

## ‘O KA ‘ĀINA, KA ‘ŌLELO, A ME KE KAIĀULU

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As Hawaiians, we have an intimate relationship to place. This connection is informed to a large extent by knowledge and interaction with ‘āina,<sup>1</sup> ‘ōlelo makuahine,<sup>2</sup> and kaiāulu.<sup>3</sup> While these relationships sustain us as a people, our connection to place must be continually fed in order to thrive. In this article, I describe Hawaiian cultural practices and beliefs related to land, language, and community. My research addresses the following questions: Why does place matter so much to Hawaiians and other indigenous peoples? What are some historic examples of the intimate connection Hawaiians have to their place(s)? How does the relationship between people and place persist despite colonization and development? Because place-making is so closely tied to personal and collective identity, I argue ‘āina, ‘ōlelo,<sup>4</sup> and kaiāulu can be sites of reclamation for the increased well-being of our people.

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*Hāllli: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being* Vol.5 (2008)  
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Indigenous ideas about land, community, and language are like the fine ribbons of makaloa that come together to make up a beautiful sleeping mat.<sup>5</sup> Each ribbon is significant and vital in its own right, but when woven together create a masterpiece to be treasured for generations. The amount of passion, expertise, and talent that the master weaver has is only as important as the nurturing of the wild plant that produces leaves that then must be dried and prepared for weaving. Each component must work in conjunction with the other in a relationship of reciprocity.

Land, language, and community are woven into the writings of many indigenous scholars.<sup>6</sup> Child (1998), Cook-Lynn (2001), Deloria (1999), Kamakau (1991, 1996), Kame‘eleihiwa (1992), Momaday (1997), Osorio (2002), Pukui (1983), and Weaver (1997) each writes about these topics and ties them to issues of indigenous identity and well-being. My intention is to gather together these authors’ writings and weave them together into a mat for resting on, as I have found comfort, peace, and energy in them.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KĀNAKA MAOLI AND ‘ĀINA

‘Āina—literally that which feeds—is where we as Hawaiians find life and sustenance. Place is where we go to ground ourselves, where our ancestors are buried, where we gather, where we love, where we remember, where we sing praises, and where we thread our genealogy. Geographer Kapā Oliveira has done extensive work on what place means for Hawaiians in her dissertation, *Ke Alanui Kike‘eke‘e O Maui: Na Wai Ho‘i Ka ‘Ole O Ke Akamai, He Alanui I Ma‘a I Ka Hele ‘Ia E O‘u Mau Mākua* (2006).<sup>7</sup> She states that “One’s identity is undeniably linked to one’s place as is illustrated by the history of Kanaka Maoli<sup>8</sup>” (Oliveira, 2006, p. 12). She goes on to explain that prior to the unification of the Hawaiian archipelago people identified themselves by utilizing the island name from which they were born. So if one was born on Kaua‘i, they would say “He Kaua‘i au,” or if born on O‘ahu, “He O‘ahu au.” She argues that in doing this they were linking themselves to the ali‘i nui<sup>9</sup> of that island. I agree and I extend her thoughts to explain that the “He \_\_\_\_\_ au” sentence pattern translates to “I am \_\_\_\_\_.” For instance, “he wahine au” means “I am a woman.” Therefore what a person is saying when they say “He Hawai‘i au” today, they are saying “I am Hawai‘i” or “I am Hawaiian,” and what Kānaka Maoli

were saying prior to Kamehameha the first's unification of Hawai'i, is "I am Maui," "I am Kaua'i," "I am O'ahu." They were literally saying I am place or 'āina, I am the island from which I was born. I return to this notion throughout this article; we are the land and the land is us, irreversibly linked forever, inseparable.

The significance of 'āina for Hawaiians is made apparent through its abundance and prominence in mo'olelo,<sup>10</sup> mele,<sup>11</sup> oli,<sup>12</sup> and mo'okū'auhau.<sup>13</sup> For instance, in beloved Native Hawaiian author, composer, and linguist Mary Kawena Pukui's *Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings* (1983), there are 36 entries related to land and 1,200 entries on specific place names. Considering that there are a total of 2,942 'ōlelo no'eau<sup>14</sup> included in the entire book, 1,236 is a remarkable number, representing 42% of the total entries. A familiar 'ōlelo no'eau related to land is, "Hānau ka 'āina, hānau ke ali'i, hānau ke kanaka" (Pukui, 1983, p. 54). Pukui translates this as "born was the land, born were the chiefs, born were the common people."<sup>15</sup> Her explanation for this saying is "the land, the chiefs, and the commoners belong together." Again there is a strong identification between people and 'āina. This proverb also speaks to the hierarchy of a Hawaiian world order. In this proverb, first to be born is the land, then the chief, then the commoner. The 'āina is most important in the hierarchy, with the chief and commoner following.<sup>16</sup> Equally salient is the relationship of reciprocity that is implied, where each one needs the other in order to flourish.<sup>17</sup>

The notion that land and people are intimately linked is apparent in many stories that have been passed down orally for millennia. An example of this is included in the story of *Keaomelemele* (Sterling & Summers, 1978). In *Keaomelemele* there is an excerpt that talks about a woman named Paliuli in 'Ewa. Here is the story translated:

