit and self has made us look in all the wrong places to find lasting happiness.

All of this is not to say that natives and indigenous cultures didn't have a negative impact on the land, but it is to say that the degree of impact is not nearly as severe as that of other colonizers. They worked to maintain the land and sustain the resources; and they were more conscious, aware, and appreciative of the land they inhabited. They constantly associated living life with nature on all levels, and in turn, they developed detailed empirical knowledge about island ecology.

This is also not to say that modernization is all terrible, but is it all worth it? Are people really better off? Happier? More intelligent? Better in tune? Peaceful? In addition, non-modernization, does not equate to non-development. One can develop spiritually and socially, and not by developing destructive technology, dominating land and other societies, and forcing assimilation. This process of development has only created warfare, hate, emissions, pollution, death, disease, loss of beauty, and competition. We can develop ways to better benefit and conserve our natural habitats, and learn to co-exist and be a part of all that surrounds us. Now we must work together on a level of cultural holism and share ideas. Our primary concern should be to nurture all beings and their lives. Sustaining ourselves means sustaining the land we inhabit, and the resources we survive upon.

There is no need for one to abandon previous spiritual practices, but simply to learn how to incorporate the land into one's daily life and awareness. The root problem that needs to be remedied if respect for the land is to be recovered involves overcoming the nature-spirit split. (Jung) Many schools of thought have begun to raise awareness to such issues in modern and accessible ways. These include deep ecology and other environmental programs, as well as a feminist approach to philosophy and relationships. In addition, there are several religious practices outside of those in indigenous traditions that have always and are beginning to refer to nature as sacred, such as Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and the stewardship ethic that is revolutionizing the creation-centered spiritual practices.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, incorporating nature into the sacred becomes not only a view of life, but a way of life. The native peoples of the Pacific Islands find their love and respect of land imbedded into all aspects of their lives, finding history, beauty, and sustainability on every level. This perception has allowed them to live for generations in peace and health with the sacred land that surrounds them. "Only when the land is given its voice will we be enriched by what it can teach us." (Jung)

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