

## ● 三崎 舞 特定助教

*Mai MISAKI (Assistant Professor)***研究課題:** 人と土地のつながりの社会変容における可能性:

仏領ポリネシアにおける先住民伝統文化の復興活動の人類学研究

(Rising from the Ground: Exploration of Social and Political Change

through the Restoration of Land-Human Relationships in French Polynesia)

**専門分野:** 人類学 (Anthropology)**受入先部局:** 人間・環境学研究科 (Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies)**前職の機関名:** オックスフォード大学 (University of Oxford)

文化、労働、政治、宗教、そして自己—私たちが当たり前に感じている人間の社会を構成する要素の多くは、実は文化的に条件づけられたものです。私は人類学者として特定の文化や社会に焦点を当てながら、人間の社会的な生活における普遍性や特殊性を見出すことを目指しています。これまでの研究では、専門地域の仏領ポリネシア (マオヒ・ヌイ) の島々での長期フィールドワークを通して、人々がどのように外来宗教であるキリスト教を土台にしながらかつての歴史を再構築し、民族的アイデンティティを構築しているかを明らかにしてきました。白眉プロジェクトでは現地の教会から視点を広げ、「土地と人間のつながり」という観点から、主権と依存のあり方を太平洋島嶼国家という文脈から探究したいと考えています。

As an anthropologist, I strive to understand the nature of human life by focusing on specific social and cultural circumstances. Particularly in deconstructing what we see as fundamental categories that shape our society – such as culture, work, politics, religion, and the self– anthropologists attempt to transcend the universalities and particularities of human societies. My specialist region is Oceania, and I conduct long-term fieldwork in French Polynesia (Maohi Nui in its Indigenous name), a group of islands in the South Pacific. Previously, I studied local Protestant theology and how people reconstruct Indigenous history and explore their identity through religion.

Throughout my time at the Hakubi center, I focus on ‘land’ (fenua in Tahitian) as the key concept to reveal contemporary predicaments and future visions of the Pacific nation. What role does the land play in people’s religious activities, cultural revitalization movements, and environmental and political activism? Can the reconstruction of a land-human relationship also transform the current socio-political structure? I will undertake a series of studies that attempt to holistically grasp the mode of sovereignty and governance centred around this uniquely Polynesian concept.

**Colonialism and its Consequences**

Polynesian Islands spread over a vast area of the Pacific Ocean, sharing rich and diverse cultures of skilled ocean voyagers. Though many spiritual, ethical, and artistic customs and values survived Western colonialism, many Pacific nations and territories today remain under colonial and neo-colonial domination due to their political and economic vulnerability, as world powers compete for security and trade deals.

In French Polynesia, this state of dependency is often compared to the disappearing connection between the Indigenous people and their land. Colonialism not only resulted in the loss of political control over lands but also undermined

uniquely Indigenous relationships with them, which manifests itself as the loss of spirituality, agricultural engagement, and geographical and ecological knowledge. Whilst this historical damage is obvious, my project investigates the potential for the land-human relationship to undermine the colonial and neo-colonial political structure.

I will scrutinise how indigenous activists cultivate an extra-legal, apolitical relationship with the land and how it maps out models of indigenous sovereignty and drafts the political prospects of the territory. How does the concept of land, rooted in traditional Polynesian cosmology and hybridised with colonial practices (Bhabha 1984; Donaldson 2022), help underpin concepts of future sovereignty in the Pacific?



Figure 1 Traditional soil oven- the modern indoor kitchen has been replacing this cooking method using soil and leaves

### The Land Rediscovered?

The ‘land’ can mean different things in different contexts: a political territory, private property, agricultural soil, or a mythological and religious entity. I will ask how different indigenous actors reconstruct traditional concepts of ‘land’ and invest in a renewed land-human relationship in terms of agricultural, cultural and environmental engagement.

The territory’s increasing dependency on imported goods and services, as well as the dismantlement of traditional land ownership, alienates the indigenous population from traditional land use. Activist groups, such as agricultural promoters, heritage management NPOs and environmental initiatives, are re-evaluating the centrality of land in Polynesian cosmology and attempting to restore spiritual, cultural and agricultural bonds with the land. For instance, Saura (2003) points out that the Polynesian people’s metaphysical attachment to their land was reappropriated in the religiously justified cultural movement in the 1980s, developing the view of land as a sacred gift of God. Similarly, I will examine how activists (re)conceptualise the land, theoretically and practically, as a source of both precolonial indigeneity and postcolonial futurity.

### From Apolitical to Political

I will trace how grassroots activists and territorial politicians are developing land-based practices into political orientations and institutional shifts. In reconstructing indigenous land-human relations, activists are faced with specifically colonial and neo-colonial challenges, such as a lack of locally based ecological education, neoliberal policies that favour large-scale tourism and commercial development and trade policy that reduces the competence of domestic agricultural products. Particularly, I will ask how Maohi political and cultural actors are approaching ideas of national independence.

Although activists’ interpersonal relations with politicians may clarify their positions on the local political spectrum, I suspect that they also demonstrate the limitations of the overseas collectivity’s autonomy in tackling the cultural and legal alienation of land. In the context of an increasing presence of Chinese investments and a continuing economic dependence on France, examining the intersection of indigenous land-based activism and pro-independence ideology may highlight culturally appropriate governance and the place of autonomy and dependency in the Pacific, a region considered both weak and isolated and strategically important by world powers.

### Method and Contributions

I will conduct ethnographic fieldwork among agricultural promoters, cultural defenders, religious actors and territorial politicians in the French Polynesian islands of Tahiti, Moorea and Tahaa. Participant observation offers an ideal means to gain access to everyday economic, ecological and agricultural engagement with the land, both organisationally and personally. I will supplement these data with qualitative interviews with activists and territorial politicians, as well as religious and agricultural educators at the Protestant pastoral school.

My proposed project will make two main contributions to Pacific anthropology and indigenous studies. On one hand, it will provide empirical material to highlight the crucial place of land in discussions of sovereignty in small island nations in the Pacific. Although Western scholarship has long emphasised the economic weakness of the region, neo-colonial relationships of ‘dependency’ must be decomposed and reconceptualised in indigenous terms (Hauofa 1994). I consider that the land, the inalienable source of Pacific indigenous identity, must undergird this process. On the other hand, this research will also theorise how colonial and indigenous practices are hybridised to achieve culturally appropriate governance in a setting that commands rigorous scholarship – i.e. the overseas collectivity of French Polynesia, which is manoeuvring its way towards greater autonomy.

### References

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