
Island Vulnerability

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Island Anthology

Pieces of the Continent: An Island Anthology

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by

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Islands Index

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne

Introduction

Though generic man should well be concerned for any other man, Donne would no doubt agree that in other respects, life experiences may define one man from another, moulding his thoughts, beliefs, his real and philosophical values, and therefore his behaviour and actions. What of this generic man upon and amongst islands? What does it mean to live in a small and remote, disparate and distant, and often vulnerable place surrounded by variable seas, often of massive extent? Does it mean anything at all? How do the influences of nature - the island environments - balance with those of nurture - the genetic influences of island cultures? Are islanders identifiable as distinct from mainlanders?

To start with, can we be informed from literature, generally, or from the literature specifically? Not so much the academic literature - though some specialist writings are worthy in this respect; neither having in mind the definitions of islands; nor economic or, on their own, the social analyses of island communities; not the debates about objectives, methods and shortcomings of past and projected development; or outsiders' accounts of their own experiences upon and amongst islands; not only the geographies or the histories of islands; but the essential diverse nature of islands and of their juxtaposition, and especially what it is to be an indigenous islander.

".....islands are much more than a writer's inspiration, a scientist's laboratory. They are home to islanders, who are both the same yet different to everyone else"
UNESCO (Preface p3)

Is this an over-ambitious quest, however? Certainly, there is a literature by islanders, as distinct from a literature about islanders written by outsiders; but is being an islander any greater or lesser experience than of anywhere else - worth writing about? How much is there, written by indigenous islanders, that describes the characteristics of life on islands, or which evaluates the island experience? What is, or has been written about, are ancient gods and goddesses, epic voyages in legend and folk-lore, and history (eg: Westervelt 1963; Laracy 1983) - and analyses of internal conditions and experiences seemingly unaffected by, and uninfluenced by, their island contexts as such (eg: Tupouniua 1977). For the outsider, life as an island dweller has therefore to be surmised; it is not written about in any way more dramatic, more enriched, or more deprived, because of its island context, than an everyday existence anywhere else.

For a writer using the English language, most sources come from other writers in

English; and most of these have not been indigenous of the island communities which have been their subject. The writing of indigenous islanders may be, or have been, prolific, but its accessibility and understanding may be the impediment of the reader. What some outsiders do have to offer, however, in addition to island fantasies and occasional translation, are perspective, observation and comparison. However, and in any case, the United Kingdom - or the British Isles, the origin of this writer, is frequently referred to as an island or as islands:

".....while James Lewis provides an alternative, which could perhaps only come from a citizen of a small, island state and might best be characterized as the people's point of view."

Lynn H Stephens and Stephen J Green (Preface pvii)

Moreover, neither are those events which are regarded (by outsiders) as spectacular or significant, given much special literary attention by indigenous islanders:

"It can be assumed that earthquake, volcanic eruption, hurricane and tsunami were as evident in prehistory as they are in history, but history is recorded principally by Europeans. Otherwise descriptively rich Tongan folklore and legend seems unconcerned with reference to environmental hazards, with the possible exception of volcanic eruption"

James Lewis (1999 p63).



Ha'ano Island, Ha'apai Group, Tonga.
(Copyright James Lewis.)

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the writings of former outsiders, adopted to become long-term indigenous observers and historians (eg: Martin: 1981).

Are perceived and imagined qualities, deprivations, dreams and fears, so frequently and for so long ascribed to island places, the fantasies and dreams of the non-islander - the outsider? Do they exist at all? More particularly, do they say more about the outsider - the mainlander - than about islands and their inhabitants themselves?

Notwithstanding, however, is there not a useful role for the outsider? To surmise with regard to islands and life upon them, to inquire, to observe, to survey and to analyse, to offer perspective and comparison, and to record - where this all must be done by outsiders at all?

As this inquiry has developed, and as the extracts that follow have been gathered, the special (but not unique) characteristics of islands, and human life upon them, have so far emerged as:

- a close association with the sea and its weather;
- a certain containment, isolation and insularity;
- a need and/or a desire for movement within a group or archipelago or to a mainland close by, or far away;
- relatively closed, and close-knit, social groups and society;
- vulnerability to proportionally high hazardous impacts; and
- the realisation that some islands are the desired (or disinterested) possession of others from which may ensue colonisation, aggression, dispossession and/or depopulation.

Added to these is essential evidence that islands have been the material of mainlanders' romantic fantasies for centuries and, though rarely realised for a few, there can be at times a positive solitude - the obverse of negative isolation - though this is as difficult to find accurately recorded in literature as it is in reality!

The most striking characteristic that emerges from the literature, however, is the extraordinary diversity of island forms and formations: "no two islands are alike and few are even closely similar". Indeed, it is in their very descriptions of islands and island formations that commences outsiders' expressions of fascination with islands as real or fictitious places of romantic appeal - for themselves and for their readers.

All human characteristics emanate in equally extraordinary diversity and richness - as they do anywhere else. Neither, however, is any islander "entire of itself" and therefore every islander also is a piece of the global continent and "a part of the main".

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One quarter of the world's countries are island states with a combined population of sixty-five million people.

Islands have been places of imprisonment and banishment, have been annexed and or occupied for strategic purposes, or selected as places for positive isolation. For writers of fiction, islands are convenient for the containment they offer of an idea and its enactment, from *Treasure Island* to *Lord of the Flies*, and encapsulate for readers a recognisable and tangible scale of place unconfused and unencumbered by an intrusive hinterland.

Resilience, coherence, social cohesion and political stability are recognised as positive aspects of island societies, as are innovative capacity, active participation and shared subsistence resources. However, these qualities come under severe strain as the hazards to which so many island formations are subjected become manifest. Tropical cyclones, floods, drought, famine, disease, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions have frequently been the cause of death, disruption, migration and evacuation. Nevertheless, as if these naturally caused events had not been sufficient, equally numerous and devastating island experiences have resulted from wars and conflicts, and from annexations and occupations by vastly more powerful, opposing or acquiring forces and interests.

Islands and their populations have, however and for the most part, survived; an expression itself of island resilience. Where they have not, or have not yet survived, there are and must be vigorous initiatives to enable them to do so. That island societies are able to survive is as crucial to ethnic diversity as is the survival of species to biological diversity.

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This anthology began as an experimental inquiry. The selected extracts relate, perhaps inevitably but with one or two significant exceptions, to identifiable, emphasised or extreme events and experiences. Everyday normality does not very often become a topic for record anywhere.

The anthology which follows is comprised as five groups. The first, 'fantasy?' indicates that islands have been an object of romantic curiosity from as early as the eighth century BC; the second, 'diversity and comparisons' describes the multifarious nature of "given" contexts; the third group is of expressions and observations of social, as distinct from physical, contexts; the fourth group has to do with impacts of external forces of various kinds; and the fifth and final group is of some consequences and outcomes:

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Helpful suggestions of additional sources are being received and others will be welcome.

As a consultant and writer on environmental hazards and human settlements, James Lewis has worked within or visited the islands of Andros (Bah); Antigua; Arran (Scot); Barbados; Barbuda; Bermuda; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Eleuthera; 'Eua; Foa; Funafuti; Funen; Gozo; Grand Bahama; Guadalcanal; Guadeloup; Hong Kong; Jamaica; Kutubdia; Lantau; Lifuka; Lofanga; Luzon; Madeira; Male; Malta; Manhattan; Martha's Vineyard; Martinique; Moheshkhali; Nauru; Nevis; New Providence; Niue; North (NZ); Nuku'alofa; Oahu; Papua New Guinea; Portland; Rarotonga; Sandwip; Savaii; Skye; Sri Lanka; St Kitts; St Lucia; St Vincent; Statten; Suomenlinna; Tarawa; 'Uiha; Vanua Levu; Vava'u; Victoria (HK); Viti Levu; Zealand; [and Kiritimati (Christmas Island: Pacific) in absentia!].

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(commenced 23 July 2003)

ONEFantasy?

Not very far from the harbour of the Cyclopes' country, and not so near either, there lies a luxuriant island, covered with woods, which is the home of innumerable goats. The goats are wild, for the footsteps of man never disturb them, nor do hunters visit the island, forcing their way through forests and ranging the mountain tops. Used neither for grazing nor for ploughing, it lies for ever unsown and untilled; and this land where no man goes supports only bleating goats. The Cyclopes have nothing like our ships with their crimson prows; they have no shipwrights to build merchantmen that could give them the means of sailing across the sea to visit foreign towns and people, as other nations do. Such craftsmen would have turned the island into a fine colony for the Cyclopes.

Homer (p5)

When we left the Rocks, Scylla, and dreaded Charybdis behind, we soon reached the Sun-god's lovely isle (Thrinacie), where Hyperion kept his splendid broad-browed cattle and his flocks of sturdy sheep....And there came into my mind the words of Teiresias, the blind Thebian prophet, and of Circe of Aea, who had each been so insistent in warning me to avoid the Island of the Sun, the comforter of mankind.....

Homer (p49)

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In the evening, at the suggestion of Orpheus, they beached the ship at Samothrace, the island of Electra daughter of Atlas. He wished them, by a holy initiation, to learn something of the secret rites, and so sail on with greater confidence across the formidable sea. Of the rites I say no more, pausing only to salute the isle itself and the Powers that dwell in it, to whom belong the mysteries of which we must not sing.

Apollonius of Rhodes (p38)

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But I told you, did I not, Ere night we travel for your land - some isle With the sea's silence on it?

Robert Browning (p179)

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Away to the south-west of us we saw two low hills, about a couple of miles apart, and rising behind one of them a third and higher hill, whose peak was buried in the fog. All three seemed sharp and conical in figure....."Skeleton Island they calls it. It were a main place for pirates once, and a hand we had on board knowed all their names for it. That hill to the nor'ard they calls the Fore-mast Hill; there are three hills in a row running south'ard - fore, main and mizzen, sir. But the main - that's the big'un with the cloud on it - they usually calls the Spy-glass, by reason of the look-out they kept when they was in the anchorage cleaning; for it's there they cleaned their ships, sir, asking your pardon".

Perhaps it was this - perhaps it was the look of the island, with its grey melancholy woods, and wild stone spires, and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach - at least, although the sun shone bright and hot, and the shore birds were fishing and crying all around us, and you would have thought any one would have been glad to get to land after being so long at sea, my heart sank, as the saying is, into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island.....A peculiar stagnant smell hung over the anchorage - a smell of sodden leaves and rotting tree trunks. I observed the doctor sniffing and sniffing, like someone tasting a bad egg. "I don't know about treasure," he said, "but I'll stake my wig there's fever here."

