

UNDERSTANDING NATIVE HAWAIIAN LAND
RELATIONS THROUGH KANAKA MAOLI LITERATURE

by

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A THESIS

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Within a hegemonic Western discourse, Hawai‘i is largely considered an aesthetic tourist destination. It is perceived to be a vacation haven, bountiful in opportunities for real estate, commodification, and gentrification. While endeavors such as these have indeed proven to be economically prolific for the state, the profits do not directly, if even remotely, benefit the Native Hawaiians whose land continues to be seized and commodified in the name of said profits. Therefore, that dominant discourse which paints Hawai‘i as a tourist destination of great economic potential is in fact a colonialist notion, denoting Hawaiian land as public property to be seized, altered, and owned. In reality, the land that is used for expansive capitalist ventures is often seized from Native people, as has been the trend since settlers first invaded Hawai‘i. This truth is further troubling when one considers Native Hawaiian land relations and the spiritual connection that many *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) have to that land. In light of the spiritual ties that many *Kānaka Maoli* have to land, or *'āina*, its seizure and alteration by non-Native persons is an act of colonialism against not only *Kānaka Maoli* homes, but also against ours bodies and spirits.

This spiritual and emotional connection between *Kānaka Maoli* and our land is deeply rooted, and it is an idea commonly expressed in contemporary *Kanaka* culture by the term *aloha ʻāina*. In understanding this sentiment, it is essential that one first understands that *aloha* carries a much deeper meaning than the Hawaiian “hello” and “goodbye.” *Aloha* connotes one’s deep love for and connection to *Kanaka* culture. It also signifies love for one’s neighbors, friends, and ancestors. In essence, *aloha ʻāina* is an expression of one’s identification with and commitment to Hawaiian land and its connected historical and cultural significance. By close reading *Kanaka* texts and terminology such as this, one can begin to understand the sanctity of *Kanaka* land relations, thereby lending to an understanding of one of the ways by which colonialism against *Kānaka Maoli* continues in perpetuity.

In this thesis, I will investigate and discuss relationships between *Kanaka* bodies and *ʻāina*. I will do this by close reading *Kanaka* literature, including the Hawaiian creation *mele* known as the *Kumulipo*, the narrative and performative device that is *hula*, and my Auntie Betty's stories that have been passed down to me through oral storytelling. I will contextualize my findings in both historical and contemporary frames. Ultimately, I am conducting this research with the aim of contributing to existing scholarship which aims to dismantle the dominant narrative which suggests that we live in a post-colonial era. The idea that colonialism is an extinguished historical event is a dangerous and false misconception that allows for the perpetuation of the discriminatory maltreatment of marginalized Indigenous communities and cultures. This discrimination is enacted in countless ways, including but in no way limited to the seizure of *Kānaka Maoli* lands. It is my hope that this research will encourage any and

all readers to continue to learn about *Kanaka Maoli* and other Native cultures, and that this endeavor for further knowledge will lead to advocacy on behalf of, and greater reverence toward Native people, narratives, and knowledge.

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*For my Auntie Betty,
who dedicated so much of her life to recovering our family's history,
and who paved the way for me to do this work today.*

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A Note on Terminology

Throughout my research, I will use various terms from 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, or, the Hawaiian language. In doing so, I hope to preserve the embedded relationality, spiritual ties, and other cultural nuances that exist within the language. Moreover, this selective refusal of English translation is an intentionally political methodology that is one facet in the ongoing task of cultural resurgence for *Kānaka Maoli*. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is presently an endangered language, its practice having been discouraged and even forbidden by English-speaking colonizers who invaded the Islands in centuries past. The modern revival of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is therefore an act of defiance against the settler-colonial agenda of erasure. Following the model of *Kanaka* scholar Queen Lili'uokalani, I choose not to translate particular words when I feel that their English translation does not convey the same meaning and depth as does the original 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. These Hawaiian terms will be italicized throughout the text and listed in a glossary at the end of the work. This glossary will offer standard English translations for clarifying purposes, though the terms' *Kanaka* meanings will be integrated throughout the text. As Noenoe K. Silva writes in *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, "Reclaiming our native languages is key to the process of recovery" (59).

Kanaka Maoli

This term means Native Hawaiian. When a macron is present over the first 'a,' as in *Kānaka Maoli*, this indicates plurality. Its absence indicates singularity. Moreover, I have chosen to use both *Kanaka Maoli* and *Kanaka* as adjectives throughout this work.

See Glossary for more English definitions of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i terms.

INTRODUCTION

"Tell me a story with your mouth," I used to request of my grandma when I was a child. A toddler at the time, I was unaware of the sanctity of the tradition of oral storytelling in *Kanaka* culture. But I think that it was of no coincidence that I preferred stories that were told from memory and recited orally. Prior to colonialist invasions of Hawai'i, *Kānaka Maoli* had no written language. Instead, there were other means by which my ancestors told stories and kept records. Oral storytelling was one such prominent method, one in which I have been fortunate enough to participate in my lifetime. From this tradition comes the maintenance of our genealogies, which offer immense knowledge regarding our ancestors, both human and otherwise. The *Kumulipo* is an outstanding example of a royal genealogy, which Queen Lili'uokalani translated and transcribed. Another means of *Kanaka* storytelling is *hula*, which is commonly perceived as primarily a source of tourist entertainment. *Hula*, however, requires great discipline of its dancers and teachers. It tells stories of our ancestors and cosmogony, honors our progenitors, and is a sacred practice in its own right. While these three forms, oral storytelling, transcribed genealogies, and *hula*, are only a select few of the many means by which *Kānaka Maoli* have preserved our histories for generations, they are the three primary forms which I will analyze and discuss in this thesis. I have chosen these three forms based on personal interest. However, other media—including but not limited to music, documentaries, poetry, and novels-- warrant future research as *Kanaka Maoli* literature and as informants of *Kanaka Maoli* land relations.

Today, I write this work as a *Kanaka* scholar, dedicated to honoring my inheritance and the work that my ancestors have done to preserve our stories. A

contemporary *Kanaka Maoli* living in a diaspora, this is my own act of cultural preservation and resurgence. My ambition in this research is ultimately to illuminate the knowledge and practices of *Kānaka Maoli* who have come before me. I do this in the hopes of illuminating the wisdom of my ancestors, especially that regarding relationality to each other and to *'āina*. Moreover, it is my hope that this work will serve to encourage reader engagement with anti-colonialist action, whether demonstrated by protesting against the decimation of *Kanaka* land, the use of social media to spread awareness about the reality of ongoing colonialism, or any number of other initiatives that contemporary *Kanaka Maoli* and allies are engaged in to defend *Kanaka* sovereignty and protect our lands and relations.

It may seem that the horror of settler-colonialism exists only in the past. However, it certainly still persists, and presents ongoing battles to many *Kānaka Maoli*, one of whom was my Great Auntie Betty, who had to fight to regain rights to our inherited *'āina*. If someone were to search “Allerton Beach, Kauai,” on YouTube, they could see my family's beautiful *'āina*. Unfortunately, the first result of this search is a video posted by Coldwell Banker Turtle Cove Realty. The brief video shows footage of a picturesque, empty beach. The background narrator details it as “a spectacular beach...that few visit,” “one of those secret places that Kaua'i is famous for,” “in a setting that, with a little effort, you can find and enjoy for the day.” While it might seem harmless, this video's content and language is seriously problematic, seeing as the particular beach being advertised belongs to my family. According to tradition that dates back to 900 AD, and according to several legal documents, tourists are not allowed on this land. In fact, 92 of my ancestors are buried in the caves that surround

the beach. Therefore, the grounds are sacred according to the genealogical and spiritual traditions of my family and *Kanaka* culture. However, this real estate company's video falsely suggests that the beach is simply a hidden gem intended for public access. While there was likely no malintent in the creation of this video, its language describes our private beach as a "secret" place "that few visit," advertising it as an enticing vacation spot to tourists who wish to be off-the-grid. This dialogue is one example of the destructive ways in which the discourse surrounding the Western commodification of land is irreverent and harmful against the rights and traditions of *Kānaka Maoli* and our culture. Not only has this beach been in my family since 900 AD, but my Auntie Betty spent an immense amount of time and effort fighting for the legal rights that declare the land as officially belonging to our family. Therefore, I will work to defend the sanctity and importance of *Kanaka Maoli 'āina* like ours throughout this thesis.