In a very short time she (Paliuli) walked over the plain of 'Ewa; 'Ewa that is known as the land of the silent fish (oysters). After she had passed the sands of Kulima (Waikele), she came to Pu'unahewehe (Punahawehe) and down to the stream of Kipapa. She went off to the plain of Punalu'u and turned to gaze at Maunauna point and the plain of Lihue. She reached the plain of Kokoloea and saw the road filled with men and women. Among the handsome young people were men and women noted for their good

looks in those olden days. Kalakoa and Malamanui were the young men and Kalena and Hale‘au‘au were young women and their names were given to places that bear them to this day. (Sterling & Summers, 1978, p. 21)<sup>18</sup>

While carefully exploring this excerpt, one notices the heavy usage of place names in the story. This is typical of traditional Hawaiian stories, which is in contrast to the narratives that were created *about* Hawai‘i by nonindigenous people. In the story above we see that places in ‘Ewa got their names from people who resided there, a constant theme throughout this story and others written in Hawaiian language newspapers in the 1800s. Another example of naming places after people can be found in the story of Kumulio in Moke Kupihea’s *Kahuna of Light* (2001). The author explains that the waterfall where Kumulio has been known to appear is now called Kumulio Falls.<sup>19</sup>

‘Āina is so important to Hawaiians that a variety of cultural practices exist to maintain the connection between people and place. The strategy of naming places after people is one such practice; a related approach is to name people after places. Both of these strategies are utilized in the story of Kahalaopuna of Mānoa:

The parents of Kahalaopuna are the twin brother and sister Ka-au-kuahine (The rain of the mountain ridge) and Ka-hau-kani (which names the Manoa wind), children of Akaaka and Na-lehua-akaaka, names of a projecting spur of the ridge back of Manoa and the red lehua bushes that grow upon it. (Sterling & Summers, 1978, p. 289)<sup>20</sup>

In this segment of the story, the genealogy of Kahalaopuna is recited through the names of parents and grandparents in the first sentences, and following these lines place names are included as an extension of that genealogy. What is significant to the argument is the naming of the children after the wind of the area, the rain of the area, the physical landmark of the area, and the trees that grow there.<sup>21</sup>

An interview with Mary Kawena Pukui on March 16, 1954, about the story of Kahalaopuna is included in the Mānoa section of *Sites of O‘ahu*. According to this entry:

When the girl was finally dead, her mother melted into the rain called Luahine-o-Manoa. Her father became two things, a hau tree and the wind in that valley. The hau tree (Kahaukane) existed until the time Queen Emma died. Whenever an ali'i died the tree would groan and sigh. Afterwards someone acquired the property and destroyed the tree. But he still lives in the wind. (Sterling & Summers, 1978, p. 289)

So intimate is the relationship between land and people that here we have a story where the people become the land by melting into the rain of the area and by becoming a tree and wind of that place. Further, in reading this story I let out a moan of pain when I learned that someone destroyed this very tree. I am moved to tears when I read or hear of a landmark that was removed for development or other purposes because these features are potentially keepers of stories and spirits. It is not only iwi<sup>22</sup> that should be protected but our places should be kapu<sup>23</sup> as well.<sup>24</sup>

Another strategy connecting people to place involves planting something physical or personal from an individual at a place. Throughout Hawaiian history and literature, there are many stories detailing this cultural practice. For instance, *The Plain of Punahawe* talks about a famous rock named Pohaku-huna-palaoa (the whale-tooth-ivory necklace hiding rock) and a woman of chiefly blood from Hawai'i island. On her journey she landed at Pu'uloa on O'ahu, walked toward Waialua, and rested on a rock where she noticed two holes. She says:

“Yes, I have worn you all the way from Hawaii to this spot and I am thinking of hiding you. You are a necklace that had been handed down from my ancestors to my parent and then it came to me, their descendant. So shall it go to my descendants. So I am leaving you here, and one of my descendants shall seek and find you.” (Sterling & Summers, 1978, p. 21)<sup>25</sup>

She leaves the necklace there, and I assert that she does so in order that her descendants will be drawn to the place. The story goes on to say that the words of this woman were “fulfilled much later by one of the great-grandsons of her grandchildren who was called Kooka, a kauila tree of Puukapele, by the Kauaians” (Sterling & Summers, 1978, p. 22). By the woman’s actions, the physical item she left in the land forever connected her and her descendants to that place.

Prolific author and Native Hawaiian historian Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau has written many accounts about the significance of place.<sup>26</sup> Here is one such story from *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai‘i*: “The chiefess Kekela fled in secret to Kauai and is said to have carried with her sands from ‘Apuakehau, Kahaloa, Waia‘ula, and Kupalaha at Waikiki, and to have deposited them at Hulaia, Kulana, and Kane in Kauai” (Kamakau, 1992, p. 140). In this story Kekela flees to a new place taking with her the sands (physical environment) of the ‘āina she is from. My interpretation of this situation is that she was preserving the mana of her connection to place. By depositing the sands of O‘ahu on Kaua‘i, Kekela sought to create a connection between the two places, to link them in such a way as to give her strength in her new environment.

Along similar lines, but perhaps not realizing it then, my husband and I have planted physical and personal items in the ‘āina. When we moved to ‘Aiea where we currently reside, we returned to our house in Hau‘ula to select a seedling from a beautiful kukui nut tree on that property and planted it at our new house. We also went back to Āhualoa and got an extremely rare pink ginger flower used for lei making along with its white and yellow counterparts from that property and planted them all at our house. In addition to the plants, we deposited personal physical items of our children with the lehua<sup>27</sup> trees growing on our ‘Aiea property so that each of our children will be forever connected to the ‘āina and to our home there.