Robert Louis Stevenson (pp104-105; 111-112 and 114)

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"Hufaidh is an island somewhere over there. On it are palaces, and palm trees and gardens of pomegranates , and the buffaloes are bigger than ours. But no one knows exactly where it is".

"Has no one seen it?" "They have, but anyone who sees Hufaidh is bewitched, and afterwards no one can understand his words. By Abbas, I swear it is true. One of the

Fartus saw it, years ago, when I was a child. He was looking for buffalo and when he came back his speech was all muddled up, and we knew he had seen Hufaidh."

"Saihut, the great Al bu Muhammad sheikh, searched for Hufaidh with a fleet of canoes in the days of the Turks, but he found nothing. They say the Jinns can hide the island from anyone who comes near it." ".....Sahib, Hufaidh is there all right. Ask anyone, the sheikhs or the Government. Everyone knows about Hufaidh."

Wilfred Thesiger (pp84-85)

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Ever since the sun rose I had been looking ahead. The ship glided gently in smooth water. After sixty days' passage I was anxious to make my landfall, a fertile and beautiful island of the tropics. The more enthusiastic of its inhabitants delight in describing it as the 'Pearl of the Ocean'. Well, let us call it the 'Pearl'. It is a good name. A pearl distilling much sweetness upon the world.

This is only a way of telling you that first-rate sugar-cane is grown there. All the population of the Pearl lives for it and by it. Sugar is their daily bread, as it were. And I am coming to them for a cargo of sugar in the hope of the crop having been good and of the freights being high.

.....and very soon I became entranced by this blue, pinnacled apparition, almost transparent against the light of the sky, a mere emanation, the astral body of an island risen to greet me from afar. It is a rare phenomenon, such a sight of the Pearl at sixty miles off. And I wondered half seriously whether it was a good omen, whether what would greet me in that island would be as luckily exceptional as this beautiful, dreamlike vision so very few seamen have been privileged to behold.
(p9)

(Notes: The island that the captain visits is based on Mauritius, to which Conrad sailed from Australia in 1888.....The voyage took fifty-four days; in 'A Smile of Fortune' it took sixty-one. While on the island Conrad, who was thirty at the time, formed a less than flattering opinion of the old French families. In his story he describes them as 'all noble, all impoverished, and living a narrow domestic life in dull, dignified decay.....The emptiness of the [girls'] existence passes belief.....)
(p204)

Joseph Conrad

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Legend has it that the Polynesian sun god Maui Fusi-Fonua fished the Tongan Islands out of the sea one day when his tortoiseshell and whalebone fishhook became entangled around an opening in the Vava'u Group's Nuapapu island. As Maui Fusi-Fonua was pulling up a large land mass from the sea, goes the story, his hook broke, scattering bits of land across the ocean and forming what are now the islands of the Kingdom of Tonga.

<http://www.pmo.gov.to>

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STEPHANO This is some monster of the isle with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language?

(Act II Scene Two)

TRINCULO Servant-monster! the folly of this island! They say there's but five upon this isle: we are three of them; if th' other two be brained like us, the state totters.

STEPHANO Drink, servant-monster, when I bid thee: thy eyes are almost set in thy head.

TRINCULO Where should they be set else? he were a brave monster indeed, if they were set in his tail.

(Act Three Scene Two)

GONZALO If in Naples

I should report this now, would they believe me?

If I should say, I saw such islanders--

For, certes, these are people of the island--

Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet, note,

Their manners are more gentle-kind than of

Our human generation you shall find

Many, nay, almost any.

PROSPERO [Aside] Honest lord,

Thou hast said well; for some of you there present

Are worse than devils.

(Act Three Scene Three)

William Shakespeare (The Tempest)

TWO

Diversity and comparison

Small islands differ in their characteristics....There are high islands derived from volcanoes, or from aggregations of continental rocks, or from the elevation of reef rock. These islands usually occur with elevations greater than 15 feet above sea level. There are low islands, comprising single islets or two or more connected by a reef to form atolls of carbonate rocks generally less than 15 feet above sea level; and sand cays.

Islands are found in every latitude and in all climates. Some islands occur singly in mid-ocean, some in archipelagoes, some close to mainlands. More than 50 islands and island groups are recognised as independent nations or semi-autonomous states, while other islands are politically part of continental nations....islanders are among the world's richest and poorest people.

Beller, William S (Ed) (pp10-11)

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Some island states are essentially single islands (eg: Barbados and Sri Lanka); others are groups and archipelagoes of several islands (eg: Tuvalu), hundreds of islands (eg: Tonga); or thousands of islands, as are the Maldives. Some islands and island groups are mountainous (eg: Dominica) and some may contain active volcanoes (eg: Savo in the Solomons, Niuafu'ou and Kao in Tonga, and Soufriere on St Vincent or on Montserrat). Many island groups comprise a variety of island types (eg: Cook Islands and Tonga). Others, for which sea level rise is especially threatening, consist entirely of atolls and reef islands (eg: Kiribati; the Maldives; Tokelau and Tuvalu).

James Lewis (1999 p20)



Sunset on Barbados, an island state which is essentially a single island....
(Copyright Ilan Kelman 1999.)



.....whereas the Maldives comprise thousands of islands.
 (Copyright James Lewis.)

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In 1882 Lloyd's agent at Rarotonga reported that the Haymet Rocks were supposed to exist about 150 miles south-southwestward of Rarotonga.....This report however would seem to have originated in the lost island of Tuanaki which appears to have existed in the vicinity, but has now disappeared.

A depth of 68 fathoms was found in Lat.24° 07' S. Long.158° 33' W. by the Fabert when searching for a low island, reported to exist in this vicinity, but of which she saw nothing.

Pacific Islands Pilot

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The appearance, or reappearance of Fonua Fo'ou (new land) renamed "Jack-in-a-box Island", recorded in 1781 by the explorer Maurelle is one of the few historical references.....(in English) from before the mid-nineteenth century. Fonoua Fo'ou had disappeared again in 1978, to await another seismic upheaval before reappearing.

James Lewis (1999: p62)

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No two limestone islands are truly alike, nor are any two volcanic islands. Kabara.....is mainly a limestone island, but has a vitally important source of volcanic

terrain. Fulaga, Vatoa and Qelelevu are entirely limestone, yet all are different. Fulaga is an uplifted atoll, enclosing a lagoon studded with a most remarkable group of mushroom islets.....Gardens are made in hollows in the limestone, and also in little beaches behind mangroves, protected from the lagoon by dense breaks of salt-tolerant grass. On the outer side of the island the sandy beach berms carry coconuts. Qelelevu is simply a slab of limestone, crossed by clefs extending down to tide level. Except on the beach berm, 'garden island' consists of solution hollows and grikes in the limestone, filled with debris from the bush to make mulch. Vatoa is far richer, with large areas of rendzinas, and some deep soils in hollows between wall-like limestone bastions around the higher levels of this multi-tiered island. Vatoa cultivates a much wider range of crops, and almost all the island is mantled in coconuts.

There is also limestone on Oneata, again under coconuts, and on offlying islands around Ono. But most of the other islands are volcanic.....Oneata contains a large and shallow lake, part of which is used for the cultivation of swamp taro and there are also large tracts of thin soiled grassland, used for sweet potatoes and cassava. In Moce, agriculture is confined to the valley sides and the beach berm, together with a small area of moister forest soils in the highest part of the island, where almost all the taro is grown. Komo, the most densely populated of the Lau islands, is a fragment of volcano, heavily mantled in coconuts and gardens. Further north is some very recent vulcanism.....producing the steep cones and crater-lagoons of Cobia and Yanuca, and Matagi, north of Qamea. Ono, in the far south, is dry and of low relief, and its cultivation is extensive.....

No two islands are alike and few are even closely similar.

Harold Brookfield (1978: pp2-3)

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The Beagle arrived at the southernmost of the Galapagos Islands. The archipelago consists of ten principal islands, of which five much exceed the others in size. They are situated under the equatorial line, and between 500 and 600 miles to the westward of the coast of America. The constitution of the whole is volcanic. With the exception of some ejected fragments of granite, which have been most curiously glazed and altered by the heat, every part consists of lava, or of sandstone resulting from the attrition of such materials. The higher islands (which attain an elevation of 3,000, and even 4,000 feet) generally have one or more principal craters towards their centre, and on their flanks smaller orifices.....

In the morning we landed on Chatham Island.....Nothing could be less inviting than the first appearance. A broken field of black basalt lava is every where covered by a stunted brushwood, which shows little sign of life.....One night I slept on shore, on a part of the island were some black cones - the former chimneys of the subterranean heated fluids - were extraordinarily numerous. From one small eminence, I counted sixty of these truncated hillocks, which were all surmounted by a more or less perfect crater.....From their regular form, they gave the country a workshop appearance, which strongly reminded me of those parts of Staffordshire where the great iron-foundries are most numerous.

The Beagle proceeded to Charles Island. This archipelago has long been frequented, first by the bucaniers (sic), and latterly by whalers, but it is only within

the last six years, that a small colony has been established on it. The inhabitants are between 200 and 300 in number: they nearly all consist of people of colour, who have been banished for political crimes from the Republic of the Equator (Quito is the capital of this state) to which these islands belong.....

We doubled the south-west extremity of Albemarle Island and the next were nearly becalmed between it and Narborough Island.....On the 8th we reached James Island.....

Charles Darwin (pp1-8)



A frigate bird on the Galapagos Islands.
(Copyright Ilan Kelman 2004.)

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Located approximately 725 kilometres south-east of the main islands of Fiji, and 1930 kilometres north-east of Auckland, Tonga consists of a total of 172 islands, 36 of which are inhabited. Administered from the capital, Nuku'alofa, on the principal island of the Tongatapu group, the archipelago includes three other sub-groups; the three islands of the Niua group in the far north, the Vava'u group and the Ha'apai group. The overall distance between inhabited islands from north to south is 690 kilometres. The total land area of Tonga is 730 square kilometres; total populated land is 647 square kilometres; and the preliminary estimated total population is now near 100,000.

James Lewis 1999 (Case Study II p60)

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We passed through the Dangerous or Low Archipelago* and saw several of those most curious rings of land, just rising above the edge of the water, which have been called Lagoon Islands. A long and brilliantly white beach is capped by a margin of green vegetation; and this strip appears on both hands rapidly to narrow away in the distance, and then sinks beneath the horizon. From the mast-head a wide expanse of smooth water can be seen within the annular margin of land. These low islands bear no proportion to the vast ocean out of which they abruptly rise; and it seems wonderful, that such weak intruders are not overwhelmed, by the all-powerful and never tiring waves of that great sea, miscalled the Pacific.