Purpose of Research

Ultimately, I am conducting this research with the goal of contributing to that existing scholarship which aims to dismantle the dominant narrative which suggests that we live in a post-colonial era. The idea that colonialism is an extinguished historical event is a dangerous and false misconception that allows for the perpetuation of the discriminatory maltreatment of marginalized Indigenous communities and cultures. This discrimination is enacted in countless ways, including but in no way limited to the seizure of Native lands. In my thesis, I intend to elaborate upon this discrimination in both modern and historical contexts, and to provide a brief history of the colonialism of Hawai‘i.

I believe it important to assert that I have a personal stake in this research, myself being a *Kanaka Maoli*. Having grown up immersed in the stories, food, language, music, and keepsakes that defined my Hawaiianness, I feel a great reverence for and personal attachment to Hawaiian culture and place. In my research, I wish to use the critical, theoretical, and close reading skills that I have acquired as a student in the English discipline in order to explore the recurring, dominant themes and languages present in *Kanaka* literature. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how Native texts, from origin stories, legends, songs, and chants to more contemporary narratives, can communicate something substantive, and maybe even transformative, about *Kānaka Maoli* relationships to land, or *‘āina*. In doing so, I will accomplish three primary goals: I will illuminate the artistic, holistic nuances of *Kanaka* storytelling and culture; I will confront the ongoing social injustices that are silently being committed against *Kānaka Maoli* still today, and I will convey some of the often-omitted narratives that describe

Kanaka culture, and those that accurately depict a *Kānaka Maoli* experience of colonialism.

Research Strategy

In my research, I will be performing a close reading of the following primary texts: the *Kumulipo*, as translated by Queen Lili'uokalani, a performance of *hula* by Unukupukupu of Hilo, Hawai'i, and select stories by Betty Kealoha Snowden Duarte. I will analyze these texts using ecocritical and postcolonial reading theories, analyzing how they serve to define *Kanaka* relationality with *'āina* as well as to survey how *Kanaka* culture has evolved under the hand of settler-colonialism. I will ground my findings in conversation with several other *Kanaka* and Native scholars so as to acknowledge and engage with the incredible work that has already been done in this field.

To begin, I will close read one text that predates colonialism, the *Kumulipo*, which is a Hawaiian creation chant. The *Kumulipo* details our cosmogony as *Kānaka Maoli*, detailing the creation of Hawai'i's islands, gods, and all living beings. In its description of creation, the *Kumulipo* illuminates the interwoven and equal relationship between man, land, and all other earthly creations. Specifically, I will be close reading a translation of the *Kumulipo* as performed by Queen Lili'uokalani, the last reigning Queen of Hawai'i. Known to be a famously literate, passionate, nationalist *Kanaka Maoli*, Queen Lili'uokalani translated the *Kumulipo* while she was under house arrest following her deposition by colonizers. I will be examining the language and motifs that recur throughout this text in order to explain some predominant themes that inform *Kānaka Maoli* land relations and to center the text as a profound statement of resistance and sovereignty at the height of the occupation.

Next, I will analyze the form and history of *hula*, focusing specifically on a performance by the Unukupukupu Hālau Hula. *Hula* is a practice of dance and storytelling in *Kanaka* culture that has existed for centuries. During the initial colonization of Hawai‘i, *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i* was outlawed, which meant that many non-English speaking *Kānaka Maoli* necessarily preserved our stories through song and dance. Therefore, *hula* conveys valuable and culturally-relevant narratives which are imperative in understanding *Kanaka* land relations, both prior to and during this era of colonization. The inclusion of this non-traditional literary form further contributes to this project’s anti-colonialist agenda in that it muddies the Euro-American idea of genre as well as the attached expectation of what qualifies as literature.

Finally, I will conduct a close reading of select stories told by my Auntie Betty. A proud *Kanaka* woman, my Auntie Betty taught me and my cousins a great deal about our inheritance and what it can mean to be *Kānaka Maoli*. I will be using video footage of my Auntie Betty telling these stories, recorded by my mother, Denise Harden, in 2001. Using this footage, I will both transcribe its audio and detail the setting of the captured events. I will then elaborate upon this demonstration of oral storytelling and what it reveals about *Kanaka* kinship and cultural practices. Furthermore, I will analyze the content and predominant themes of the stories, exploring how they define *Kanaka Maoli* culture and relationships to *‘āina*.

Moving into the technical aspects of how I will conduct this process, I would like to define “close reading,” which is one aspect of my chosen research methodology. Essentially, this strategy suggests the careful, sustained analysis of a given passage, phrase, or word within a text so as to expand upon and contextualize its linguistic,

cultural, and political implications. Because my aim is to analyze and communicate *Kānaka Maoli* relations to 'āina, I will be close reading works and passages that discuss this relationship in particular. Not only will I be examining the English text, but I will also explore the nature of any provided translation from the original 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. In doing so, I will perform a close reading for contextual significance at the same time that I am performing somewhat of an etymology in order to explore the translation of ideas across cultures. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i provides useful clues into the land relations that I wish to illuminate, conveying nuances about Hawai'i that provide insight into the genealogical, cosmological, and conceptual knowledge that defines *Kanaka* culture.

In addition to close reading, my research will employ a historical methodology, as I will execute a historical and cultural contextualization of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, of Hawaiian colonization, and of the political happenings of contemporary Hawai'i in my research. Using a plethora of secondary sources, I will explore the cultural, social, political, and spiritual implications of my primary sources. Ultimately, I will contextualize these findings within a history of the colonization of the Islands in the 19th century and their forced annexation as a US territory in 1898, and as a state in 1959. This contextualization will be useful in exhibiting some of the ways in which *Kānaka Maoli* are continually discriminated against and colonized as well as highlight the incredible acts of resistance, revitalization, and resurgence through which we maintain our connections to 'āina, our ancestors, and our wider relations. This research ultimately aims to illuminate both truths at the same time that it explores *Kanaka* literature as a lens into the often-ignored narratives of *Kānaka Maoli* and our relationship with 'āina.

CHAPTER 1 | A Brief History of Hawai'i's Colonization

The following is a condensed chronicle of the colonization of the Hawaiian Islands, beginning with Captain James Cook's arrival at Kaua'i in January 1778 (Kuykendall). Born in Yorkshire, England, Cook was the first European to see the Hawaiian Islands. He named them the Sandwich Islands after his patron, the Earl of Sandwich. Some sources speculate that *Kānaka Maoli* believed Cook to be the *Kanaka* god Lono¹ and welcomed him with what they therefore believed to be due reverence. However, this relationship allegedly turned sour at the killing of a *Kanaka Maoli* by a European invader. In response to this rumored death, there arose tensions between the *Kānaka Maoli* who inhabited Kealahou Bay and the European invaders who were visiting. It is unclear how the subsequent events unfolded, but the turmoil ultimately ended in Captain Cook's death in 1779.