## ‘O KA ‘ŌLELO MAKUAHINE

In societies where oral tradition is the focal point of literacy, language is critical to survival. So critical is language for Kānaka Maoli that we have multiple proverbs on the topic that have been passed down for generations (Pukui, 1983). In Hawaiian

language where kaona<sup>28</sup> is highly valued, multiple layers of meaning build critical thinking and interpretive skills. When used properly, language enlivens conversations and stimulates thought.

Here are three proverbs that demonstrate the magnitude of language. The first reads: I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo no ka make (Pukui, 1983, p. 119). Pukui translates this to say: “Life is in speech; death is in speech” and interprets this as “words can heal, words can destroy.” My extension of this is that not only can things be spoken into existence, but that which comes out of your mouth is so powerful that you should be careful what you say, lest it come to pass. I was raised to know that once you say something, you can never take it back, so be careful what you say. In addition, this proverb can be interpreted to mean: We live by our language and without it, we will die. In other words, our language is what keeps us alive as a people and without that language, our existence as a unique people will end.

Laguna author Leslie Marmon Silko, and Trinh Minh-ha who examines Silko’s construction of orality in “Grandma’s Story” from *Storyteller*, speak to this idea that words have power (Trinh, 1989). Such a concept crosses cultural boundaries, particularly within indigenous worlds, and I assert that much of that must have to do with an oral tradition in which words are intentional and must be spoken with care because when you rely completely on oracy, you don’t have the ability to go back to what you have said and revise. The first draft of what we speak is transmitted and absorbed, and we are immediately held accountable. In contrast, when writing, you may revise and revise many times before ever letting a single person see what you have written. We must be careful when relying too heavily on written tradition for the standards by which we practice oral tradition.

Another 'ōlelo no'eau on the topic of language and the power and authority of oral tradition is: “Aia ke ola i ka waha; aia ka make i ka waha” (Pukui, 1983, p. 9). Pukui translates this to “life is in the mouth; death is in the mouth” and interprets it as “spoken words can enliven; spoken words can destroy.” Nearly identical to “life is in speech, death is in speech,” both evoke an ability to use the precious resource of words as a tool of dominance or a tool of empowerment. Underscoring such ideas, then, and following from Leslie Marmon Silko, N. Scott Momaday, and other indigenous scholars, is the philosophical principle that, unlike written words, oral tradition demands an immediacy and a reciprocity because within the fragility of the spoken word is also great power and responsibility. Spoken word has the ability to call into being, to name, and to identify—and it has the

power to harm, as demonstrated by Silko's poem about witchcraft that serves as the center of her collection of stories, poems, and photographs that make up her *Storyteller* monograph.

In the Hawaiian context, my favorite modern 'ōlelo no'eau on the topic of language is "E ola mau ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i." This statement has been interpreted in several ways. For example, "the Hawaiian language lives on," or "long live the Hawaiian language," or even "the Hawaiian language must live on." This proverb was popularized during the Hawaiian language revitalization movement, and it is my view that it powerfully motivates us to recognize how deeply our survival as Hawaiians depends on the perpetuation of our language.

Language is the keeper of culture. Native Hawaiian linguist Sam L. No'eau Warner speaks of the impossibility of separating culture and language. He discusses translating curriculum for Hawaiian immersion schools versus creating new curriculum in Hawaiian that is culturally relevant in "Kuleana: The Right, Responsibility, and Authority of Indigenous Peoples to Speak" (1999). In my experience as a Hawaiian immersion teacher, I found this to be critical to the interest level of the students. When materials were translated from English to Hawaiian, it was business as usual for students; a non-Hawaiian worldview and values being perpetuated in Hawaiian with the language of instruction being the only differences between them and what their nonimmersion counterparts were getting in English-medium schools. In creating new curriculum in Hawaiian, it was the time we spent doing cultural activities in Hawaiian, such as cleaning fish and pounding poi, that lit the eyes and fire within the students. The times we read stories from Hawaiian language newspapers of the 1800s were meaningful to students because through the history, values, and lives of Kānaka Maoli now passed, students are able to relate and yearn to be a part. When culture and language are compartmentalized, much is lost; it is as if the yarn of the lei has been severed in half so you are left with flowers sewn on string that make up half a lei but without anything to wear around your neck—the value of what the lei was meant to be is left unrealized.

Many Hawaiian immersion and Hawaiian language teachers have described language as the keeper of culture, and they have reminded us of the need to perpetuate our culture through our language and vice versa.<sup>29</sup> Language gives us the context and framework from which we see and interpret the world. At the same time, language builds a sense of community and nationhood. For the purposes of this article, language gives us the power to better understand place. In our ability



to speak and/or understand Hawaiian language, we are able to interpret the names of place and glean from them information that helps us to relate to that place. For example, in the name Hau'ula, we may understand that red pandanus was or is prolific in the area called Hau'ula.

Jace Weaver, Cherokee attorney and professor of American and Religious Studies at University of Georgia, Athens, states that “Louis Owens contends that Native writers recover authenticity by incorporation and invocation of the oral tradition in their texts” (Weaver, 1997, p. 239). This pivotal concept lays the foundation for a narrative style of academic writing. This is an empowering concept by which many students find strength in their oral tradition and lends merit to that endeavor in academia.