Charles Darwin (pp34-35)

*the Marquesas, or the Disappointment Islands of French Polynesia, but unlikely to have been Danger of the Cook Islands?

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The Republic of Kiribati comprises thirty-three islands, located in the central Pacific Ocean, straddling the Equator and the International Date-line. The country is subdivided into three distinct groupings of islands:

- The Gilbert Islands - an archipelago of 17 islands spread over 680 km in the western sector which includes Tarawa, the seat of government, and Banaba (Ocean Island) the westernmost island of the group.
- The Phoenix Group: a cluster of 8 islands lying about half way between the Gilbert and Line Islands and lying all in the southern hemisphere; the most well known island in the group is Kanton (Canton).
- The Line Islands - a chain of 8 islands in the east spread over 2000 km located on both sides of the equator and includes Kiritimati (Christmas Island) which accounts for half of the country's land area.

Distances between the island groups is very large. From Tarawa to Caroline atoll, the easternmost of the southern Line Islands, the distance is 4210 km; to Kiritimati in the northern Line Islands it is 3280 km; and to Kanton in the Phoenix Group 1760 km. Within-group distances are also very large. From Washington to Flint in the Line Islands 2050 km; from Makin to Arorae in the Gilberts 680 km; and from Tarawa to Banaba 470 km.

The total land area of all the islands in Kiribati is about 810 square km of which the largest is Kiritimati (388 sq km) accounts for approximately 48 per cent of the total land area. The next five largest islands are Malden (in the central Line Islands), Tabiteuea and Tarawa in the Gilbert Group, Tebuaeran (Fanning) in the northern Line Islands and Abemama in the Gilbert Group. The remaining 27 islands have a combined total land area of about 250 sq km; 11 with areas of between 10-20 sq km and 16 with areas less than 10 sq km. The smallest is Vostok, 0.6 sq km. Most of the Gilbert islands have land areas between 10 and 25 sq km. The Phoenix islands, with the exception of Kanton are small, under 5 sq km, while the eight Line islands are more variable in size.

All of the islands in Kiribati are of coralline formation: there are no volcanic islands or outcrops of continental rock. All (with the exception of Banaba) are sea level atolls or reef islands whose heights reach only 2-3m above high water mark. Banaba in the extreme west is an uplifted coral atoll which reaches an elevation of 78m. Kiritimati

in the east is an atoll which is at a slightly higher elevation than the rest of the islands.

Roger McLean (pp 3-5)

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St Kilda is the name not of one island but of an archipelago which lies in the Atlantic Ocean about 110 miles west of the Scottish mainland. The nearest island is Uist in the Outer Hebrides which is about 45 miles east of St Kilda.....Hirta is the largest island of the group.....Hirta can only be thought of as stupendous. In parts only one and a half miles long, and at no point more than one and three quarter miles across, the island has five peaks over nine hundred feet high.....three are over a thousand feet above sea level.

Of the three other islands in the group, the island of Dun lies nearest to Hirta.....separated from the main island by a narrow channel, only fifty yards wide. Dun is a long, narrow finger of land which rises to over 570 feet above sea level as it stretches out into the Atlantic. The island is rocky and precipitous on its western side, grassy on its eastern flank, and in winter it was not unknown for the spray from waves to crash over the top of the island into Village Bay below.....The archipelago includes (the islands of Soay and Boreray and) other giant rocks, called stacs, that rise out of the Atlantic like the tips of icebergs. Stac Levenish.....Mina Stac.....Bradastac.....Stac an Armin which rises to 627 feet.....and Stac Lee.....

Tom Steel (pp26-28)

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The experience of smallness (as distinct from its theoretical analysis) should have a part to play alongside other criteria such as population size, land area, and income. For example, the 122 sq kms of St. Helena or the 400 sq kms of Barbados are substantial "smallnesses" when compared to that of Tuvalu's 26 sq kms; but much more significant is that Tuvalu's minimal land area is further separated between its nine atolls (which are further separated again) over oceanic distances of 750 kms. Although all are "small" (islands or states), the experience of their land formations, whether by visitors or indigenous inhabitants, is vastly different--a difference which it is not (yet) possible to discern from the present categories. The same issue would apply to any island group or archipelago; the prevailing differences that exist between dispersive land forms and contiguous continental countries are surely significant.

Would an additional category of "islands" be useful, with an indication of (eg) "dispersive" or "entire" to begin to convey the fragility and the remoteness that is a part of a special experience of smallness? "Remoteness from what" (eg continental land mass or capital/other islands) would need to be considered. A more precise grouping may be required than by seemingly arbitrary cut off points--or by self-appointed memberships or political affiliation, such as that of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat being inclusive of both Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea. Smallness may be more a complex matter than simply size.

James Lewis (2002)

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The off-shore islands in the Ganges/Brahmaputra delta are known as chars, which means "children of the land". Created by silt which flows down the rivers from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal, the chars build up over time and also erode according to the rivers' flow. Flat, with limited forestation and less than one metre above sea level, the chars are extremely vulnerable to cyclones, storms and tidal surges.....Life is precarious - but river erosion and population pressure elsewhere has brought thousands of poor people to the chars to seek new livelihoods.

Philippa Howell (p1)

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Char Jabbar is situated at the mouth of the delta of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna rivers almost in the northern end of the Bay of Bengal some 16 miles away from the Noakhali mainland in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). A comparatively flat land, being exposed to the sea, the island has been subjected to a set of natural hazards posed by the onshore movement of wind and water generated by the energy component of atmosphere and ocean.....(p1)

Although the population density of Char Jabbar is much lower than that of the mainland, the area has not always been a self-supporting unit.....One estimation (of population) puts it around 18,000.....with a corresponding density of about 400 persons per square mile, by the end of June 1970. On the whole, the rate of increase of population in Char Jabbar is higher than the rate of increase for the province of East Pakistan as a whole (p3)

The process of land building and erosion is very pronounced in the delta areas and the speed at which some of these drastic land changes are occurring is extremely fascinating. New lands, or chars as they are called locally, can be formed overnight while some coastlines are estimated to be receding at rates of up to 800 ft per year (p5).

M Aminul Islam

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.....Lintin Island in the centre of the great Canton Bay twenty miles north-east of Macau, from which it is clearly visible, being in appearance a mountain some two thousand feet high, a fact which explains its name, which translated means 'Solitary Nail'. Though a small island only three miles long, much importance attached to it as the entrepôt of the opium trade.

Maurice Collis (1964 p30)

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It (Mergui) is a town of some 20,000 inhabitants, situated on an island of the utmost fertility at the edge of a great archipelago. The inhabitants in general are dressed in Burmese clothes and use the language of that country, though they are of the mixed blood of Burma, Siam, Malaya, China and India, with strains of Portuguese and

Arab. It is a place endowed by a various past
(p17)

The first island of the archipelago sighted by a ship beating across from Madras on the N.E. wind of the early part of the year was Tenasary Island. It is about eighty miles from Mergui.....

On its western side it rises sharply from rocks to some eight hundred feet, thickly wooded down to high water mark. This is no pleasant wood of great trees and glades, but an impenetrable undergrowth from which forest trunks stand up white against the greenery. Under the pale blue sky and intense sun, which accompany the N.E. wind, the island has a certain forlorn beauty. The white breakers at its foot and the vivid green suggest a freshness that is not there, for the temperature hardly falls below 75°F.

A little west of the north point is a narrow bay, which sinks into the island and is sheltered from all the winds as a loch. At the inner end of this cove is a white strand, with five fathoms of clear water close to the edge. By the side of it there flows down from the mountain a perennial stream. Between the sand and where the slope begins, stretches a small mangrove swamp, in which crawl iguanas and mudfish. The forest is full of wild pig and monkeys. The place is uninhabited and has always been so, though on its fertile soil fruits and hill rice could be grown.

This lonely spot, with its fresh water and sheltered anchorage, was a rendezvous for pirates. The Bay of Bengal is so huge a sea that its pirates - and there were pirates then on all seas - congregated only at points by which merchantmen had to pass when making port. As Tenasserim Island lay on the main approach to Mergui, the cove.....was a favourite waiting place
(pp31-32)

.....it will be noticed that a course from Tenasary Island is marked due east to a channel between Iron Island and King Island, forty miles away. This piece of sea is more thickly covered with islands than the old map pretends. On all sides are gleaming beaches, wooded heights. King Island itself has a range of peaks which rise to nearly three thousand feet. From the upper valleys waterfalls drop to the shore. Some sign of habitation begins.

The traveller is at last upon that inner water, which leads down to Mergui, still forty miles distant and difficult to find
(p34)

The ports of Indo-China and the islands have changed little with the centuries. Mergui today is much the same as in White's time. This is not only true of the scenery. The ridge, the woods of Petaw with their heavy greenery, the shimmering sands farther out - these are naturally the same. But the town itself has changed little. Its thatched and bamboo houses, winding streets, roadside bazaars and monastery stairways are still what they were in the seventeenth century.

The ridge round which the town is clustered is not high, hardly more than one hundred feet, but it rises nearly as steep as a cliff. On the highest point is a Buddhist pagoda, which by its design alone stamps the place as Indo-China, an art-integration distinct from India. In White's day the pagoda was there, and immediately to the south of it on a lower part of the ridge was a large battery. The Deputy

Commissioner's house now occupies that site. When I lived there, I found in the garden remains of brick ramparts and some cannon balls.

At the foot of the ridge was a single street. The houses nestled into the steep hillside and looked towards the water of the harbour, which at full tide washed underneath the piles on which they were perched. At low tide there was an expanse of mud and mangrove. Many of the houses had their own jetty, at which lay long, thin boats, the hull made from one piece of wood, a cabin roofed over with thatch occupying the centre. These boats carried sail, and with their racing cut were capable of ten miles an hour with a good breeze aft.

As the street continued along the harbour face it began to multiply, where the ground permitted, until at the southern end it became a block of roads and houses creeping round the ridge and eventually enclosing it up to the northern extremity. The whole was protected by a stockade of earth and bamboo.

(pp35-36)

Maurice Collis (1936)

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Thought to be named after the daughter of mariner Bartholomew Gosnold, who found wild grapes on the island when exploring the coast in the 16th century, Martha's Vineyard was a prosperous haven for whaling vessels and merchant fleets in the early twentieth century. After the age of steam it became a popular vacation resort known for its sea breeze, bike paths and charming towns.