Following Cook, many European explorers visited the Islands, bringing with them disease, religious agendas, and desires to trade *Kanaka* materials like sandalwood, whale oil, and furs. Amidst all of this foreign inundation, however, King Kamehameha the Great had an agenda of his own. Each Hawaiian Island had its own ruling *ali'i*, or chief, in the late 18th century. Kamehameha desired the consolidation of the Islands so that they could function under one governance, namely his own. After conquering Maui, Lāna'i, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, and O'ahu, Kamehameha still did not rule over Kaua'i or Ni'ihau, preventing the complete union of the Islands (Burns). However, in 1810, the

¹ For further details, see Kuykendall, Ralph S. *The Hawaiian Kingdom*. University of Hawaii Press, 1957. See also, Daws, Gavan. *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*. University of Hawaii Press, 1974, pp. 11-15.

ali'i of these two remaining independent Islands agreed to this union, resulting in what became known as the Kingdom of Hawai'i.

Prior to this successful union, however, Kamehameha ruled over only the singular Island of Hawai'i. It was during this era, in 1792, that British Naval Captain George Vancouver visited the Islands (Kuykendall). Vancouver, who had been a junior officer on Captain Cook's voyages, began to establish a relationship with King Kamehameha over the course of his travels. This relationship was allegedly a catalyst in Kamehameha's eventual decision to cede his Kingdom to Great Britain in 1794. However, it is argued still today that "Kamehameha did not mean to give away the land but only to ask aid for Hawaii" (Westervelt 21). This ambiguity in consent and intention regarding the signing of treaties has long been a point of concern for Native populations. Oftentimes, treaties were drawn using language that was virtually inaccessible for any person whose first language was not English, leading to deceptive negotiations that historically disadvantaged Native groups.² It is therefore still debated as to whether Kamehameha knew that he was agreeing to concession, but it happened nevertheless. As Kamehameha gained dominion over all of the Islands, all of Hawai'i came under British rule. This shift in governing powers affected the principles and titles of *Kanaka* rulers, and it made British subjects out of *Kānaka Maoli*.

Under British rule, and as the subject of increasing foreign interest, the Kingdom of Hawai'i became a destination for surges of missionaries, predominantly Calvinist and Evangelist Christians (Kuykendall). Along with the desire to spread Christianity, these

² See Scott Lyon's *X-Marks* for further elaboration on this history.

missionaries brought with them foreign diseases and entirely new sets of beliefs that would destroy *Kānaka Maoli* ways of being and knowing. Specifically, this influx of foreign visitors meant a reconstruction of the *Kanaka* education system, including a written alphabet and, commonly, the prohibition of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. Moreover, *Kanaka* clothing was replaced with more conservative wear, seeing as the common clothing worn by *Kānaka Maoli* did not align with the Christian idea of modesty (Stone). These changes were not inherently negative, but they were objectively destructive to the traditions that had long defined *Kanaka Maoli* culture. For example, the forbiddance of 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in the classroom, and its lessened use at large, meant that older generations of *Kānaka Maoli* struggled to pass along their stories and genealogies to their descendants who no longer spoke the same language. Moreover, many *Kānaka Maoli* were taken advantage of for lacking English proficiency, finding themselves coerced into situations and agreements that they did not fully understand. This resulting confusion often led to the unintended signing away of one's rights to 'āina or other valuables (Trask).

The foreign visitors persisted, often dealing in continued missionary work and the trading of goods. King Kamehameha the Great continued his rule until his death in 1819, in Kailua-Kona Hawai'i. Succeeding him was his eldest son, Liholiho, who died from the measles after only a five-year reign as king. Next in line was Kauikeaouli, who was only ten years old when he assumed the throne under the regency of Ka'ahumanu, his father's favorite wife. Kamehameha III then went on to rule for nearly 30 years. During his reign, British and French governments signed a declaration in favor of

Hawai'i's independence, making the Islands a neutral territory. With governance switching hands at such a rapid pace, turmoil was inevitable.

Perhaps one of the most destructive decisions made by a ruler during this era was Kamehameha III's agreement to the Great *Māhele* in 1848 (Trask). This measure irrevocably changed *Kanaka 'āina* systems of ownership and distribution of lands and resources. Essentially, the decree denounced *ahupua'a*, the traditional system of land division, in exchange for a complicated legal process that left many *Kānaka Maoli* blindsided by the revocation of the 'āina that was their birthright. Because of the Great *Māhele*, the homes of many *Kānaka Maoli* were seized and redistributed outside of their families. Many folks were unaware that they were not complicit with updated measures, or were otherwise unsure how to secure their 'āina under this new set of laws. As a result, foreign powers were able to secure private ownership of 'āina, leading to the exploitation and commodification of *Kanaka 'āina* and to the displacement of *Kānaka Maoli*. Sugar plantation owners came to own significant plots of land, making profits off of the 'āina at the expense of these dispossessed *Kānaka Maoli*.

A few decades later, David Kalākaua (1874-1891) became King of Hawai'i. Only a year into his reign, Kalākaua signed a Reciprocity Treaty with the United States, which gave the United States market free access to goods grown and harvested in Hawai'i ("Hawaiian Monarch Divides Land"). The signing of this treaty resulted in profits and expansion for sugar plantation owners, most of them foreigners. While this meant a temporarily lucrative economy for Hawai'i, it also meant a surge in immigrants who were either looking to work on or own these plantations. In essence, this movement transformed the Kingdom of Hawai'i into flourishing grounds on which foreigners could

pursue American interests of capitalism and commodification. During this time, plantation owners grew increasingly wealthy, one of the most prominent beneficiary's being Sanford B. Dole, who was also growing increasingly dissatisfied living under a *Kanaka* monarchy (Trask). From this increasing discontentment came talk of reformation and the staging of a coup. The Reform Party, or, "Missionary Party," gained power in government. This political group essentially sought out the erasure of *Kanaka* culture in exchange for values and practices that were more aligned with their own. White missionaries who had invaded Hawai'i had an ever-increasing presence throughout and interest in the Islands, profiting off of the commodification of the land's resources and people. King Kalākaua attempted to fight back against these forces, himself a proponent for the reduction of powers held by the Missionary Party. Of course, Kalākaua was met with fervent pushback in efforts spearheaded by Lorrin A. Thurston and Sanford B. Dole. These two men were members of the Missionary Party, and both stood to gain significant territory and money from their exploitation of *Kanaka 'āina*. In response to Kalākaua, they created a constitution that further minimized Kalākaua's powers and ascribed greater power to the cabinet and Legislature. Militia backed the constitution, and King Kalākaua signed it at the threat of violence. This would become known as the Bayonet Constitution.

After Kalākaua passed in 1891, his sister, Queen Lili'uokalani claimed the throne. Only two years into Queen Lili'uokalani's reign (1891-1893), the United States staged a coup in which they forcibly deposed the Queen and illegally assumed control of the sovereign kingdom. While the Queen was imprisoned in Iolani Palace, U.S. militia invaded Honolulu. These efforts were led by none other than Sanford B. Dole,

who stampeded over alleged objections from then U.S. President Grover Cleveland. Queen Lili'uokalani surrendered, wanting to avoid outbursts of violence. In 1895, the Queen allegedly participated in a coup of her own, led by the Hawaiian Royalists against the Republic (Kuykendall). The coup was unsuccessful, and it resulted in Lili'uokalani's arrest, at which point she formally assented to abdicate her throne, thereby abolishing the Hawaiian monarchy. In 1898, the United States officially annexed Hawai'i, and it became the nation's 50th state in 1959 (Trask).