For Kiowa novelist, poet, and essayist N. Scott Momaday in *Man Made of Words*, oral tradition provides a fourth dimension that links speech and language to the power and prayer of ceremony:

Oral tradition is the other side of the miracle of language. As important as books are—as important as writing is, there is yet another, a fourth dimension of language which is just as important, and which, indeed, is older and more nearly universal than writing: the oral tradition, that is, the telling of stories, the recitation of epic poems, the singing of songs, the making of prayers, the chanting of magic and mystery, the exertion of the human voice upon the unknown—in short, the spoken word. In the history of the world nothing has been more powerful than that ancient and irresistible tradition *vox humana*. (Momaday, 1997, p. 81)

For many centuries the written form of literacy has been valued above that of the oral—and indeed has often underscored justifications of colonialism that have transformed indigenous peoples into peoples without history (Mignolo, 2000; Trouillot, 1995). Written tradition has been inappropriately used against indigenous peoples around the world, and until we nurture oral traditions and recenter them within our education system by placing them at the same level as writing, our students will continue to be ill equipped and unfairly measured. Thus, as Weaver (1997) says: “Even in this image-dominated age, language—the word, written

and spoken—retains a special power to move and affect” (p. 161). Let our people be equipped with the power to move and affect so that our communities heal. Stories, poems, prayers, narrative, oli, mele, hula, mo’olelo, and mo’okū’auhau are all cultural expressions with a foundation in a strong oral tradition. It is our responsibility to perpetuate them in whatever way is most useful to our families and community.

## A KAIĀULU CONCEPT OF LAND

On the topic of land ethic from an indigenous perspective, N. Scott Momaday talks about the effects of the technological revolution on his people. I argue his mana’o<sup>30</sup> can be extended to Native Hawaiians as well. Momaday (1997) states:

One effect of the technological revolution has been to uproot us from the soil. We have become disoriented, I believe; we have suffered a kind of psychic dislocation of ourselves in time and space. We may be perfectly sure of where we are in relation to the supermarket and the next coffee break, but I doubt that any of us knows where he is in relation to the stars and to the solstices. Our sense of the natural order has become dull and unreliable. Like the wilderness itself, our sphere of instinct has diminished in proportion as we have failed to imagine truly what it is. And yet I believe that it is possible to formulate an ethical idea of the land—a notion of what it is and must be in our daily lives—and I believe moreover that it is absolutely necessary to do so. (pp. 47–48)

There are numerous Hawaiians who know the locations of the stars in relation to the rising and setting of the sun thanks to all the change makers who were and continue to be instrumental in the sailing of the *Hōkūle’a*.<sup>31</sup> Today there are generations of Native Hawaiian children who are able to experience Native Hawaiian voyaging and learn the locations of stars and other ancestral knowledge associated with navigation. Still, this is a relatively small group of individuals when compared with the Hawaiian population. There are Hawaiian families who have their ēwe<sup>32</sup>

planted in the ground in places that they belong. But again, this is perhaps a small fraction of the Hawaiian community as a whole. Therefore, let us reclaim our places, first by giving them back their names, then telling their stories, and by planting the piko<sup>33</sup> and ēwe of our children in the 'āina.

Native Hawaiian historian and scholar Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa articulates in *Native Land and Foreign Desires: How Shall We Live in Harmony? Ko Hawai'i 'Āina a me nā Koi Pu'umake a ka Po'e Haole: Pehea Lā e Pono Ai?* (1992) that Hawaiians' relationship to the land at the time of Western contact was alive and conscious and did not at all resemble foreign traits of individualism or capitalism. In my own experience, I have lived in many places, places of my ancestors, places of others' ancestors, places that my immediate family has called home. Each place breathes. Each place has its own spirit. I am connected to each of those places, but some more deeply than others. When I consider the places that I am more deeply connected to, it doesn't necessarily have to do with the amount of time I lived there. It has more to do with the extent to which I interacted with the land. Interestingly, the places I lived that were located in urban centers with very little or no land due to zoning or development are the ones I fondly remember yet do not long for. Where my family lived before me, I have strong connections, and the places that I frequented with my family and actively participated in cultural activities, I yearn for; they are the ones I feel compelled to return to time and time again.

There are two places that I have cried for in the middle of the night or in my husband's arms. Those places are Hau'ula and Āhualoa. We lived on 1 acre in Hau'ula on the island of O'ahu and that place was a place of my husband's ancestors. Hau'ula breathes like the smell of rain and sea mixed with the mist of the early morning mountains. It is calm and caresses the spirit. The land there nourishes the soul. The house was ugly, but the land was deep and loving. Āhualoa was 5 acres in the mountains outside of chilly Waimea on the Big Island.<sup>34</sup> The weather was made for sweatpants, rubber boots, and picking white ginger for lei. Forty or so lehua trees framed the ocean view from the house. They were old trees, old in a sense that they were wise, tall, and strong. That land was land that fed our family, land that nourished our creativity and healed us. When there, you feel cradled by the chilled air and warmed by the land.

Native Hawaiian musician and historian Jonathan Osorio (2002) examines the Mahele<sup>35</sup> in great depth in *Dismembering Lāhui*, analyzing the procession of laws and events that made privatized land ownership so disastrous for the maka'āinana.<sup>36</sup> Of importance is the fact that he details all of the circumstances surrounding the ultimate disenfranchisement of Hawaiians via the loss of land.