Lonely Planet (2002 p284)

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The graceful Seven Mile Bridge is the longest of the 40-plus bridges that link the island chain (of Florida Keys). On its north side stand remnants of the original Seven Mile Bridge, built in the early 1900s by Henry Flagler (p625)

While Key West still exudes charm and eccentricity, overdevelopment is straining the resources and patience of old-timers. Since the Great Depression, artists and craftspeople have converged on the area. (p626)

Lonely Planet (2002)

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Hawaii's first inhabitants were Polynesians who arrived from the Marquesas Islands between AD 500 and 700. Tahitians conquered the islands in about 1000, introducing human sacrifice and kapu, a practice of taboos that strictly regulated all social interaction.

British explorer Captain James Cook spotted the Hawaiian archipelago on January 18 1778. He was met favorably by the islanders, but was killed in a melee on a later visit.

Cook's crew introduced the first of many foreign diseases that decimated the native Hawaiians. During the 1820s the first Christian missionaries arrived and quickly became a powerful influence on Hawaiian society. Foreigners gained control of vast tracts of land and established a sugar industry.

In 1852 American plantation owners began recruiting laborers from overseas, bringing some 350,000 Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos and Europeans. Immigrants soon came to outnumber native Hawaiians, but together they created Hawaii's multiethnic culture. Within a few decades, westerners owned 80% of Hawaii's privately held lands, while the Hawaiians drifted into ghettos in the larger towns (sic). By the end of the 19th century the native population had been reduced from an estimated 300,000 to less than 50,000 (pp1088-1089)

Hawaii is the world's most isolated archipelago, 2500 miles from the nearest landmass, North America. Volcanic in origin, the six main islands all have splendid scenery. Their leeward (southwestern) coasts are sunny, dry and desert like, with white sands and turquoise waters. The mountains windward (northeastern) sides have tropical jungles, cascading waterfalls and pounding surf. The uplands are cool and green with rolling pastures, small farms and ranches (p1089)

Lonely Planet (2002)

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Thera (Santorin) is the most southerly island in the archipelago of the Cyclades. It was once about ten miles in diameter, and was covered by cone-shaped peaks whose sides were scored by steep ravines. In the centre was a summit of perhaps 1600 metres in height. The steep valleys traversing the ranges would have been covered in vines growing in rich well-weathered volcanic soil. Before it acquired the name of Thera it had been known as Kallistê, the very beautiful island. It was also sometimes called Strongulê, the circular island. These names may preserve a memory of what it was once like, but they are no longer appropriate as descriptions. The eye can no longer view it as a complete circle. It is not even a single island. Thera is in fact three fragments of what was once a single island: Thera proper, the largest portion, crescent shaped, with four hills between 300 m. and 600 m. and a population of about 5000; Therasia, a much smaller portion to the north-west, with two villages; Apronisi, the 'white island', to the south-west, a small, stack-like uninhabited fragment with dark cliffs crowned with the thick banks of white ash and pumice which are such a striking feature of the Thera landscape.

When viewed on a map the circular outline of the Thera group of islands is very clear. One can easily visualize the outer rim of the once united island, and also the inner rim which now surrounds a great central expanse of sea over 80 square kilometres in extent. Everywhere around this inner rim may be seen the shorn-off cliffs which stand as mute reminders of the volcanic violence to which the island has been subjected. And in the centre of the great bay the dark volcanic dome spreads its fretted outlines like the tentacles of some giant squid rising from the depths beneath. For Thera is a volcano - the only active volcano in the Aegean.

J V Luce (pp45-46)

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We went to Ross Island, that historic mass on McMurdo Sound which is cemented to the rest of Antarctica by the Ross Ice Shelf, an august chunk of ice the size of France, and visited Scott's two huts and Shackleton's haunted Cape Royds hut, and lived beneath the midnight sun. This trip augmented.....Antarctica as another state of being. Nobody was a native of the place. Only in the past 60 or 70 years had a scatter of human myths become associated with it. But even in its massiveness it had made no tribe unto itself. It had provoked no native tongue, no rites, no art, no jingoism. Its landscapes existed without the permission of humanity. And everything I looked at, even the nullity of the pole, produced jolts of insomniac chemicals in my system. It was not landscape, it was not light. It was super-landscape, super-light, and it would not let you sleep (p4).

Thomas Keneally (2003)

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Article 121

Regime of islands

1. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide.
2. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory.
3. Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.

UNCLOS

THREE

- [Containment, isolation and insularity](#)
- [Social interaction](#)
- [Travel and navigation](#)

Containment, isolation and insularity

Insularity is especially associated with small states. Thirty-two small states are islands and when islands are also small much of life is conditioned by an awareness of insularity. This often manifests in a close association with a sense of place which gives preference to individual identity over collective solidarity, making co-operation between islands problematic and secession an ever-present possibility. Other common characteristics are remoteness, which has considerable economic and administrative costs, environmental precariousness, which is seen in the dangers of frequent natural disasters, and acute indefensibility posed by the problems of meeting a multitude of potential and actual threats from the sea with limited

resources. At the same time many island states have benefited from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which gives them right to resource-rich Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) which extend over tens of thousands of square kilometres and promise considerable economic benefits in years to come. Many are well situated geographically and climatically to benefit from the fast-growing tourist market.

Commonwealth Secretariat (1997: p11)

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Islands are candles, to be snuffed out one by one only for those island-living species which are territorially bound and unable either to adapt to, resist or retire in the face of innovation. The concept of insularity would have had as little meaning to the Pacific islanders as to the Vikings: the sea was as much part of their living space as was the land. It is not insular environment that makes an island population vulnerable, nor size, but the adaptive and mobility characteristics of the population concerned, and the real degree of isolation. Creatures that can move, retire into or recruit from other environments have far greater survival capacity than those which have no choice but to remain passively where they are.

Harold Brookfield (1980: p27)

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Antigua experiences earthquakes, droughts and hurricanes. To isolate for study each of these as they occur would be to ignore the interrelationships between the after-effects of one and the effects of the next. Moreover, there will be conditions arising from outside the natural disaster spectrum which bear upon, and are themselves affected by, all these phenomena.

This interplay of events and conditions is readily illustrated in the case of island countries, which have a natural and clearly defined containment. Such interrelationships suggest a complex human-ecological system which must be recognised if environmental balance and compatibility are to be maintained - particularly in respect of hazards.

James Lewis (1999 Case Study III p74)

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But when Orwell learned that a large farmhouse - "Barnhill" - was available at a spot overlooking a beautiful green bay, he could not wait to move to Jurathere were five spacious bedrooms, a large sitting room and dining room, and a big kitchen. But like the cottage, it had no electricity.....Barnhill stands at the northern tip of the island, and in Orwell's day the nearest neighbour was more than a mile away; the road leading to the place was nothing more than a primitive track.....and the nearest shop was twenty-five miles to the south. It was the only one on the island. The population of about three hundred was scattered over an area of 160 square miles.....It had the makings of a paradise, for Orwell at any rate. And there was the particular advantage of being so far removed from London that people could not easily get in contact with him. Barnhill had no telephone and mail came only once or

twice a week, so there would be ample opportunity to live as one pleased without the constant interruptions of a successful literary life in London. Despite the fact that the rent was 'almost nothing', as Orwell put it, no one else had tried to live in the house since 1934.

He had no intention of being a hermit.....He wanted people to come and visit him. He liked the idea of a steady stream of friends coming and going. There was enough room in the house to allow him to work quietly even with a few guests under his roof, and their presence would give him a chance to continue engaging in the kind of friendly debates which he so much enjoyed in London. Barnhill would be not only his farmhouse but his office, his restaurant, his pub, his inn, and there would be few reminders of the outside world of wars, dirty streets, modern factories, and power politics (pp439-440)

Orwell relished the complications involved in travelling to his retreat. Living on Jura was one long adventure, and the hardships were an indispensable part of the island's appeal....."George has a fantastically silly Robinson Crusoe mind" (p449)

"The house faces south & we have a lovely view over the Sound of Jura with little islands dotted here & there.....we go fishing in the evening which is the time the fish rise. They are simply delicious fresh from the sea. In fact, on the whole we live on the fat of the land. Plenty of eggs and milk & ½ lb butter extra weekly on to our rations. Our landlord gave us a large hunk of venison a short while ago which was extremely good. Then there are local lobsters and crabs....." (pp 453-454)

Almost all of it (Nineteen Eighty-Four) was written on Jura, an island far removed from the kind of world described in the book (p454)

Michael Shelden

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The isolation and marginalisation of islands, however, helps to create their beauty and allure. In island vulnerability lies plenty of island intrigue. The characteristics which may cause concern about island sustainability are those characteristics which make the islands worth living on. The challenge is not so much in transforming apparent weaknesses into strengths but in perpetuating those strengths without their becoming weaknesses.

Ilan Kelman (p72)

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People who live on islands are always letting their eyes glide along the horizon. They see the lines and curves of the familiar skerries, and the channel markers that have always stood in the same spots, and they are strengthened in their calm awareness that the view is clear and everything is in its place.

Tove Jansson (p95)

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Social interaction

To begin with there are three principal groups, Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, each one with its distinct culture, represented by numerous sub-types. Furthermore, within each of these groups we find at least two ecological types: fertile, mountainous islands and low, arid atolls. Finally, all possible combinations of habitat and native culture are found in every political sphere into which the Pacific is divided and the principal colonial powers have at various times or simultaneously been Spain, England, Germany, France, Japan and America, which obviously represents a great range of cultures and sub-cultures. A great number of varying situations, from a simple meeting between two cultures as on Raroia to the extremely complex cross-cultural relationships in Hawaii are thus found in the Pacific.

Bengt Danielsson (p234)

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Resilience is a property associated with the political and social systems of small states. There is a strong measure of institutional coherence in many small states which has encouraged constitutional development and the spread of democracy. Small states are more likely to be democratic than large states, irrespective of levels of economic development. This suggests a greater measure of political consensus and of social cohesion than applies in larger societies. The predominant political culture is one of 'concerted political harmony' which sees incremental change as the most effective way to promote political legitimacy and deliver efficient administration. In consequence, and in comparison with other states, small states exhibit an enviable record of political stability.....They are also significantly better performers in delivering human development than larger states, with many of them to be found in the upper ranks of the listings for the developing world set out in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index

Commonwealth Secretariat (1997: p11)

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The scene of this study was the little island of Tau. Along one coast of the island, which rises precipitately to a mountain peak in the centre, cluster three little villages: Luma and Siufaga, side by side, and Faleasao, half a mile away. On the other end of the island is the isolated village of Fitiuta, separated from the other three villages by a long and arduous trail. Many of the people from the other villages have never been to Fitiuta, eight miles away. Twelve miles across the open sea are the two islands of Ofu and Olesega, which, with Tau, make up the Manu'a Archipelago, the most primitive part of Samoa. Journeys in slender outrigger canoes from one of these three little islands to another are frequent, and the inhabitants of Manu'a think of themselves as a unit as over against the inhabitants of Tutuila, the large island where the Naval Station is situated. The three islands have a population of a little over two thousand people, with constant visiting, inter-marrying, adoption going on between the seven villages of the Archipelago.