Dispossession of and violence against Native bodies, the stealing of Native lands, the manipulation of Native peoples, and overt racism are not strictly crimes of the past. They are present realities, as similar injustices to those in Hawai'i's history continue to be committed against Indigenous populations the world-over. The settler-colonialist agenda has always been fueled by a ravenous appetite for Native lands and resources. One strategy to access those resources and to reduce Indigenous resistance has been to repeatedly tear apart the fundamental practices, beliefs, and relationships by which Native cultures have long been defined. In place of these sacred tenets in practice from time immemorial, the colonizers' ways of doing are asserted as if correcting a problem. The beliefs and practices that preceded colonial invasion are denounced, discouraged, and trivialized. Burial grounds become gardens for tourists, sacred mountains become grounds on which telescopes are built, and so on. It may not be as blaringly loud during the 21st century as it was during the 19th, but colonialism is certainly still ongoing, and it is certainly still destructive.

Parallel to this persistent injustice has always been persistent defiance by Native communities and allies. Native scholars have long been investigating and rejecting this

destructive colonialist agenda, which is evidenced by an incredible, expanding body of work in Native and Indigenous studies. *Kanaka* scholars like Queen Lili'uokalani have contributed to works that speak to the sovereignty of Hawai'i, and which reclaim agency for *Kānaka Maoli* everywhere. Native communities continue to enact practices that have historically been repressed. In *Kanaka* culture, this has been facilitated by the resurgence of *hula kahiko* and in the continued practice of oral storytelling, to name only a couple of means by which *Kānaka Maoli* refuse erasure by modern colonialism. The preservation and passing down of our genealogies, either written or spoken, is one essential defense against this act of violence. Our genealogies express our connections to our ancestors and declare our shared birthright to the 'āina that is so often exploited. Famously translated by Queen Lili'uokalani, the *Kumulipo* is one such genealogy that traces the royal bloodline back to our original progenitors, and which details the familial bonds that all *Kānaka Maoli* have to 'āina. In this, the *Kumulipo* reasserts *Kanaka* sovereignty, declaring that *Kānaka Maoli* are the rightful inheritors and caretakers of *Kanaka 'āina*. In the next section, I will analyze this text so as to discern what it can tell us about this sacred relationship to 'āina and to each other.

CHAPTER 2 | The *Kumulipo*

The relationship between *Kānaka Maoli* and Hawaiian ‘āina is entirely unique from the settler-colonial ideology that separates humans from nature. In fact, I would like to proposition the word “nature” as an ideal that is commonly manipulated so as to serve settler-colonial values. According to its use in this context, “nature” often suggests that living ecosystems are distinctly separate from humanity, and which in fact characterizes nature as a category of life that is entirely independent from humankind. Haunani-Kay Trask articulates this point in her work *From a Native Daughter*, by way of “reading the West's view of itself through the degradation of [her] own past” (Trask 117). Through this lens, Trask observes that, “When historians wrote that the king owned the land and the common people were bound to it, they were saying that ownership was the only way human beings in their world could relate to the land, and in that relationship, some one person had to control both the land and the interaction between humans.” That is, settler-colonialist ideology did not and does not permit a kinship with land in the same manner that is inherent to *Kānaka Maoli*. Rather, the colonialist treatment of land is based upon constructs of ownership, positing land as a political commodity and as an object to be owned and controlled. This relationship is not only evident in the history of land seizures in Hawai‘i, but throughout the long-standing history of Euro-American colonialism, which has historically exploited land as a bargaining chip, and flaunted its ownership as a designation of power.

As Mishuana Goeman writes in “Land as Life,” “A consequence of colonialism has meant a translation or too easy collapsing of *land* to *property* [italics in original]” (Goeman 72). In modern, capitalist ideology, land is seldom perceived as a source of

wisdom, and even less so as one's relative. Instead, it is treated exactly as Goeman suggests: property. Its purpose is belittled to real estate, ownership, expansion. Goeman goes on to contrast this ideology with that of Native cultures, explaining, "Indigenous Nations claim land through a discursive communal sharing, and land is not only given meaning through consensus of claiming territory but also through narrative practices" (73). Rather than viewing land as a means for individual or economic gain, Indigenous ideologies regard land as sacred, as a gathering place, as a source of knowledge and narrative. According to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, author of *As We Have Always Done*, "This makes sense because this is the place where our Ancestors reside, where spiritual beings exist, and where the spirits of living plants, animals, and humans interact" (Simpson 155). Although Simpson is speaking to Native American and, more specifically, Anishinaabe land relations, this perspective also applies to *Kanaka Maoli* ideology, which mirrors a near-identical school of thought: humans, both living and dead, are in relationship with the land and all of its inhabitants in perpetuity. Therefore, land is a source of knowledge to be revered and honored accordingly. Scholars in fields of Native and Indigenous studies have long been invested in this conversation about the sanctity of land, defending its role as educator and spiritual divinity.

In fact, Native Hawaiian tradition acknowledges land, animals, and other earthly elements to be in relationship with humankind, rather than being a wholly separate category of life. As scholar Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa writes in her book *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, "Hawaiians say, '*He ali'i ka 'āina, he kauwā ke kanaka*,'" which translates to "The land is a Chief, man is its servant" (Kame'eleihiwa 3). This phrase, which Kame'eleihiwa states is commonly known among Native Hawaiians, reveals that

the power dynamics of the Kanaka Maoli relationship between humankind and land are entirely antithetical to that between the Western person and land. Whereas Western colonialism posits man as the direct owner of land, Kanaka Maoli perceive land to be the “Chief” which man serves. While this dynamic positions land as the more powerful entity over man, the relationship between the two is more familial than it is authoritative or hierarchical. According to Trask, “Since the land was an ancestor, no living thing could be foreign. The cosmos, like the natural world, was a universe of familial relations. And human beings were but one constituent link in the larger family” (Trask 5). Therefore, “Nature [is] not objectified but personified” in Kanaka culture, “resulting in extraordinary respect (when compared to Western ideas of nature) for the life of the sea, the heavens and the earth” (5).

One text wherein this relationship is particularly evident is the *Kumulipo*, a Hawaiian creation *mele* that was first written down in the 19th century. The word *mele* can be read as a genre, separate and distinct from the Euro-American categories of literature that academia uses to categorize written literature. *Mele* is akin to the English “chant” or “song,” seeing as it is passed down orally and recited with meter, but typically without a melody. Having been passed down through generations by means of oral storytelling, the *Kumulipo* details the birth and creation of various living elements, including man, shellfish, taro, and many other creatures. Through a close reading of this text, I will investigate the relational and metaphorical language employed in the *Kumulipo* in order to analyze and expand upon its representation of *Kānaka Maoli* land relations and cosmogony.

Moreover, this work will analyze two particular adaptations of this Hawaiian creation chant: the first as translated by Queen Lili‘uokalani, the second by Martha Warren Beckwith. Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last sovereign monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom (Peterson), translated the *Kumulipo* while imprisoned by US corporate and military figures during the 1895 occupation of Hawai‘i (an illegal occupation that is ongoing). Her work consequently serves as a declaration of *Kanaka* belonging, proving unjust both her imprisonment and colonial land seizures. She states that she “endeavored to give the definition of each name as far as it came within [her] knowledge of words, but in some cases this could not be done because the true signification has been lost” (Lili‘uokalani *Introduction*). Therefore, her translation features both ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* (Hawaiian language) and English, with certain words selectively retained in ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* so as not to mistranslate a connotation or idea that can only be conveyed through the original language of the *mele*. For example, where Beckwith writes “Born was the drupa shellfish, his child the bitter white shellfish came forth,” Lili‘uokalani writes, “The Makaloa was born, the Pupuawa was its offspring” (I, 30). It is in instances such as these that Lili‘uokalani elects to preserve the *mele*’s original ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* terminology, perhaps for personal preference and likely because, as stated earlier, she feels that a word’s translation to English would cause its “true signification” to be lost. In *Kanaka* culture, the word *makaloa* does indeed signify the English “shellfish.” However, it is also a name for a certain type of seaweed, carries the connotation of being the material used “for making the fine Ni‘ihau mats,” and is an adjective meaning “Always green; always fresh” (Wehewehe). Of course, the English word “shellfish” does not carry any of these connotations, which are specific and

valuable to Hawaiian culture. Therefore, Lili‘uokalani’s commitment to preserving certain words in ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* is in fact an act of cultural preservation, seeing as the language communicates a great deal of cultural ties that cannot be wholly translated in English.