Indigenous people around the world hold land to be sacred, and that value is constantly in direct conflict with capitalistic notions of progress, ownership, and materialistic growth. Capitalism devours native lands with an insatiable appetite feeding on oil, precious metals, and, in Australia, uranium (Iverson, Patton, & Sanders, 2000). In *For This Land*, Standing Rock Sioux, renowned historian, political scientist, and activist Vine Deloria Jr., writes:

Almost every tribal religion was based on land in the sense that the tribe felt that its lands were specifically given to it to use. The proceedings of treaty councils are filled with protest and declarations by Indians to the effect that lands cannot be sold since no human has the power or right to own them. (Deloria, 1999, p. 127)

Deloria goes on to say that the lands were sacred because ancestors had been buried on them and sacred events had taken place on them, and he discusses the exploitation of natural resources on sacred lands. So intimate is the relationship, Deloria notes, that just as we would protect our sibling, we are compelled to be enraged by the desecration of our 'āina.

So strong is the connection of Native Hawaiians to the land that even when Hawaiians leave Hawai'i, they and their children and their children's children sometimes feel an intense need to "come home." Recently my cousin Davelyn, who grew up in Waiāluā but moved to Oregon, was home in Hawai'i and shared a story about her physical need to come home. She tried to explain this yearning to her husband who has lived in Oregon for most of his adult life and who is a Kamehameha Schools graduate. She explained that she thought maybe her husband did not fully understand her feelings; to her it is more than a desire, it is an actual physical need.

My cousin talked about her rural connection to place through a lifestyle of raising and riding horses and believes that her interaction with the environment has created a stronger connection between her and Hawai'i. I understand this and believe it to be true. Once connected to 'āina, it physically pulls at us and calls us to return. This is why so many Hawaiians who have relocated to other parts of the world have a need to return to Hawai'i, even Hawaiians who have been removed from 'āina for a generation or more. There is an 'ōlelo no'eau that articulates this notion: Ho'i hou i ka iwi kuamo'o; Pukui (1983, p. 109) translates this statement

to mean “return to the backbone.” She explains this as a return to the homeland or family after being away. I interpret this to mean to return to where your ancestors have been buried, to the land where your genealogy lives on in that which has been deposited in the ground and the stories of place.

## KAIĀULU HO‘I<sup>37</sup>

Just as land and place are critical to the well-being of our people, so is community. The concept of community has many definitions. For me, community is where we are validated, where we go for advice, comfort, and safety. From a native standpoint, community is the natural extension of our families. Above all it is a site of reciprocity. We are responsible to our community, and our community is responsible for us. We gain strength from our community, and our community challenges us to be stronger. We are vested in the well-being of our community and are called to ensure that every member is held accountable and kept safe. ‘Āina and people together in a healthy relationship can become community.

So necessary is community for Kānaka Maoli that Native Hawaiian communities exist across the globe. There are significant numbers of Hawaiians in Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, and many other places where Native Hawaiians congregate, find each other, eat Hawaiian food together, dance hula, and marry each other because the need for community and culture is so compelling.

Jace Weaver articulates community in a powerful way in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literature and Native American Community* (1997). Below I quote Weaver, who is discussing Robert Warrior’s work in *Tribal Secrets*, to highlight how American Indian scholars have used scholarship as a means to engage a commitment to community. What emerges out of the exemplary paragraph below, and to which I add my own voice, is an example of how native scholars draw upon the centrality of community as a means to affirm the past, present, and future of indigenous lifeways:

As Warrior claims for Vine Deloria Jr. and John Joseph Mathews, “Both contend in their work that the success or failure of American Indian communal societies has always been predicated not upon a set of uniform, unchanging

beliefs, but rather upon a commitment to the groups and the groups' futures." Not to be committed to Native American community, affirming the tribes, the people, the values, is tantamount to psychic suicide. (Weaver, 1997, p. 43)

Being committed to and engaging in community thus fostering the bonds of family and community is an act that nourishes the collective well-being for Kānaka Maoli. As indicated above, those who do not engage in community wander and wander, often times feeling unfulfilled at best and committing "psychic suicide" at worst.

In her work, Brenda Child also conveys such commitment to community in several ways. At the beginning of *Boarding School Seasons* (1998), Child talks about quilting at the Carlisle Boarding School. She says that the star quilt for which Native American women have become renowned is symbolic of the close collective of pan-Indian identity that naturally evolved in the boarding situation. So strong is the need for community among Native peoples that tribe members learned bits and pieces of other tribe members' languages and became a community of their own. Child speaks of the intense homesickness of the children and the sickness that the families felt with their children so far away from home and community. Children wrote of the separation from community when they returned and the intense grief they felt as a result. For these people, community was like a family member that they mourned when they did not fit back in upon returning from the boarding experience.

Following Child's discussion of quilting and community building in boarding schools, Weaver's (1997) arguments in *That the People Might Live* recenter community in relation to oration and how "most Amer-European analysis of Native texts have focused on those texts' relation to orature" (p. 163). He then explains how he deliberately refocuses the discussion to content and commitment to community, a resistance to that movement:

I have attempted to situate the literary moment in historical and political context in terms of the writer's communitism. It is clear that Native literatures differ from dominant discourse in their commitment to community. This includes a shared sense of story, the orature that first served to define and shape tribal realities. The play of language becomes a

common bond. In some fashion, works by Native writers, though often highly Western in form, may mimic, perhaps even unconsciously, the tribal stories their authors heard as children. (Weaver, 1997, p. 163)

He indicates that story is community building and that by invoking oral traditions, a writer, even if subconsciously, invokes community. Further, Weaver states:

Words cannot be killed. Thoughts cannot be silenced. Identity, ultimately, cannot be suppressed. Native writers, as they have for over 200 years, reflect and shape Native identity and community in a reciprocal relationship with their communities. They are finding their voices in ever increasing numbers, and as they write they help “create a new tribal presence in stories.” They help “push things” on to another place. (p. 168)

Most indigenous authors discuss community in relation to language, land, or responsibility. We are responsible to our community, our land, and our language because we are those things. It is impossible to separate one from the other. We are the land, the language, and community collectively. All these things create a beautiful makaloa mat to be treasured for generations to come. As a shared experience and entity, community is diverse and multilayered. If 'āina is the foundation and community the roof, then language is the pillar that comes from the 'āina and supports the roof.