Margaret Mead (Appendix 3 p211)

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It is the characteristic of islands that their comparatively small area and extent is physically limited and defined by a natural containment. They are physically and administratively finite, though island states, as distinct from islands themselves, may be dispersed and complex, in contrast to the relative simplicity within each of their island parts.

It is in the nature of islands that they are a containment of interrelationships between activities. In that containment, connectivity between policies, activities and environments are more readily evident and more easily identified. Conversely, in the archipelagoes, there is inevitable division and separation of activities that create special problems. Overall, the combination of interrelatedness and geographical division epitomises the problems of government that all countries experience.

The advantage of smallness and containment within islands to contextual analysis, is that interrelationships between one event, action or activity and another, are evident and relatively unobscured.

James Lewis (1999 p47)

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But a current report shows that the country [Tuvalu] has other problems to face that also affect its economy. These include high population growth rates, deficiencies in environmental education and awareness of environmental issues, a decline in traditional resource management practices and production systems, the unsustainable use of natural resources, and problems with waste management and pollution control. Yet the same document reporting those facts went on to acknowledge the 'innovative capacity.....and strength of islands communities.....(as) evident in active participation, a shared cultural outlook, religious unity, and the imperative of shared subsistence resources'.

A J W Taylor

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In a small place, people cultivate small events. The small event is isolated, blown up, turned over and over, and then absorbed into the everyday, so that at any moment it can and will roll off the inhabitants of the small place's tongues. For the people in a small place, every event is a domestic event; the people in a small place cannot see themselves in a larger picture, they cannot see that they might be part of a chain of something, anything.....and they live like that, until eventually they absorb the event and it becomes a part of them, a part of who and what they really are, and they are complete in that way until another event comes along and the process begins again.

Jamaica Kincaid (of Antigua: p52)

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.....I understand how awful it is. Here you come, headlong into a tight little group of people who have always lived together, who have the habit of moving around each other on land they know and own and understand, and every threat to what they're used to only makes them still more compact and self-assured. An island can be

dreadful for someone from outside. Everything is complete, and everyone has his obstinate, sure and self-sufficient place. Within their shores, everything functions according to rituals that are as hard as rock from repetition, and at the same time they amble through their days as whimsically and casually as if the world ended at the horizon.

Tove Jansson (of Klovharun, in the Pellinge peninsula in the Gulf of Finland: p43)

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Travel and navigation

History provides only a short record by comparison with Tongan prehistory. Polynesians were sailing the ocean 1500 years before the arrival of the first European explorers.

James Lewis (1999 p62).



Nuku Island, Vava'u Group, Tonga.
(Copyright James Lewis.)

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The greatest achievement of ancient Polynesia was canoe building, including not only an advanced neolithic art in marine design and construction, but also a remarkable tradition in advanced navigational knowledge and practice. Without aid of compass, sextant, or chart, early Pacific seafarers undertook long oceanic voyages of discovery and settlement in their deep-water canoes under the command

of chiefs and navigator priests.

Alan Taylor (in Judi Thompson p1)

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.....Tuvaluans have long had the habit of journeying far from home. The limited resources of the group have encouraged many to go away in search of employment. Others have gone away to preach the Gospel, or to study, and some have been carried away accidentally while sailing between islands. Still others have gone to seek adventure. Thus, though remote from most other groups in the Pacific, Tuvalu has not been cut off from them and Tuvaluans have made their mark on places far from their own shores. The sea was a highway, and not just a barrier, to far off islands well before the development of air transport linked Tuvalu closely to the outside world.

Simati Faaniu (in Hugh Laracy p121)

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.....but the navigating officers had only a scanty knowledge of the waters between Malacca and Java. The charts were incorrect, not all the small islands and but few of the shoals were marked. The Dutch had never been communicative on such matters, as they wanted no trespassers in their spice-island preserves. The direction, too, of the wind was a problem. Could one sail from Malacca to Java in the month of June ? They should have got off in May. The distance in a straight line was not great. From Malacca to the eastern exit of the Straits was some 150 miles; from there south-east to Java another 500 miles, say 650 miles altogether. But sailing ships do not go in a strait line.

Maurice Collis (1966 p53)

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The course taken was through the Straights of Sunda between Java and Sumatra, the usual route for ships sailing directly from Chinese waters to the Cape and vice versa. The Cape was passed on 13 May 1816. They did not put into Cape Town but sailed on to St Helena, which was reached on 18 May, about eight weeks after leaving Batavia.

St Helena had for centuries been a watering place for ships on the eastern run, and now was very much in the news, for there, confined on its heights, was the man who had given his name to the age, the Napoleonic age. Napoleon had arrived in St Helena on 17 October 1815, seven months before Raffles put in there. Waterloo was only eleven months back; 18 June 1815 was fresh in all minds.

Maurice Collis (1966 p98)

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Canton is.....on the Pearl River some forty miles from its mouth, known as the Bogue or the Bocca Tigris. This is situated at the head of a great bay, on the western horn

of which, forty miles south, is the Portuguese town of Macau. The eastern extremity is Lantau Island, behind which is the island of Hong Kong. Across the mouth of the bay are the Ladrone Islands, and in the middle Lintin Island.

It was about July or August, in the middle of the south-west monsoon, that merchantmen from Europe and India used to enter the China seas. The wind being aft allowed studding-sails to be set, and like black-bodied birds with white wings extended they would drive steadily to the northward at a rate of a hundred miles a day. On such a following wind the Landrone Islands were often sighted ten days after leaving the Straits of Malacca, if the course were from India, or Banka if from Europe.

At the Grand Lemma, the principal of the Ladrones, a Chinese pilot used to be taken on, a simple fellow, more fisherman than pilot, but capable of steering the ship through the island channels to Macao roads.

Maurice Collis (1964 pp20-22)

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From the Bogue to Whampoa was a distance of thirty miles or so according to the course steered. There were two bars en route at about the tenth and the twenty-third mile. Vessels of more than 1400 tons sometimes anchored below the former bar, but the great majority of merchantmen trading to China were less than that tonnage. The bars were crossed at the flood. If the wind failed, six-oared boats were ready to give a tow. After the upper bar the course of the river was due east. You came very soon to the Six Flat Islands and then to Dane Island, the eastern end of which was called Matheson Point, and the western Jardine Point....Adjoining Dane Island to the westward was the island of Whampoa, the name being a corruption of the Chinese word Wang-po, Yellow Anchorage. Whampoa, lying thirteen miles short of Canton, was the place where all European ships anchored.

Maurice Collis (1964 p41)

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From Rum Cay on October 16 (1492) the fleet sailed 22 miles to an island which Columbus had seen in the west.....This was Long Island.....and along the 60-mile shore of which he coasted for three days.

Without delay they set out across the deep Crooked Island Passage and came to Long Cay.....For four days he ranged up and down the shores of Fortune and Crooked Islands, seeking a way through the shoals of Acklins Bight to the gilded cities he felt must lie beyond.

.....it needed all of Columbus's sailing skill to carry the fleet safely down the chain of Ragged Islands.....Finally, on October 27th, he crossed the arm of the Bank now named after him, by way of Lloyd Rock and Cay Santo Domingo, and left Bahamian waters for the last time.

Michael Craton (pp35-37)

FOUR

- [Vulnerability](#)
- [Possession, utilisation and occupation](#)

Vulnerability

.....certain places and populations are, in a real sense, more vulnerable to natural events than others. A population living on the edge of poverty, a population occupying an ecologically-marginal environment, a population dependent on a single source of sustenance - all these are more vulnerable than wealthy people with good land and a range of alternative means of gaining a living. This is at the aggregate level; within a population, the poor are more vulnerable than the rich, the very old and very young are more vulnerable than the adult and strong. Within Fiji, the eastern islands are more vulnerable than the nation as a whole, because the effect of natural events tends to be more serious on small islands dependent on only a few sources of livelihood than on larger islands with a more diverse resource base.

Harold Brookfield (1977: p165)

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Concern over the fate of islanders infected with disease to which they were not in any way immune emerged in the 18th century, and though the concern did little to save the islanders from intensification of the 'fatal impact' it has continued into modern times. While true isolation constitutes protection, it also makes the isolated population unusually vulnerable once the isolation is breached.

Harold Brookfield (1980: pp23)

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Nine times between 27 March and 17 November 1943 Japanese aircraft attacked Funafuti.
(p140)

The first offensive blow from Tuvalu was struck on 20 April 1943 when twenty-two B-24s took off from Funafuti to bomb Nauru. Other airfields were later built on Nanumea and Nukufetau, in time to be used in November 1943 by aircraft engaged in the battle for Tarawa.
(p141)

Melei Telavi (in Hugh Laracy)

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Many small island states are in typhoon or hurricane regions and it is not unknown for storm damage to their economies to be pervasive. St Lucia lost 60 per cent of its coconut and 75 per cent of its banana output from a hurricane in 1980; and Mauritius

lost one-third of its sugar output in 1974 and 1975 and again in 1979 and 1980 from natural calamities. In Grenada a single hotel fire in 1981 destroyed half of its hotel capacity. In 1979, 73 per cent of the population of Dominica was rendered homeless by a hurricane, and banana exports fell by 80 per cent in 1980 from the 1978 level after two major hurricanes in 1979 and 1980. Extensive agricultural loss can also result from plant diseases and pests not only because of country-wide incidence but because of the tendency towards monoculture

Commonwealth Secretariat (1985: p19)

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One quarter of the world's countries are island states with a combined population of sixty-five million people; 51 of these are UN classified Island Developing Countries.....Tropical cyclones, hurricanes and storms are the most frequently damaging disaster type in most island states. The incidence of hurricanes may be no higher for island states than for some continental ones, but some frequencies for islands are impressive.

The proportional impact of natural disasters on island states is very much higher than in continental countries. Although numbers of homeless in the continental disasters were in all but two cases very much higher than the 810,000 homeless in Jamaica (Hurricane Gilbert 1988), the percentage of homeless was significantly highest in Jamaica at 34 per cent.