Fig. 1. Queen Lili'uokalani, scholar and activist (Hawaii State Archives).

While Lili‘uokalani’s translation tactic is responsible in its refusal to depart from *Kanaka* tradition and meaning, it does offer an impediment in reader comprehension if the text’s audience does not understand ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* or its myriad nuances. Therefore, my analysis also references Beckwith’s text in order to offer English translations when essential for the comprehension of non-Hawaiian-speaking

readers. Beckwith, an American folklorist and ethnographer, was the first person to translate this *mele* entirely into English, and her adaptation has been referenced by English-speaking scholars since its publication in 1951. That being said, I will occasionally use Beckwith's translation as the reference-point by which I will clarify the language employed in Queen Lili'uokalani's translation for English-speakers. However, I will also explain the cultural connotations of the 'Ōlelo Hawai'i terms that are being translated to English. In doing so, I hope to offer both clarity for reader comprehension, as well as insight into the cultural nuances that are maintained through Lili'uokalani's preservation of the *Kumulipo*'s original diction.

In any context, the task of translation demands that great care be taken so that a work's original linguistic and cultural nuances may be preserved. Therefore, my analysis of the *Kumulipo* will consistently acknowledge the shortcomings and intricacies of translation and its negation. Furthermore, my close reading will focus on the relational terms, descriptors, and form employed throughout the *Kumulipo* in order to investigate what *Kanaka* literature suggests about *Kanaka* land relations. Ultimately, the aim of my research is to develop and demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between *Kānaka Maoli* and land, and to exemplify a critical reading theory that is informed by *Kanaka* culture. This close reading will analyze the characters, character relations, diction, and structure employed throughout the *Kumulipo* in order to demonstrate how *Kanaka* texts such as this reveal essential knowledge regarding *Kanaka* land relations and culture.³ In doing so, I also argue for the political

³ The *Kumulipo* has been investigated and analyzed by many *Kanaka* scholars, and is often cited as an informant on *Kanaka* culture in conversations of *Kanaka* identity, colonialism, spirituality, cosmogony, and related topics. A few notable scholars who

significance of this text as a statement of *Kanaka* sovereignty by Queen Lili‘uokalani in response to the United States’ illegal occupation of the Hawaiian kingdom.

The *Kumulipo* was originally created in honor of the birth of Kalaninuiamamao, formally known as Ka-I-i-mamao. Ka-I-i-mamao was a high chief whose birth name, Lonoikamakahiki, was changed by his grandmother at his birth (Lili‘uokalani). His new name was intended to denote his royal lineage and to serve as an acknowledgment of the gods. Queen Lili‘uokalani prefaces her translation of the *Kumulipo* with this history, including an explanation of the royal, spiritual, and ancestral significance of the text in relation to Ka-I-i-mamao. She also notes that this ancient prayer of creation, the *Kumulipo*, would be passed on through oral storytelling to Ka-I-i-mamao’s daughter Alapai Wahine, who would further pass the story along for generations. This historical foregrounding is essential to Lili‘uokalani’s translation, seeing as “the genealogy of the Land, the Gods, Chiefs, and people intertwine with one another, and with all the myriad aspects of the universe” (Trask 2). That is, Ka-I-i-mamao is not just the son of two parents, but the descendant of every creation and entity that preceded his birth, which the *Kumulipo* goes on to detail. Moreover, it recognizes that his offspring have inherited that same ancestry, just as they inherited the stories of those who came before.

have engaged in these conversations in their own texts include Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui, “Mana, Leo (Breath, Spirit, Voice): Kanaka Maoli Empowerment through Literature;” Joyce Pualani Warren, “Theorizing Pō: Embodied Cosmogony and Polynesian National Narrative;” and Brandy Nālani McDougall, “Mo‘okū‘auhau versus Colonial Entitlement in English Translations of the Kumulipo.” These works discuss the importance of the *Kumulipo* in *Kanaka* studies and culture, emphasizing various aspects of the *Kumulipo* and of *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i*. In my own work, I want to establish how the *Kumulipo* informs *Kanaka* relationships with *‘āina*, engaging with the work of these and other scholars.

This detailed account of lineage is one means by which the *Kumulipo* is an exemplary demonstration of oral storytelling as an accurate historical record-keeper. That is, particular names, dates, and chronologies have been memorized, recited, and passed down for generations by way of oral storytelling. This is essential to understand as we engage with *Kanaka* knowledge and its embodiment in non-Western forms. This knowledge is no less legitimate or accurate because it has not historically been written down. Queen Lili‘uokalani substantiates this claim by highlighting the origins and circulation of the *Kumulipo* prior to her translative work. In so doing, Lili‘uokalani rightfully characterizes the text as a legitimate historical record by documenting the names of figures who were involved in the genealogy’s first telling and dedication. This is a vital distinction when contextualizing the *Kumulipo* in the modern-day, Western tradition of literature, which often discounts oral storytelling as unreliable.

In fact, in his collection of essays *The Truth About Stories*, Indigenous scholar Thomas King argues that, “If we stopped telling the stories or reading the books, we would discover that neglect is as powerful an agent as war and fire” (King 98). King astutely acknowledges that the preservation of a culture relies in large part on the continued telling of its stories, whether they are written or spoken. Neither is more essential or correct, but both are imperative to understanding the history, values, and identity of any given culture. To cease the repetition of a culture’s stories, or to cease the manner in which those stories have historically been passed down, would be an act of neglect against said culture, thereby contributing to its erasure. Particularly when examining a genealogy such as the *Kumulipo*, the distinction of oral storytelling as a reliable historical medium is essential in marking the text as a record, and not as a fable.

Queen Lili‘uokalani translated the *Kumulipo* so that it would survive into modernity, but she was also sure to explain in her introduction that its origins and survival have been products of a long-standing tradition of oral storytelling. By situating the text as an outcome of successful *Kanaka* storytelling practices, Queen Lili‘uokalani characterizes the text and *Kanaka* culture as historically legitimate, rebuking popular notions about Western forms of record-keeping as the only correct accounts of history.

A Close Reading

The structure of the *Kumulipo*, in its entirety as well as in its individual stanzas, tells us a great deal about *Kanaka* land relations. It is divided into two major sections, or, *wā*. While *wā* designates certain sections of the work, it also means “space,” “time,” and “era” in *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i*. In other words, the structural division of the *Kumulipo* is itself a chronologizing tool, and an especially useful mnemonic device for oral storytellers. The first of these two *wā* is representative of the generative darkness known as *Pō*, a time during which non-human life forms were created. The second *wā*, called *Ao*, is the generative period during which the first humans are created, and it is during this latter half that gods and light are introduced. These periods of darkness and light can be associated with “night” and “day,” respectively. In *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i*, the word *Pō* has many other meanings besides “night,” including “a revelation from the gods [as in dreams or omens],” “to stay in the dark; ignorance,” and “the realm of the gods,” to name only a few of its many definitions (Hawaiian Electronic Library). From this, we can gather that the generative darkness of *Pō* is entirely separate from humankind, it being “the realm of the gods,” its darkness conducive to human “ignorance” in all of the

divine wisdom that it conceals. Contrarily, *Ao*, the latter half of the *Kumulipo*, translates to “enlightened,” “World, earth, realm,” and “to grow.” Whereas the first half of the genealogy precedes the creation of humankind and highlights an ignorance, the second half is complementary to this darkness in its introduction of light and awareness. It is during this second half of the *Kumulipo* that humankind is created, at which point we come to grow aware of our existence and of the generative powers from which we derived.

