informative opening into the diverse and intersecting motives of eighteenth-century European navigational projects in Oceania, a reminder of the need to read critical early moments of encounter prismatically, with distinct facets that reveal histories and counter-histories complementary to more familiar accounts.

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Ship of Fate: Memoir of a Vietnamese Repatriate brings to mind the words of Elie Wiesel, “It is the duty of the survivor to speak of his experience and share it with his friends and contemporaries.” This book is a powerful and compelling litany of loves and losses and of journeys to and from both. Through a powerful and compelling litany of loves and losses and of journeys to and from both, in this memoir, Trành Đình Trú recounts in rich detail his childhood, treasured marriage, prestigious naval career, evacuation from Saigon to Guam, repatriation to Vietnam, thirteen-year captivity in reeducation camps, and eventual immigration to the United States.

Swept up in the pandemonium during North Vietnam’s capture of Saigon in April 1975, Trành was separated from his family, who remained in Vietnam while he captained one of the ships in the evacuation fleet that escaped to Subic Bay in the Philippines and then moved on to Guam. He faced immense loss and longing: “I had lost not only my house, my jeep, and my career, I had lost my wife and our children. I felt the absurdity of it, transferring from one ship to another, journeying to where . . . I felt so depressed thinking about my lot—how could my life be so lost, so lonely like this?” (54).

On 13 May, his ship arrived in Guam, which the United States had designated as a way station before presumed settlement in the country. Though he had been there before early in his career, the circumstances of his return colored his view of the island: “Guam’s isolation reminded me of my own separation from my loved ones” (137). His refuge on Guam lasted until 15 October 1975.

The US government brought over one hundred thousand Vietnamese to Guam. There they were detained in a dozen camps prior to relocation to other countries or to the United States, where they would be held in camps before being integrated into American society. According to the common public understanding of what happened to the evacuees, Trành states, “the Vietnamese refugees only needed to know how to accept their new American reality, how to adjust to their new circumstances, and learn to work hard. After that, every difficulty
would vanish, and the future would be bright” (60). However, this is not the whole story. Ship of Fate provides another perspective that most people do not know—a story of forced exile and repatriation, of agency in the face of chaos. While the vast majority of Vietnamese chose to migrate to the United States, over 1,500 evacuees wanted to return to Vietnam. “There were still some people who didn’t want to abandon our homeland and who considered their families, their wives, and children even more precious than America” (61). Some Vietnamese who had been transported to the United States returned to camps on Guam to join the others seeking repatriation.

Their request to return to Vietnam was met with resistance; negotiations with the Vietnamese government on behalf of the refugees were conducted by the United States and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and proceeded very slowly. Undaunted, Vietnamese in several camps organized a leadership committee and carried out peaceful actions to draw attention to their plight. They hung signs on camp fences, held demonstrations, and met with the commander of the Civilian Affairs division and representatives of the UNHCR. Frustrated by repeated directives to wait and a lack of diplomatic progress on their behalf, the refugees turned to more extreme actions, including destructive riots and hunger strikes. Media attention raised public awareness to a national level, and committee leaders continued to advance their cause with officials, including the governor of Guam and a delegation of the US Congress. The US government ultimately granted their request to return, giving them the largest ship in the South Vietnamese fleet that evacuated to Guam, the Việt Nam Thương Tín. Trần was given command of the ship. When asked by the media why he was journeying to a communist country that so many others had fled, he declared, “Just like everyone on this ship, I am not abandoning freedom in order to return to communism. I would like to emphasize that we are returning to our families, our wives, and children” (142).

Though they did not know whether their return would be permitted by the new Vietnamese government, Trần noted that due to the high public profile of their situation, the government “must be wary of the pressure of public opinion from around the world” (141). Uncertainty about his family was also a concern for Trần: “I didn’t know if I was returning to my family or stepping into the world of the dead” (146).

The group arrived in Vietnam after a ten-day journey and were met with suspicion and accusations by the government. Thought to be spies or to be transporting Americans, they underwent numerous interrogations and depositions. They were placed in reeducation camps, where they endured forced labor, starvation, and isolation from their families. Trần describes years of “hunger and hardship, fed just enough to survive but never . . . a full meal” (185). He laments, “I had begun to realize that the communists had spared us the death penalty but had instead imposed on us the penalty of living. The communists didn’t allow us to die easily” (191).
Trần was imprisoned until 1988, thirteen years after his return to Vietnam. Life was difficult for him and for others who had been repatriated; he did not see much of a future in Vietnam because the Communists “used force to keep us down” and employment was limited to menial labor (206). A year after his release, the United States began its Humanitarian Operation, which facilitated the immigration of repatriates held in reeducation camps. Trần applied for resettlement in the United States and departed Vietnam in December 1991. Once again motivated by love, he says, “we left not for ourselves, but so that our wives and children could look toward the future” (208).

*Ship of Fate* is a rare account told from the perspective not of a historian or scholar, but of a Vietnamese naval officer, husband, father, and leader—a man who lived and made history. His story is one that adds an important dimension to our understanding of the Vietnam War and of Vietnamese in Guam and the United States. While the setting for half of the book’s chapters is Guam, the island is merely a backdrop for this personal narrative. Trần’s interaction with residents outside the camps was limited, and his story is focused squarely on those actors and experiences germane to his return to Vietnam. He viewed the island as separate from the United States, referring to it as “this autonomous land,” and while Guam’s governor and people were supportive hosts, they were not essential to achieving repatriation. That part of Trần’s life was not lived in the present moment; his memories of that time were centered not on his temporary refuge but on his homeland. Trần notes, “Whether bitter or sweet, all memories are worth remembering” (32). Indeed. Let us remember this story.

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Across academic disciplines, native and indigenous scholarship concerned with politics and leadership models in the Pacific has proliferated since its emergence in the latter half of the twentieth century. For example, there is a growing body of literature written by Samoans about Samoan notions and models of power and leadership, some works focusing on the political machinations at the national level and others centering on village and family hierarchies. These studies have uncovered and employed alternative research approaches such as ethnographic case studies and the popular talanoa to flesh out insider voices and to critique the essentializing gaze of empirical studies. *Uncovering Indigenous Models of Leadership* by Susuga Leiataua Robert Jon Peterson (hereafter Leiataua in recognition of this chiefly title) appears to have added another alternative to the grow-