James Lewis (1991: pp39-40)

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Funafuti atoll was overwhelmed in 1972 by the 50-foot waves of hurricane Bebe riding on an exceptional spring tide and accompanied by winds of up to 150 knots. Nearly all the 125 village houses were destroyed, and government buildings were damaged beyond repair. Five people died and 700 were made homeless; crops were annihilated and copra production fell by 80 per cent.

James Lewis (1999: pp21-22)

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The tropical cyclone which severely damaged the town of Batticaloa on Sri Lanka's east coast in 1978, traversed the country and caused continued damage to inland areas. Rural populations predominate in most developing countries, but the spectacular, concentrated and accessible damage in Batticaloa was the focus of national and international assistance. Field analysis on the other hand, showed much larger numbers of destroyed and damaged buildings in the more remote rural areas, and much higher proportions of loss per incumbent administrative unit.

James Lewis (1985)

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Not only did Hurricane 'Allen' select many small island countries, it did so while

affecting their capitals the least. Of the nine island countries directly affected by the hurricane before it struck the Central and North American mainland, seven were most seriously affected in areas which did not include the capital city; Barbados, St Vincent, St Lucia, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

James Lewis (1980)



Silver Sands, Barbados was unaffected by Hurricane Allen in 1980 despite damage in the north. Different regions of a small island can have different disaster effects.
(Copyright Ilan Kelman 1999.)

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Tropical cyclone 'Isaac' in March 1982 destroyed twenty-two per cent of housing stock throughout the (Tongan) archipelago....in spite of an impressive rehousing programme, more than half of those made homeless had not participated, being unable to afford their contribution of a quarter of the cost per dwelling.....a major long-term housing problem pertained that established practice could not solve.....the problem (had) become locally recognisable and a significant concern.

James Lewis (1985)

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The destruction of Avarua on Raratonga in the Cook Islands by Cyclone 'Sally' in January 1987 was a rare reminder of an infrequent hazard.....Eighteen thousand people live in the fifteen Cook Islands, which together total no more than 240 square kilometres of dry land and stretch over 1500 kilometres of sea, north to south.....The largest island, Raratonga, 70 square kilometres, is beautiful and mountainous and has a population of 10,000. Mangaia is 57 and Atiu 29 square kilometres. The

remainder consist of low atoll chains 30 - 40 kilometres long, but containing only minute dots of land: Pukapuka, Manihiki, Suvarrow, Palmerston and Aitutaki.

James Lewis (1987)

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There was one last place along the east coast where the tide was to claim victims.....Canvey Island, another unplanned settlement at the mouth of the Thames Estuary, where 58 people died.....Canvey was.....overwhelmed quite suddenly, sometime after midnight.....The sea swept over.....with all the suddenness of a disaster in mid-ocean.....Foulness and Canvey had become half-submerged offshore islands.....

Michael Pollard (pp65, 66 and 70)



Canvey Island, near where the main breach in the Canvey sea defences is thought to have occurred in 1953.
(Copyright Ilan Kelman 2000.)

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The day that the volcano reached Harris, the boy and his donkey were safe, but nineteen other Montserratians were to die within minutes, killed by a force hotter than the inside of a kiln. No person, no animal, could outrun the Soufrière Hills volcano. It was 25 June 1997.

(p1)

Polly Pattullo

----- 000 -----

The history of volcanic-island evacuations offers little comfort for Montserratians who, by their actions, have seemed to pre-empt the pitfalls (Minister to visit volcano island, August 27).

Of 2,500 people evacuated from Niua Fo'ou (Tonga) in 1946, 1,800 voted not to go (but did so with the majority) and half of that number eventually went back. The

population evacuated from Tristan da Cunha in 1962 all returned after two years. The 28,000 population of St Pierre on Martinique in 1902 died because there was no evacuation (the mayor among them, who stayed to demonstrate their safety !). Soufriere on St Vincent in 1979 caused the temporary evacuation within the island of up to 20,000 people and virtually the entire population survived.

Assisted evacuation requires assisted repatriation. Redevelopment of the island (in the north) would seem to be long overdue and an economically sensible option. Whilst there is Montserratian will to remain, there should be political will to assist them to do so.

James Lewis (1997)

Possession, utilisation and occupation

Islands are an anachronism. Seemingly insignificant in global terms of physical size or population, they have often been of crucial strategic importance to world powers. Always heavily dependent upon trade but vulnerable to world economic and political fluctuations that they are unable to control, islands were early victims of protectionism and then colonialism.

James Lewis (1999: Case Study III p 74)

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As traders, missionaries and settlers moved out from Europe to Africa, Asia and the Pacific in the nineteenth century their governments gradually followed them.....where the citizen went the flag was not far behind. And when one nation got involved in an area it was commonly followed by other, rival, nations. Of all the countries in the Pacific, only Tonga managed to avoid being annexed by some foreign power - and even then it did not completely escape.....To protect her interests in these areas Germany persuaded Britain in 1856 that they should divide most of the western and central Pacific between themselves. Each, therefore, claimed a 'sphere of influence', and agreed not to seek political influence in the 'sphere' of the other. Kiribati and Tuvalu, along with the southern Solomons and Banaba fell within the British 'sphere'. Britain had already in 1877 given the Governor of Fiji the additional title of High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.....

Under both labels, protectorate and colony, Tuvalu was subject to a Resident Commissioner based in Kiribati, who was responsible to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, who was in turn responsible to the Colonial Office in London. But while the colonial authority structure developed, the indigenous one declined.

Noatia P Teo (in Hugh Laracy pp127 and 129)



A Tongan island.
(Copyright James Lewis.)

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On occasions during 1943 there had been more than 6000 Americans based in Tuvalu.....(p141)

To the people of Tuvalu, at least to those of them who's islands were occupied by the Americans, the war brought much excitement and material prosperity.....Many did not bother to cultivate their lands and pulaka pits, preferring to rely on the Americans to supply them - by way of both gifts and wages.(p141)

(On Funafuti) In the construction of the airfield a large portion of the land formerly used for growing pulaka and taro was covered up. The local people were later compensated yet they suffered an enduring loss. Pulaka is no longer a staple food, although during the war it did not matter. The American occupation brought them more food - as well as cigarettes, soap and kerosene - more than they had ever had before. Many still think of that as the best time of their lives (p142)

(On Nanumea) Indeed, most of the damage done on the island was done by its defenders. The airfield took up one sixth of the land area, and to make it the Americans destroyed nearly half of the coconut trees, 22,000 out of 54,000. Moreover, efforts to replant that land have not been very successful. The coral is packed too hard for the trees to grow properly (p143)

The arrival of eleven warships on the afternoon of 2 October was a spectacular sight to the islanders, who had never before seen such large vessels - or so many of them at one time. Still, it was only a beginning. During October 1943 forty-three ships

entered the harbour, and the figure was to rise to 131 in November, to 141 in December, and 174 in January 1944 (p142)

Melei Telavi (in Hugh Laracy)

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In 1877, Grenada became a Crown Colony and in 1967 became an associate state within the British Commonwealth. Grenada and the neighboring Grenadine Islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique adopted a constitution in 1973 and became an independent nation in 1974.

The post-independence period was plagued by corruption, extremism and political thuggery until a bloodless coup by London-educated lawyer Maurice Bishop in 1979. He immediately reinstated a measure of human rights and promised to resolve the country's economic problems. Bishop had widespread popular support and proved a charismatic leader, but his policy of nonalignment and socialist leanings didn't sit well with the USA or Grenada's more conservative neighbors. Ostracized by the West, Bishop turned to the Cubans for aid, who then undertook construction of a new airport on Grenada.

A struggle between Bishop and military hardliners resulted in Bishop's overthrow in 1983, and he was placed under house arrest. A spontaneous gathering of 30,000 people (one third of the island's population) forced Bishop's release. Together they marched to Fort George, where the military opened fire on the crowd, killing an estimated 40 protesters. Bishop and several of his followers were taken prisoner and summarily executed.

In the turmoil that followed, the US government convinced a handful of Caribbean nations to pledge support for a US invasion of the island. US forces invaded six days later in an operation that claimed the lives of 70 Cubans, 42 Americans and 170 Grenadians, including 18 who were killed when US forces mistakenly bombed the island's mental hospital. Most US forces withdrew two months later, although a joint US-Caribbean force remained stationed on the island for several years. Democratic elections have been held in 1985, 1990 and in 1995, the last bringing the New National Party to power and installing NNP leader Keith Mitchell as the Prime Minister. In late 1998, the defection of several members of Parliament from the NNP to the opposition brought the government down. As a result, elections were held in January 1999, which Mitchell won handily despite accusations of corruption from the opposition.

Lonely Planet

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Diego Garcia is a horseshoe-shaped atoll, the largest of 52 islands that make up the Chagos archipelago, a British colonial territory curving through the heart of the Indian ocean. In 1964, at the height of the cold war, the United States entered secret negotiations with the British government to lease the island and convert it to military use. The Americans required a strategic base to plug the gap between their presence in the Mediterranean and the Philippines.

The only bar to the project was the 5,000 islanders who lived there. The US insisted that the area be cleared for security reasons. Without any local consultation, an accommodation was reached, and by 1973 a savage depopulation strategy had been accomplished, with all residents forcibly transported to nearby Mauritius.

Libby Brooks (p3)

Postscript: a legal case to allow Chagosians to return was refused by the High Court in London in October 2003.



Chagos, Diego Garcia.

(Public domain photo courtesy of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's photo library](#), Department of Commerce, U.S.A. Government.)

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.....orders were given to make sail for the island of Singapore. There the ships anchored off a fine sandy beach at 4 pm on 28 January 1819.
(p143)

The island of Singapore is twenty-six miles from west to east and fourteen from north to south, and is thus only very slightly larger than the Isle of Wight. A strait about a quarter of a mile wide at its narrowest divides it from the mainland, which here is the Malay state of Johore. It is as much a part of Jahore as is the Isle of Wight of England. In 1819 there was nothing remarkable about its appearance. It was mostly flat, with a low hill here and there, swampy, densely wooded and sparsely inhabited. For hundreds of years ships to and from Canton had passed close to it, a familiar, but not interesting, sight. A walled city belonging to the empire of Sri Vijaya, a great Hindu-Buddhist state, had stood there until the break up of the empire toward the end of the fourteenth century. Nothing had ever been built on it since.....The

Sanskritic name of the old city was Singhapura, the Lion City, that is the holy city of the Lord Vishnu. It is interesting to recall that Marco Polo, who passed through the Straits about the year 1284, very probably saw the ancient city, for he landed at Rhio.