The particular order in which life forms are created is significant in that animals, plants, and all other nonhuman life forms are born before man. In *Kanaka* tradition, “...first-born are always hakus (superiors, lords)” (Tenth Era). Therefore, the positing of man as the younger sibling to nonhuman creations suggests that man owes a certain degree of reverence to animals, ‘*āina*, and other nonhuman entities. Just as younger siblings are expected to respect their elder human siblings in *Kanaka* culture, so they are expected to revere their nonhuman siblings. The *Kumulipo*’s structure is demonstrative of why *Kānaka Maoli* so vehemently revere ‘*āina*, seeing as it fills this role of man’s respected elder. Moreover, this dynamic depicts humankind as the relative, or sibling, of such creations as ‘*āina*, further constructing a framework wherein reverence and love are demanded by the intimate relationship shared between *Kānaka Maoli* and our land.

Consisting of 2102 lines and divided into sixteen sections, or “eras,” the *Kumulipo* is organized according to a historical timeline. It is not organized by chapters or characters; rather, it responsibly traces Hawaiian cosmogony, and the relationships that structure it, in a chronological, orderly fashion. This connection to one’s

predecessors is both intensely spiritual and somewhat political. That is, while all *Kānaka Maoli* share the origins that are chronicled in the first *wā* of the *Kumulipo*, an individual will inherit the *mana*, or spiritual energy, that is unique to their individual *mo'okū'auhau* (familial genealogy). One inherits certain biological features from their family, but they also inherit their family's energies, for better or worse. This reveals just how deeply ingrained *Kanaka* identity is with the original generative powers. One's *mana* marks one's connection with the divine, as well as that with all of one's ancestors, including but not limited to human lifeforms. In essence, many *Kānaka Maoli* base their identities off of their inherited genealogies. Thus, *Kānaka Maoli* regard their ancestors, human or otherwise, with the utmost respect, including the *'āina* from which they have descended.

The way in which this genealogy is parsed, by way of eras, is essential for memorization, seeing as the *Kumulipo* was passed down through generations by way of oral storytelling. Moreover, much of the *Kumulipo* employs a repetitive structure which details how various elements are created and interrelated. Such couplets as “Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,/ The [insert creature] was born and lived in the sea;” are repeated at the start of verses 3-14 in the First Era of the work (Lili'uokalani). Similar to how the chronological organization of the work serves as a mnemonic device, so too does this repetition. Furthermore, the repetition of this designation places various creations as equal to one another, each emerging from the same generative source, and none marked as favored by its creator. This is in direct contrast to the Christian theology which marks God's creations as “good,” until man is created, making His creations “very good” (Genesis 1: 25-31). In Hawaiian cosmogony, every creation is related to

each other, and none is superior in value to the other. The repetitive form of the *Kumulipo* serves to enforce this, seeing as each creation is acknowledged as derivative of the same source, and in the same fashion. In turn, *Kānaka Maoli* regard ‘*āina* and animals as their equal counterparts, not as inferior beings or commodities.

While the repetition of the aforementioned couplet is consistent throughout the First Era, the first two verses of the Era are distinct in their poetic narration. Specifically, the First Verse of the First Era begins by marking the story’s events as occurring “[a]t the time when the heavens turned and changed...” (I. I. 2) This cosmogony does not explain the creation of these “heavens,” nor that of the planets that it subsequently mentions. Rather, it is more focused on accounting for the spiritual and ancestral origins of life. Specifically, the source accredited with Earth’s genesis is “the slime which established the earth/ The source of deepest darkness” (I. I. 6-7). Across any and all translations of the *Kumulipo*, the creator of all life is consistently denoted as this “slime,” which is a designation entirely unique to this particular cosmogony. This generative slime does not immediately create life; rather, it is “[t]he source of deepest darkness,” from which “was night born” (I. I. 11). This tradition is also an obvious departure from monotheistic theories of creationism. None of the generative powers cited in the *Kumulipo* are gendered or anthropomorphized, which is in direct contrast to those defining elements of monotheistic theology that often depict creators as having human-like characteristics or singular identities. In this, the *Kumulipo* demonstrates that man is neither ruler nor influencer over any other life forms. As a consequence, man is once again characterized as equal in power and value to such creations as animals and ‘*āina*. Moreover, the acknowledgment of a generative spirit, or element, as the primary

source of creation denies the theory of a singular deity, which is representative of how *Kanaka* identity is inherited and communal rather than solely based on the individual. This means of identification is in fact evidenced by the deeply-rooted *Kanaka* tradition of tracing one's inheritance through the shared genealogy that is the First Era of the *Kumulipo*.

The darkness that is detailed in the First Verse of the First Era is known as *Pō*, or the generative darkness from which all life is subsequently sourced (Warren). Ascribing powers of creation to a “darkness” is further demonstrative of the *Kanaka* departure from notions of monotheism, and of the illimitable cosmological relationship that is believed to bind together all of creation in this mythology. The *mele* goes on to detail the birth of two generative entities in its second verse: “Kumulipo was born in the night, a male./ Poele was born in the night, a female” (I. II. 1-2). To categorize these entities in familiar terms, both “Kumulipo” and “Poele” are essentially divine, nonhuman energies. These energies are responsible for the creation of those beings that are subsequently listed in this second verse. Although they are generative powers, it is important that one does not mistake the gendering of these two entities as an anthropomorphizing move. Rather, this labelling of “male” and “female” complements can be interpreted as a means to instill a sense of balance between generative, cosmological energies. That is, the two energies are equal and opposite one another, allowing their partnership to create whole beings. This pairing of generative male and female energies is consistently repeated at the beginning of each verse throughout the *mele*'s First Era, each pairing posed as the “parents” of the creations listed thereafter. It

is thus evident that all creations are siblings born from the same “parents,” regardless of whether those siblings are of the same species.

After the second verse introduces generative parents Kumulipo and Poele, their first creation, “[a] coral insect,” is listed, which is itself a generative agent “from which was born perforated coral” (I. II. 3). This pattern, wherein each new line cites a new creation and its offspring, continues throughout this and subsequent verses: “The Papaua was born, the Olepe was its offspring (pearl and oyster)” (I. II. 14). This pattern takes the consistent form of a single line of text for each act of creation and reproduction, thereby suggesting that each organism is of equal value to one another. Whether the second verse is describing a divine spirit or an oyster, it consistently adheres to this form, visually and temporally demonstrating the *Kanaka* ideal that all living organisms possess their own beingness and are inherently equal in worth. Furthermore, the consistent designation of various creatures as having or being “offspring” is consistent with the genealogical intention and voice of the *Kumulipo*.