## WAHI PANĀ<sup>38</sup>: PLACE AND HAWAIIAN WELL-BEING

What is it that you know about the place you are from, the place you live now, and how is it that you arrived upon that knowledge? Did you learn it from listening to the breath of 'āina, from your kūpuna,<sup>39</sup> from your interactions, or from paying close attention to the patterns day after day? How do you know that the wind is Nounou'ili, Po'olipilipi, or Kipu'upu'u? Have you felt it on your skin and fully

comprehended the meaning, or does all rain feel basically the same? These are questions you must answer for yourself and questions that speak to the specificity of ‘āina. Consider the following mele written to honor the place called Waikīkī and those ocean places linked to it.

Mele of Waikīkī as relayed by Samuel M. Kamakau

I nui kai mai Kahiki  
*The great sea from Kahiki*

I miha kai i ka ‘āina;  
*Quietly surrounds the island;*

I po‘i ke kai i kohola,  
*The sea breaks on the reef flats,*

I nehe ke kai i ka ‘ili‘ili;  
*The sea whispers to the pebbles;*

I kīkī ke oho i ke kai,  
*The hair is dressed with seawater,*

I ‘ehu ke oho i ke kai li‘u,  
*The hair is reddened by the salty sea,*

I lelo ke oho i ke kai loa.  
*The hair is yellowed by the foamy sea.*

He kai lihalaha kō ka pua‘a,  
*A savory sea is that of pigs,*

He kai likoliko kō ka moa.  
*An oily sea is that of fowl.*

He kai he‘e nalu kō Kahaloa,  
*Kahaloa has a sea for surf riding,*

He kai ho‘opuni kō Kālia,  
*Kālia has a surrounding sea,*

He kai ‘au kohana Māmala,  
*A sea for swimming naked is Māmala,*



He kai 'au 'o Kapu'eone.  
*A sea for sandbar swimming is Kapu'eone.*

He kai kā 'anae kō Ke'ehi,  
*Ke'ehi has a sea for kicking out full-sized mullet,*

He kai 'elemihi i Leleiwi;  
*A sea for 'elemihi crabs is at Leleiwi,*

He kai awalau ke'e Pu'uloa,  
*A sea of crooked channels is Pu'uloa,*

He kai puhi nehu, puhi lala,  
*A sea that blows up nehu fish, lala fish,*

Ke kai 'o 'Ewa e noho i ka la'i nei.  
*In the sea of 'Ewa, there is the calm.*

Na 'Ewa-nui-a-La'akona,  
*From 'Ewa-nui-a-La'akona,*

Kūikealaikauaokalani...  
*Kūikealaikauaokalani...[Kūali'i]*  
 (Kamakau, 1991, pp. 44–45)

In hearing and passing down the stories of place the 'ike<sup>40</sup> of our kūpuna is perpetuated: This gives sustenance to the next generation and power to the land. The stories of place teach us values, give us wisdom and knowledge about the intricacies of that specific place, and make us aware of what will and won't thrive in that area and what to be careful of, just as demonstrated in the mele above. Through place names and the names of winds and rains, we can better know a place and ground ourselves in the value of dialogue between land and people.

Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau talked about land extensively in Hawaiian language newspapers in the 1860s. Some of his work was translated by Mary Kawena Pukui and became the book, *Tales and Traditions of the People of Old: Nā Mo'olelo o ka Po'e Kahiko* (Kamakau, 1991). In it Kamakau constructs place in a very familiar way. Typically, he stands upon a place and sees a landmark, and that visual feature evokes a story about the place and those who lived, loved, fought,

and died there. Place is sacred because it holds our memories and reveals them to us again and again. Kamakau (1991) states: “If I were to tell the story of each place in this archipelago from Hawai‘i to Ni‘ihau, I would not be finished in twenty years” (p. 16). What Kamakau is saying, in essence, is that each and every place in Hawai‘i has its own stories, dozens if not hundreds. To remember our future, we must know the stories of place, they inform us of tomorrow, yesterday, and today. To appreciate and fully comprehend the stories, we must become intimate with the ‘āina of those stories. One way to do this is to live and breathe those places every day, to listen and to be in conversation with ‘āina.

Where we are in relation to ‘āina matters because there are layers upon layers of knowing and understanding that are built into having a spatial understanding of where one is located. My upbringing and relationship with ‘āina has directly influenced the way I remember things. When I want to recall what I said at a particular moment in time and begin to think about the conversation, I always am first struck with a visual of where I was located physically at the time the conversation took place. Once I am able to visualize my surroundings, the memories of the conversation and actual words come back. Locating oneself in relation to place in stories is a strategy that has been used time and time again in traditional Kanaka Maoli stories and a practice that continues regardless of attempts to erase our memories by erasing our places. We must continue this tradition, and when we tell our children stories, the names and physical characteristics of the places associated with the story need to be the veins of those stories. We must never get to the point where the genealogy of place is lost in the telling of our mo‘olelo.