(pp144-145)

.....one sepoy went straight to the Temenggong's house, the largest in the little village above the beach, some of whose inhabitants seemed to be sea gypsies, a wandering Malay tribe who preferred boats to houses, and made a living as pearlers and pirates. The Temenggong gave the Englishman a cordial reception. Raffles did not delay in coming to the point. The British would like to make a settlement on Singapore island. As it had an excellent harbour and was right on the course taken by ships through the Straits, it would make a good entrepôt between Canton and Calcutta. The resulting trade would benefit the local inhabitants as well as the British. If the Temenggong granted a lease, he would be offered an attractive rent. The Temenggong replied that he would be glad to do so, but the matter did not rest with him. Singapore island belonged to Jahore, as did the Rhio, Linga and Carimon groups of islands. The consent of the Sultan of Jahore would have to be obtained.

(p145)

Maurice Collis (1966)



The Jungle of Singapore...Airport.
(Copyright Ilan Kelman 2004.)

----- ooo -----

.....because the Silk Road was no longer a safe caravan route, but swept by the wars of Cental Asian kings, a sea passage had to be found. The Portuguese were the first to discover it. In 1557, fifty-nine years after their great navigator, Vasco da

Gama, had reached India, they obtained leave from the Ming to settle on an island, or more precisely, on a hilly isthmus three miles long which jutted from the south coast of a deltaic island, divided only by narrow creeks from the mainland south of Canton. The town they built there came to be called Macao. Though they were not allowed to go beyond the confines of the isthmus, they enjoyed the monopoly of the sale in Europe of those commodities which the Chinese let them buy.

Maurice Collis (1964 p12)

----- 000 -----

For the last hundred years Mergui has been a British possession (1825 - 1948) situated in the extreme south of Burma, but at the time of James II it belonged to Siam, being that kingdom's port in the Bay of Bengal. It was then, as a rule, called Mergen by the English.

Maurice Collis (1936; p17)

----- 000 -----

Concerning Australia's role in the Pacific (<http://www.csiwisepractices.org/?read=475>), let us recall that the British colonization of the Pacific took place at a time when native populations already had well established cultures, languages, societal structures, beliefs, commercial exchanges and maritime links. The British colonization in the Pacific coincided with a rather aggressive evangelization strongly threatening the cultural and social identity, and diversity of the islanders. Of course, other countries besides Britain also participated in the colonization of the Pacific.

On the other hand, in the Caribbean region, colonization took place in an atmosphere of labor intensive production systems accompanied by an accelerated introduction of slaves from Africa. There was an effective socialization and evangelization which has subtly entered beliefs and is translated in current behavioural, linguistic and attitudinal patterns in the Caribbean population.

John Celecia

----- 000 -----

The cession of an island aroused shame and anger among the Cantonese, and the strength of the war party at Court forced the Emperor to continue hostilities.....Palmerston was in any case dissatisfied with Hong Kong, which he contemptuously described as a 'barren island with hardly a house upon it', and refused to accept it as the island station....Sir Henry Pottinger, who arrived at Macau in August 1841, renewed hostilities with resolution and by the following August, when British troops were threatening to assault Nanking, brought the war to a close by the Treaty of Nanking. Under it Hong Kong was ceded to the British Crown, 'it being obviously necessary and desirable that British subjects should have some port whereat they may careen and refit their ships.....', and four additional ports on the mainland were opened to trade.

In June 1843, after the treaty had been ratified by both countries, Hong Kong was declared a British Colony, and the name 'Victoria' was conferred upon the

settlement.....

G B Endacott (p229)

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A network of Alcatraz-style island holding centres off Britain, to deal with a maximum quota of 20,000 new asylum seekers, was proposed yesterday by a Conservative Party policy commission. The Tory group says that using British off-shore islands would provide "clean, safe , habitable environments with a low population density and which would offer no prospects for economic advancement" for the asylum seekers.

Alan Travis

----- 000 -----

I was most put out that Alderney was not considered as the ideal Alcatraz-style island for asylum seekers.

As it is the only land in the British Isles that hosted a Nazi concentration camp, I would have thought it would be top of the Conservative party's list. Not only that, the island has a multitude of Victorian forts and Nazi bunkers. The steep cliffs and an extremely dangerous tide would no doubt come in handy. I'm sure a bunch of asylum seekers would fit in nicely. Failing that, it would be perfect for any retiring Conservative party members. I'm sure Lord Archer already has our tourist brochure.

Ann Chadwick

----- 000 -----

Thank you for including Eel Pie Island as a possible concentration camp for asylum seekers. As chairman of the Eel Pie Island Association I can confirm that the island is not 1,500 but a mere 550 metres long, with a bird sanctuary at each end, four dozen houses, two dozen houseboats, a dozen studios and small businesses, three boatyards, two boating clubs and a footbridge.

It would therefore be a little difficult to accommodate 20,000 refugees, even on a standing-room only basis, though no doubt they would be glad to jump in the Thames on hot days (at spring tides their feet would be covered in water anyway). So not in our backyard, thank you - we don't have one.

Dan van der Vat

----- 000 -----

The Wallabies have done rather well out of their neighbours from the Pacific islands over the last couple of decades: think of Ofahengaue and Tabua of old, think Tuqiri and sundry Kefus of more recent vintage. It may, therefore, seem just a little rich.....to go all tearful about the torments and traumas currently being suffered by Fiji, Samoa and Tonga as they attempt to prepare for the World Cup that threatens to leave them almost as impoverished competitively as they are economically.....the

"rape" of the islands' most precious sporting resource - their young rugby talent - is threatening the entire fabric of the international game.....more than a dozen front-line Test players decided against representing their countries in the forthcoming tournament.

Simon Raiwalui and Jacob Rauluni of Fiji; Trevor Leota and Isaac Fea'unati of Samoa; Asia Havili, Tevita Vaikona, Lesley Vainikolo and Epi Taione of Tonga - all these and more will spend the next two months playing club rugby in Britain, rather than gracing the great rugby arenas of Australia.....They cannot afford not to play club rugby, because it is their only realistic source of income.

Chris Hewett

----- 000 -----

There are two Christmas Islands; the one your map shows in the Indian Ocean, and the one once used for bomb testing in the Pacific Ocean (Pilot told to fly through atom bomb cloud, December 28).

James Lewis (2001)

FIVE

- [Survival](#)
- [Demise, dispossession and depopulation](#)

Survival

This is the first land I have visited where little or no water is; and yet about eight hundred people live here, and refuse to move to any other part of the Friendly Islands where there is plenty of land, with a cordial welcome, but they prefer a land vitrified and comparatively sterile, without water, and having no harbor or landing place, and where the sea is generally very turbulent, because, they say, there fathers lived there before them, and they are buried.

Walter Lawry (in Rogers, Garth: dedication)

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.....very small islands in the sea have turf instead of soil. The turf is mixed with seaweed and sand and invaluable bird droppings, which is why everything grows so well among the rocks. For a few weeks every year, there are flowers in every crack in the granite, and their colours are brighter than anywhere else in the whole country. But the poor people who live on the green islands in towards the mainland have to make do with ordinary gardens, where they put their children to work pulling weeds and carrying water until they are bent with toil. A small island, on the other hand, takes care of itself. It drinks melting snow and spring rain and, finally, dew, and if there is a drought, the island waits for the next summer and grows its flowers then instead. The flowers are used to it, and wait quietly in their roots.....The first to

come up was the scurvywort, only an inch high, but vital to seamen who live on ship's biscuit. The second came up about ten days later in the lee of the channel marker, and it was called stepmother, or love-in-idleness.

Tove Jansson (of Klovharun, in the Pellinge peninsula in the Gulf of Finland: pp114-115)

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The other (view) will point to the one hundred years in which that uncertainty could be prolonged; to the realism of evacuation and Pacific precedents where many have preferred defiant and hazardous isolation to the unknowns of relocation; and to the experience of Tuvaluans of the sea and its hazards as a basis upon which to adjust over time. The imagery of possible ultimate catastrophe should not be made to preclude seemingly minor measures on behalf of the interim real condition.

James Lewis (1989)

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Simulations undertaken to date indicate that reef islands will physically adjust to sea-level change and will not totally disappear from reef platforms given current sea-level scenarios.

Importantly, simulations also show that changes in sediment supply and transport can also cause physical alteration of small islands by an equivalent or greater magnitude than sea level alone. These preliminary findings underscore the sensitivity of reef islands to changes in a range of environmental variables.

While the study does not project wholesale devastation of low-lying reef islands, it would be incorrect to infer that small island nations should not be concerned about the possible consequences of sea-level rise. On the contrary, rates of erosion up to thirty metres and washover deposition of sediments pose significant management issues for island nations where the coastal margin is commonly heavily populated and contains high-cost infrastructure.

Increasingly small island nations are being asked to develop adaptation strategies to the impacts of climate change. The STM (Shoreface Translation Model) does not solve the difficult issues of how to adapt to change. Rather the modified STM provides better resolution of the mode (for example, washover, rollover) and magnitude of island response to which adaptation will be necessary.

STM simulations have highlighted issues of physical island response that have previously not been identified in vulnerability assessments and provide clear definition of the nature of changes to which management agencies will need to respond.

For example, rather than simply responding to poorly resolved estimates of land loss, managers will need to carefully consider:

- how communities will adapt to physical island instability and movement on the reef platform;

- how adaptation strategies will allow for washover processes to naturally raise island margins;
- how compatible ongoing development can be with island washover processes and what planning and regulatory tools would allow this to happen; and,
- how adaptation measures can be implemented to ensure that waves, currents and sediment transport processes are not affected.

Paul Kench and Peter Cowell (p6)

Demise, dispossession and depopulation

There is a great deal of historical evidence to support the view that the impact of external forces on islanders has been uncommonly severe. Most, if not all the recorded cases of extermination of human populations refer to islanders. The Guanches of the Canary Islands were early victims though, like the Caribs of the eastern Caribbean, a very few of these people survived. The northern Arawaks of the Greater Antilles seem on the other hand to have been destroyed totally, in the space of less than a century. Other examples include the Tasmanian aborigines, the people of a few islands in the Pacific, and the Norse colonists in Greenland who, from a real point of view, were as much islanders as any other of the world's vanished populations.