In essence, the *Kumulipo* is a thoroughly detailed, far-spanning demonstration of just how closely humans are in relationship with nonhuman life. For example, the Third Verse of the First Era features a structure that is repeated in several of the subsequent verses, wherein the first and last three lines remain the same in each stanza: “Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,/ The [creature] was born and lived in the sea,” followed by, “A night of flight by noises/ Through a channel; water is life to fish;/ So the gods may enter, but not man” (Lili‘uokalani). This repetition serves a dual purpose: as a mnemonic device for remembrance and as a structural element to emphasize the significance of the repeated themes. The introductory line of each of these verses is

originally written as, “O kane ia Wai‘ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai‘olola” (Kalākaua). This line features the words “kane” and “wahine,” meaning “man” and “woman,” respectively. This theme of gendered pairs remains consistent throughout the *Kumulipo*, and its repetition serves once again to establish the generative nature of this genealogical chant. Whereas the gendered pair Kumulipo and Poele were previously read as nonhuman entities, the use of “Man” and “Woman” at this moment in the *mele* reads as more distinctly human, seeing as the terms “Kane” and “Wahine” are used in the original ‘*Ōlelo Hawai‘i* telling of the story. Therefore, the denotation of “Man” and “Woman” at this moment in the text can be read as referents to humans, rather than to amorphous, gendered entities. By opening each verse with the line, “Man by Waiololi, woman by Waiolola,” or “Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream,” this section situates men and women as connected to land by bodies of water. In doing so, this section reveals how inextricably linked *Kanaka* are to ‘*āina*. In fact, this phrasing posits both man and woman as “streams,” which, in the natural world, come together to contribute to one singular body of water. Considering that the verses begin with this designation, and are followed by the listing of new creations, the phrase “Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream” is symbolic of the original generative powers uniting to form one creation. This introductory line is repeated for twelve verses, demonstrating the importance of balance between man and woman, as well as that of the connection that binds together *Kanaka* and ‘*āina*.

Moreover, the repeated closing lines of each of these twelve verses is similarly essential in defining the themes of the *Kumulipo* and the culture that it represents. According to Queen Lili‘uokalani’s translation, the closing lines read, “A night of flight

by noises/ Through a channel; water is life to trees;/ So the gods may enter, but not man” (I. III. 4-6). These three lines embody the spiritual character of ‘*āina* in accordance with *Kanaka* culture, which acknowledges ‘*āina* as a living and sacred entity. This closing phrase also suggests the connection that is shared by all earthly creations, seeing as “water is life to trees,” and that the giving of life is facilitated “[t]hrough a channel.” That is, all of the land is interconnected and in a divinely-created, inextricable relationship. Humanity, rendered in the gendered language of the time as “man,” is one facet of this relationship, but the *Kumulipo* is sure to clarify that humans are neither the creators of nor overseers to the other entities involved: “So the gods may enter, but not man.” The dynamics of land relations are sacred in their limited accessibility by “the gods.” This defiance of entrance to humankind reminds us that the gods create all life forms, each equally valuable and with equivalent power. Essentially, if *Kanaka* cosmogony were to be organized into a hierarchy of power, there would be only two scaffolds: first, the gods, and second, all other beings.

Given that ancestors are sacred and revered in *Kanaka* culture, no matter what physical form they take, this *mele* demonstrates a deep respect for nonhuman life in that it designates such organisms as coral and clams as ancestors in this royal genealogy. This is particularly important to consider given the context of the political state of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i during the time at which Queen Lili‘uokalani was translating the *Kumulipo*. While Lili‘uokalani was being held prisoner, and the Hawaiian ‘*āina* was being seized by colonizers, Lili‘uokalani committed to this translational work so as to preserve “terms and allusions” regarding “the natural history of Hawaii, which might be forgotten in future years without some such history as [the *Kumulipo*] to preserve them

to posterity” (*Introduction*). In essence, Lili‘uokalani’s translation and transcription was an act of reclamation. That is, by writing down the *Kanaka* genealogy, she was documenting a historical record that evidences the history of Hawai‘i, as well as her genealogical relationship to that land which was actively in the process of being stolen by U.S. colonizers. In fact, in Queen Lili‘uokalani’s introduction to the *Kumulipo*, she calls the *mele* “nothing less than the genealogy in remote times of the late King Kalākaua...and myself” (*Introduction*). In other words, the *Kumulipo* is evidence that the land on which she was imprisoned, and which colonizers were seizing, was part of her rightful inheritance. The trees, the taro, the sand, the coconuts are her ancestors. Every living creature that inhabits the ‘*āina*, as well as the ‘*āina* itself, was and is a progenitor to Lili‘uokalani, a relative.

The colonialist seizure of the ‘*āina*, then, is a breach of a longstanding inheritance to which Lili‘uokalani and all *Kānaka Maoli* are and always have been entitled. Considering this dynamic, one can now understand how modern land seizures, over-building on Native land, or the building of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea are all modern acts of colonialism that impact more than just the Western notion of nature. These acts deny the sacred *Kanaka* history of inheritance, which posits *Kānaka Maoli* as the relatives, inheritors, and caretakers of *Kanaka* ‘*āina*, and they directly disrespect our non-human ancestors by way of their unjust possession and commodification. One *Kanaka Maoli* activist, Pua Case, has led great efforts against the installation of the TMT on Mauna Kea, and has elaborated on this transgression to *Democracy Now*: “Mauna Kea is genealogically linked to the Native people of these lands. Mauna Kea is known as our *kupuna*, our ancestor, our teacher, our protector, our

corrector and our guide" (Goodman). The dormant volcano is not just a stunning summit; it also plays all of these roles that Case astutely acknowledges. And it is also only one site of many at which the modern colonialism of *Kanaka 'āina* and *Kānaka Maoli* persists.



Fig. 2. Peaceful protestors gather to object to the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea. Photo via Caleb Jones/AP.

Protesting, educating, and persisting in *Kanaka* practices are methods of cultural resurgence and reclamation. Case's above interview is exemplary of an essential tenet in redirecting trajectories of further destruction against *Kānaka Maoli* and our beliefs and practices. The resurgence of said practices is another way to prevent their erasure. For example, *hula kahiko*, or traditional *hula*, has long been met with attempts of modification, sexualization, and erasure. Therefore, its continued practice is itself an act of defiance against colonialism, and even more so when younger generations are taught about its origins and performance. The following section elaborates on the history, modernization, and resurgence of *hula*.

CHAPTER 3 | Hula

When British colonizers first infiltrated the Hawaiian Islands, they were both fascinated and appalled by *Kanaka* culture. In fact, Protestant missionary Hiram Bingham recorded his unfavorable opinion regarding *hula* in a journal entry: “The whole arrangement and process of their old hulas were designed to promote lasciviousness [sic], and of course the practice of them could not flourish in modest communities. They had been interwoven too with their superstitions, and made subservient to the honor of their gods, and then rulers, either living or departed or deified” (Sitzer 14). This denotation of *hula* as a means “to promote lasciviousness” is only one of a myriad, culturally-biased interpretations by colonizers who were entirely unfamiliar with *Kanaka Maoli* culture.⁴ Whereas the hegemonic norms of the 19th century U.S. prioritized conservative dress and monotheistic (Christian) religion, these constructs were not familiar to *Kānaka Maoli*. Nevertheless, colonizers reacted to the different cultural practices of *Kānaka Maoli* according to how they measured up with the practices of the white American. As Sharon Linnéa writes in her novel *Princess Ka‘iulani: Hope of a Nation, Heart of a People*, “The [Protestant and Catholic] missionaries were scandalized by what they saw as the natives’ ignorance (meaning they had no written language or schools) and their partial nudity (they lived in a tropical climate and had very different standards of decency!)” (Linnéa 12). However, there is no inherently superior quality to written language; neither is nudity inherently

⁴ Such as Captain James Cook (1779) and Adelbert de Chamisso (1816). See Stone, Scott C. S., et al. *Yesterday in Hawai‘i: A Voyage Through Time*. Island Heritage Publishing, 2014 for a more detailed account.

promiscuous. These perspectives are created by a culture, and they were quickly forced upon *Kānaka Maoli* following the arrival of English Captain James Cook in 1778.