Kupihea (2001) talks of an old-timer named Samuel Ka‘ili Naumu, a half Hawaiian and half Irish man, who was confused about his heritage and identity. Unable to choose between the two sides of his heritage, Ka‘ili was tormented.

Ka‘ili once told me that he spent seven years as a dedicated Seventh-Day Adventist. During this time his family and friends referred to him as a religious fanatic. After this period, he took up the bottle, drinking for many years. Eventually he was committed to a treatment center for alcoholics in Kaneohe, on the island of Oahu. There he spent another seven years of his life overcoming alcohol abuse.

Upon returning to Kauai he also returned to the mountains and the lifestyle of his youth, and here he found happiness. He often repeated the following words to me while we traveled in the mountains of Waialae and Ka'aha. *“I spent seven years in that tunnel looking for the light on the other end. But I couldn't find it so I came out the same way I went in. And saw the same light that I'd seen before I went in.”* (Kupihea, 2001, pp. 199–200)

Kupihea uses this experience to talk about an individual's light within. I would like to point out that Ka'ili's grounding in the places of his childhood and youth is the force that brought him back to a state of happiness and reconciliation. When the umbilical cord between the 'āina and our people is cut, suffering often occurs. Unlike our grandparents' generation who met at the beach or in the open fields, today, coffee bars and the mall are where people see each other. In an effort to maintain an intimate connection to place, we need to create spaces where we interact with each other in cultural learning environments.

We sustain and grow our connection to the land by sharing stories of place. By learning the names of the places we claim and opening a dialogue with 'āina, we come to understand the deeper meaning of place. Learn the names of the winds and rains, feel them on your bare skin with your eyes closed and enjoy them, let them tell you their mea hūnā,<sup>41</sup> and share them with all who will listen. Plant the ʻēwe of your children in the place you want them to be connected to. If you live on the 'āina of your ancestors, then you are blessed; plant the ʻēwe of your children there and they will forever be connected to that place. If you live on 'āina that you are new to, but where you want to become rooted and where you want your children rooted, plant their ʻēwe there.

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#### NOTES

1 For this article I have intentionally chosen to not italicize Hawaiian words or put the translation for them in parentheses. I ascribe to the belief that Hawaiian is not a foreign language and therefore should not be italicized. I place the translation for the Hawaiian words in these endnotes so that the reader has the opportunity to learn the Hawaiian word from the context in which it is used, and if that is not possible at first, then the translation is provided here. My hope is that by the end of the article, the reader may have learned several Hawaiian words in the process.

2 **'Āina** Land or that which feeds

3 **'Ōlelo makuahine** Hawaiian language, literally, mother tongue

4 **Kaiāulu** Community or collective

5 **'Ōlelo** Language

5 The makaloa mat is a fine mat that was woven from the makaloa plant and reserved primarily for ali'i (chiefs). If the mat had a pāwehe design it was highly prized.

6 Operating outside of Western conventions, there are many native scholars whose research and writings are helping reshape the way we have been trained to think about the world and our relationship to it. In my work, I draw upon a community of scholars and indigenous concepts to obtain a better understanding of the meaning and value of place for native peoples and Hawaiians specifically. When constructing my arguments I deliberately use direct quotations—the actual words—of authors for three reasons. First, to invoke a feeling of community, a concept that is a part of an indigenous worldview and a fundamental Hawaiian value. (The idea of native scholars invoking community in their writings was first articulated to me by Professor Jodi Byrd in a writing class. Mahalo nui e Jodi.) Bringing a hui (group) of native academics into the conversation allows a community discussion to take place. In turn, I see my role to be that of the host or facilitator of the conversation. In the Hawaiian context, this action represents aspects of ho'okipa, hospitality, and haku, the art of weaving/creating.

The second reason I use direct quotations from writers has to do with the difficulty inherent in condensing someone else's words and thoughts without misinterpretation, which could potentially change their meanings. Again, from a Hawaiian perspective, words have mana (power, sacredness), and paraphrasing or selecting only small portions of text can alter the speaker's status and intention. Sometimes it is best to leave the words alone and let the authors speak for themselves because to change them seems hō'oiio (conceited).

The “power of the collective voice” is the final reason for using quotations extensively. So much stronger is a chorus of voices working toward a goal than that of a single individual. A Hawaiian expression of this concept is “alu like,” where everyone brings their expertise to the table and works together toward a common goal to accomplish something much bigger and better than a single person could.

7 For a full treatment of Kapā Oliveira's work on place in relationship to my arguments, see chapter 2 of my dissertation (Nāone, 2008).

8 **Kanaka Maoli** A descendant of the first inhabitants of Hawai'i; an aboriginal or indigenous person of Hawai'i (**Kānaka Maoli** Plural of Kanaka Maoli)

9 **Ali'i nui** High chief or king

10 **Mo'olelo** Stories11 **Mele** Songs12 **Oli** Chants13 **Mo'okū'auhau** Genealogies14 **'Ōlelo no'eau** Proverb, wise saying

15 It should be noted that this book was first published in 1983 but that the information for this project was collected and translated between 1910 and 1960. In addition, I have followed Kate Turabian's style of referencing (from *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*) and therefore instead of the 'ōlelo no'eau number, I have included the page on which the 'ōlelo no'eau is placed.