Taking these larger instances into account, it is perhaps surprising that so much attention has been focussed on the Pacific.....Certain islands did, however, suffer very severely, and this can be demonstrated from the historical record. One such is Aeiutum in the New Hebrides, where archeological as well as documentary evidence has been examined. Population numbers are fairly reliably estimated at between 3500 and 3800 in the 1850s. Decline, at first rapid, continued for many years, reaching only 191 in 1947, a loss of almost 95 per cent. The major event was a devastating epidemic of measles in 1861, shortly following a severe hurricane, and followed a few years later by epidemics of diphtheria and whooping cough. Circumstances favoured high mortality, for the population had been recently Christianised, was concentrated into villages, and assembled regularly in crowded churches and schools - conditions which produced almost ideal environment for the rapid dissemination of disease borne by droplet infection between individuals. Female mortality was more severe than that of males, so that as there was already a surplus of males in the population, the ability of the population to reproduce itself was disproportionately diminished.

Harold Brookfield (1980 pp23 and 25)

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Another appalling famine, from 1863 to 1866, again killed off nearly a third of the population.. Now, however, the government reacted. The Equatorial African islands of São Tomé and Príncipe were being developed by Portuguese capital for large scale cocoa production. Conditions on the plantations were brutal. It was almost impossible to recruit free labour. Government-sponsored recruitment began in Cape Verde in 1863 among wretched famine victims who preferred the virtual slavery of contract labour to starvationthis was not voluntary but forced emigration. It was to go on until the 1970s.

Emigrants also went to the coast, many to Senegal.....São Vicente, sparsely inhabited, had one asset - a superb natural harbour. During the mid-nineteenth century it was developed as a coaling station by British firms. The British navy and merchant shipping put in regularly for coal.

By the end of the nineteenth century hundreds were emigrating every year to America. Today, it is said, there are more people of Cape Verdean origin there than in the islands.....

Famine raged from 1941 to 1943 and again from 1947 to 1949.....In all some 45,000 people died of starvation.....

By the onset of the droughts of the late 1950s and 1960s a new escape route had opened.....By the end of the 1960s well over 100,000 were working in Europe.

Christopher Fyfe (pp8-9)

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In September 1946 a major eruption occurred on the volcanic island of Niuafou'ou. There was no loss of life, but the damage was so extensive to government buildings, dwellings and plantations, and risk of further eruptions likely, that the Queen and her Government decided to evacuate the whole population and bring them to the southern island of 'Eua, where there was ample space for their needs. Many of the Niuafou'ou people remained on this fertile island, but some eventually returned to their homeland, denuded though it is of much of its vegetation and still a potential danger spot.

A H Wood and Elizabeth Wood Ellem (in Noel Rutherford p202)

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Several of the Niuafou'ou people declared there was no great danger to life on Niuafou'ou in 1946 once the people were encamped on the hill and the wind backed to the south. And they point to the total absence of deaths or injuries as a result of the eruption as evidence of this view. They argued that the 1943, 1929, and the 1886 outbursts were all of greater severity and more destructive of land and crops than the 1946 eruption yet no-one was evacuated in 1929 when Futu village was destroyed or in 1943 when all vegetation was severely desiccated, and only a few families left the island after the violent steamburst eruption of 1886 inside the crater lake.....

Another argument put forward by Niuafou'ou people in 1967 is that over 15 weeks elapsed between the date of the eruption (of 1946) and the order to evacuate the population, and by that time daily life on the island with the exception of Government services was almost back to normal.

Garth Rogers (p123-4)

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L'île de la Désolation est le surnom de Tristan da Cunha, possession britannique de

l'Atlantique sud. Surnom justifié par les tempêtes naufrageuses et les champs de lave enherbés. Depuis un siècle et demi des gens d'origines diverses y formaient une colonie chrétienne dont la constitution comportait un seul article: "Nul ne s'élèvera ici au-dessus de quiconque". Ces hommes et ces femmes auront tous témoigné d'une extraordinaire et volontaire accommodation à la vie la plus rude, dédaignant les "bienfaits de la civilisation" quand en octobre 1961 une éruption volcanique contraignit les 264 habitants de l'île à l'exile secourable en Angleterre.

Ils ont quitté le Moyen Age. Sans transition ils vont découvrir le xx^e siècle, apprécier le progrès et son contraire. La société de consommation ne tarde pas à les horrifier plus qu'elle ne les émerveille. Dès 1963, n'y tenant plus, ils regagnèrent leur village dévasté sous le cratère encore fumant.

Aujourd'hui l'île est entièrement modernisée. Les Tristans ont-ils donc capitulé devant ce qu'ils contestaient? Non. "Sages de la modernité" comme les qualifie un journaliste anglais, ils ont su se servir de la technique sans se laisser asservir par elle.

Herve Bazin (dedication)

L'île de la Desolation is the surname of Tristan da Cunha, a British possession in the south Atlantic. A surname justified by shipwrecking storms and fields of lava. For a century and a half a diverse people formed a Christian colony there of which the constitution comprised the sole article: "No-one should raise here above whomsoever". These men and women had all born witness to an extraordinary and voluntary adjustment to a life the most harsh, scorning the "benefits of civilisation", when in October 1961 a volcanic eruption consigned the 264 island inhabitants to a willing exile in England.

They had left the Middle Ages. Without transition they went to discover the twentieth century, to appreciate progress - and its opposite. The consumer society quickly horrified - more than it astonished. Since 1963, without support, they regained their devastated village below the still smouldering crater.

Today the island is entirely modernised. Have the Tristans thus capitulated? No. "Wise to modernity" as the qualification given by an English journalist, they have the knowledge to use technology without becoming its slave.



Tristan da Cunha.

(Public domain photo courtesy of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's photo library](#), Department of Commerce, U.S.A. Government.)

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Any similarity between the St Kildan way of life and that led upon the mainland was superficial. Isolation had a determined effect upon their attitudes and ideas. The St Kildans can only be described as St Kildans and their island home little else than a republic. The people, like those of most isolated communities, sacrificed themselves year in and year out securing, often precariously, a livelihood for themselves and their children. In the practical business of living, St Kilda bore little relation to the mainland where people were becoming more concerned with evading secondary rather than primary poverty. When the island was finally evacuated in 1930, not only had Nature defeated man but, in a real sense, man had defeated his fellow men. (Introduction: pp9-10)

Throughout most of the last century, St Kilda was subject to pressures. Education, organised religion and tourism all attempted to throw into doubt the St Kildans' way of life. For centuries the world outside stood aloof from people of Hirta (the principal island of the St Kilda archipelago). They were content on the mainland to allow such a remote community to go its own way. As long as the people of St Kilda were so isolated, they were insulated from the forces that wished them to conform. The strength of the community, however, became weakened as contact with the mainland increased. When disease decimated their number and wind and sea made the acquisition of adequate supplies of food difficult, the St Kildans were forced to turn eastwards for help.....Help, as interpreted by the articulate spokesmen of a richer and more advanced society, was best given by persuading the islanders to give up the struggle.

As adults (the people of Hirta) had to accept those values that most of us on the mainland are taught to believe in from birth. For instance, the islanders found it difficult to base their existence upon money. They had never lived in a world in which

they bought goods and services of each other. They had of course accepted gladly the opportunity of making a little money for themselves at the expense of tourists, but that intrusion had never altered the basic relationship one St Kildan had with another
(pp10-11)

The history of the St Kildans shows the folly of thinking of the islanders as similar to ourselves, and their community but a distant cousin of our vast urbanised society. The death of St Kilda was to prove the most important in the history of island depopulation in Scotland. The publicity the evacuation received brought home to government and public alike the hazards involved in seeking to solve the problems of isolated communities by simply evacuating them.....The story of St Kilda may be a small human tragedy, but the study of the islanders' former ways and the reasons why the people were forced to evacuate their island might provoke some to question our future.
(pp11-13)

The elderly of St Kilda left with the saddest hearts. Many of them had not left the island before and could speak no English.....one or two of them were weeping. One of the most tightly-knit communities in Britain found itself split up.....The government had been unable to find sufficient accommodation for the thirty-six islanders in Argyll.....The next day the nations newspapers told their version of the day's events..... The social anomaly in the Atlantic that had been an embarrassment to progress made elsewhere in Scotland had at long last been eradicated.
(pp 24-25)

Tom Steel

----- 000 -----

For Montserratians, there is nothing new about leaving. Migration has been central to the lives of most families for generations. It is part of the restless history, not just of Montserrat but of the whole Caribbean - the "going up", the "coming down", the "back home", the "up there". The imperative to leave, the scattered families, the sense of exile, the memories of home and the anxiety of returning - all these elements are present in the histories and literatures of the Caribbean and, for better or for worse, have helped to shape many features of those societies.

At times, a higher percentage of Montserratians than people from any other Caribbean territory have migrated - pushed by a shortage of land and jobs. The process began in the post-emancipation period. By 1845, a colonial officer claimed that 2307 adults emigrated to Trinidad and British Guiana.....The process never really stopped. Montserratians continued to leave for other English-speaking Caribbean colonies. Some went to Panama (2000 Montserratians helped build the Canal, on which work began in 1881; many of them died there), others went to Cuba and later to Curaçao and Aruba to work in the oil industry. In the 1950s and 1960s the migratory route was to the UK, and then, to a lesser extent, to Canada and the US. Migration provided an escape from rural drudgery and a promise of opportunities elsewhere. (pp155 -156)

So the volcano crisis forced Montserratians down another phase of migration, one whose route was unknown. They started to leave soon after 18 July 1995 (the date of the first large-scale eruption). At that stage, they had hoped it would not be for

long.....The numbers leaving ebbed and flowed, but in the first year of the crisis, some 3000 people had left. By the end of March 1998, with the height of the exodus over, approximately 7500 islanders, two thirds of the population, had gone. Of these, 46.7 per cent went to the UK; 38.7 percent went to Antigua; 13.3 per cent went to other Caribbean countries and 1.3 per cent to North America. After that, the exodus slowed but did not stop. A further 246 islanders, for example, left between April and October 1998 and the exodus trickled on into 1999. (pp157-158)

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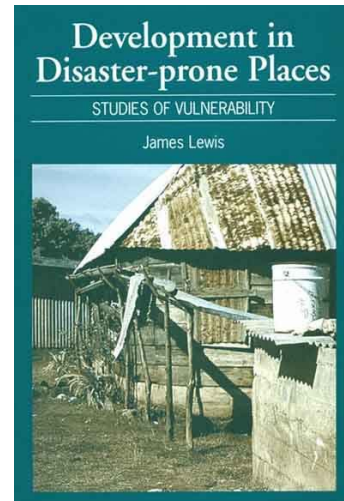
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Wight
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