16 In Western academia, hierarchy has a negative connotation; however, from a Hawaiian perspective I believe this term is appropriate and not oppressive in nature. Instead, the hierarchy where nature is put first is necessary for the ultimate survival of humans.

17 Another 'ōlelo no'eau on the topic of land is "He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauwā ke kanaka" (Pukui, 1983, p. 62). Pukui translates this: "The land is a chief; man is its servant." Her explanation of this proverb is "Land has no need for a man, but man needs the land and works it for a livelihood." My extension is that it is the responsibility of people to treat the land with respect, to nourish it, feed it, listen to it, and ensure that it is cared for.

18 After finding the story in *Sites of O'ahu*, I went to the original source in the Hawaiian newspaper *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* (December 13, 1884; Hawaiian Ethnological Notes, Vol. II, p. 829). Then Noenoe Silva introduced me to the newly published story of *Keaomelemele* by Moses Manu, translated by Mary Kawena Pukui in 2002. Although there were many options in the entire book of *Keaomelemele* to choose that would exemplify this strategy, I kept with the original selection because it was such a good example with few lines.

19 I ascribe kahakō and 'okina (Hawaiian diacritical marks to indicate long vowels and glottal stops, respectively) for all Hawaiian words that I use in my text. If the author did not use them in their text, I do not include them out of respect for the author. For example, Pukui does not use an 'okina in her name, so I do not place one in her name.

20 This selection originally was located in a book by Martha Beckwith titled *Hawaiian Mythology* on pages 152–153. This was a condensation from *Fornander's Collection* (Vol. V, pp. 188–193); Nakuina, in *Thrum's Tales* (pp. 118–132); Kalākaua, *The Legends and Myths of Hawai'i* (pp. 509–522); Westervelt, *Gods and Ghosts* (pp. 84–93).

21 According to this version of the story, Kahalaopuna is wrongfully beaten to death but is brought back to life by her parents when her spirit rises up to the top of the nearby lehua tree and chants her location and plight. The relationship between the woman and the environment is intertwined, and the tree (or environment) assists the woman and her family so that she can be saved.

22 **Iwi** Bones

23 **Kapu** Taboo

24 An example of how strongly I feel about this is when ABC's *Extreme Makeover Home Edition* came to build on the agency I worked for up until October 2007's 3 acres of land in Kalihi. I went to make sure that, one, the natural spring that was to feed our lo'i (irrigated terrace) was preserved and, two, that not a single stone or any of the native trees were destroyed or removed from the property. It was a bit complicated to explain to people from Hollywood, but they agreed to comply. Now that I articulate this, I understand that I was compelled to ensure that no one was removed.

25 The original location of this story was included in "Na Wahi Pana o Ewa," *Ka Loea Kalaiaina*, July 14, 1899, newspaper.

26 Samuel Mānaikalani Kamakau (1815–1876) was one of the most prolific Hawaiian authors of all times. Between 1866 and 1871, he wrote more than 200 historic articles in Hawaiian language newspapers and is honored for his contribution to our understanding of our past through a native lens.

27 **Lehua** More commonly referred to as 'ōhi'a, lehua is an indigenous tree of Hawai'i and is the first to grow after a lava flow. The flowers are beautiful and used to make lei. Red is the most common; however, Hawai'i island has many colors naturally, including red, salmon, pink, yellow, and some say white.

28 **Kaona** The underlying meaning of a word or thought often utilized in songs. For example, a song might make reference to a pua (flower) that really is a child. Or a song might make reference to a wind that actually is referring to a woman who comes from the area where that particular wind blows.



29 Waiau Elementary 1992–1993, 1994–1995 meetings and personal communication with Kalani Akana, Kahele Dukelow, Kehau Llanos, Leilani Makekai, Ka'oi Nu'uaniu, and Ka'umealani Walk. Personal communications with Puakea Nogelmeier between 1988 and 1991.

30 **Mana'o** Thoughts

31 The *Hōkūle'a* is a replica of a traditional double-hulled canoe built in 1975 by the Polynesian Voyaging Society that has sailed by traditional Polynesian star navigation and without modern sailing instruments numerous times in the last 20 years.

32 **Ēwe** This is what medical doctors call the afterbirth.

Unless one fights for it in the hospital after delivery, afterbirth is disposed of as medical waste. Our people planted it at the place they were born or had familiar and relational connections to. We need to reclaim that practice and make it widespread so that our people continue to have a physical connection to the land.

33 **Piko** In this case, it is the umbilical cord and core that fall off shortly after birth. (There are also other piko on the body.)

34 I use the word *was* instead of *is* out of immense sentiment and connection to Āhualoa. Āhualoa will always be a part of me, but I am pained that we no longer have a legal claim to it.

35 The Mahele is often referred to as the Great Mahele; I intentionally do not use the word *great* with it because it was the polar opposite of great for Kānaka Maoli. The Mahele was the land division of 1848 whereby land tenure in Hawai'i was changed from historical and traditional land stewardship to land ownership and has had a devastating impact on Kānaka Maoli.

36 **Maka'āinana** Commoner

37 **Kaiāulu ho'i** Community indeed

38 **Wahi pana** Place; I also extend this to the specificity of 'āina

39 **Kūpuna** Grandparents or elders

40 **'Ike** Wisdom

41 **Mea hūnā** Secrets, hidden things