Upon Cook's arrival, he was greeted with a warm reception by the *Kānaka* people, and he was even treated to a traditional *hula* performance (Stone). While Cook reportedly enjoyed bearing witness to the performance, his ignorance to *Kanaka* culture ensures that he did not understand *hula* in the depth with which it has historically been conceived and practiced. Author of *Yesterday in Hawaii*, Scott C.S. Stone writes, "*Hula* at the time of early Western contact was a visual rendering and/or enhancement of Hawai'i's oral literature. Without knowledge of Hawai'i's language, poetic conventions, and cultural and religious traditions, it was impossible to understand and appreciate the *hula*" (28). While *hula* is a beautiful performative art which can be used for entertainment purposes, it is intricately connected to storytelling and cultural tradition at its core. Stone denotes "poetic conventions" as central in characterizing and understanding *hula*, referencing the all-important narrative component of the practice. Not only is *hula* a physical art, but it is fundamentally a means of communication through which *Kānaka Maoli* convey stories of cosmogony, genealogy, kinship, *Ali'i*, and other cultural facets. Stone continues to comment on the poetic nature of *Kanaka* storytelling, observing that "dance rendered this poetry into visual form by alluding to selected words of the text... The dancer was essentially a storyteller... conveying the text depended primarily on movement of the hands and arms" (28). Each of the *hula* dancer's movements are either mimetic of, or gestures toward, the text that is sung or chanted in tandem with the dance. This is an essential tenet in understanding the cultural, historical, and literary value of *hula* as a form in that it reveals how the dance

has historically acted as a storytelling--and consequently record-keeping--device. That is, the records, histories, and traditions of *Kānaka Maoli* were passed down through such oral storytelling tactics and performance modes as *hula*, and were therefore essential in the cultural makeup of the *Kānaka* people. The dance is often misconstrued as a universal "welcome" by visitors who have historically perceived the sacred tradition as catered entertainment. In truth, *hula* was and continues to be a valuable device for storytelling, communication, cultural history, and community memory.

Unfortunately, the Euro-American perception of *hula* gained traction as Christian religion gained popularity among *Kānaka Maoli* in the late 19th century. In fact, Queen Ka‘ahumanu, wife of Kamehameha I, converted to Christianity and forbade *hula* in 1830 (Stone 36). This decision led to the underground practice of *hula*, and to its otherwise staged and “missionary-approved” performance, which included conservative costumes.

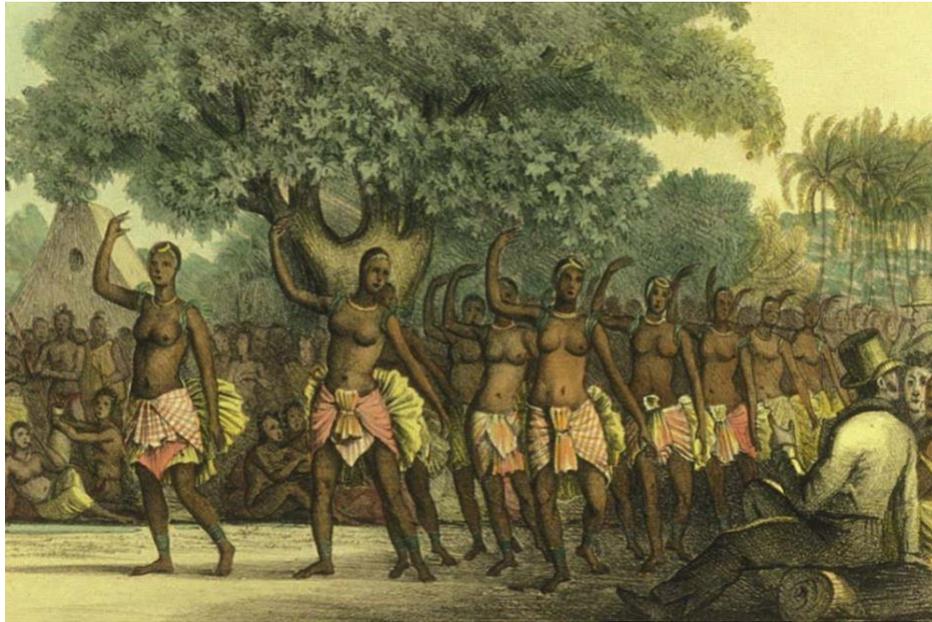


Fig. 3. Ludwig Choris's interpretation of traditional hula garb, prior to missionary invasion (Young).



Fig. 4. More conservative, "missionary-approved" wear for hula dancers. Photograph by J.J. Williams (c. 1885). ("History of Hula in Hawaii").

This dictation over what dancers wore, where they danced, and how they danced is an obvious repression of *Kanaka* culture. In modern times, *hula* practice is still repressed, but by antithetical measures. Rather than restricting costumes to more conservative, missionary-approved styles, modern tourism now situates *hula* as an almost trivially-commodified, and often over-sexualized demonstration of the “paradise” ideology that tourists so ravenously consume. Haunani-Kay Trask describes this characterization in her work *From a Native Daughter*: “In the hotel version of the *hula*, the sacredness of the dance has completely evaporated, while the athleticism and sexual expression have been packaged like ornaments” (144). Whereas the original practice of *hula* was performed ceremonially in order to share and preserve histories, prayers, *meles* (chants), and other sacred texts, modern popular *hula* is often done in a purely secular and performative manner, often rendered as a spectacle of welcome or greeting for tourist consumption.

Modernization & Resurgence

In understanding how *hula* has come to be regarded as a tourist-greeting, one must consider the fundamental tenets that have directed its performance along this trajectory. While individual dancers enact this “hotel version” of the traditional dance, it must be noted that they are acting within a deeply-embedded structure of colonialism. Hawaiian tourism, which is aimed at the commodification of the idea of “paradise,” exploits *Kānaka* people, practices, lands, and identities for a profit. While one might feel averse to this structure and its unethical practices, one may not have the financial or social mobility to actively resist, deny, or opt out of such relationships. That is, many

Kānaka Maoli work within the tourist industry because of a need for income and the availability of jobs within that particular market, needs that are themselves the result of ongoing settler colonial dispossession, oppression, and marginalization. As Trask puts it, “In the end, the entire employment scene is shaped by tourism.” As a consequence, “[r]efusing to contribute to the commercialization of one’s culture becomes a peripheral concern when unemployment looms” (145). While this evolution of *hula* is predominant in its global perception, a significant number of persons continue to practice traditional *hula*, or *hula kahiko*. Some practitioners of this more traditional form might attend hula school, known as *hula halau*. In these schools, students learn traditional moves, regalia, behaviors, beliefs, and *meles*.

This modern revival of *hula kahiko* is in fact its second resurgence, the first of which occurred at the death of Ka‘ahumanu in 1832. Given her 1830 verdict which outlawed the public practice of *hula*, *Kānaka Maoli* gave a new life to *hula* as Ka‘ahumanu’s life drew to an end. Moreover, King Kalākaua succeeded Ka‘ahumanu in 1874, and he was an impassioned proponent of the revitalization of *Kanaka* culture. One staple aspect of this culture was, and is still, *hula*. Not only is *hula* essential to *Kanaka* culture as a site for cultural, historical, and genealogical knowledge; it is also wholly representative of the *Kānaka Maoli* departure from Western tradition in its form. Its oral and physical recitation is subversive in the face of Euro-American religious, literary, and historical accounts that have long been recorded in print. *Hula* narratives have survived for generations by way of orality and movement, thereby defying any assumption that print is necessary for a text's survival. Moreover, *hula* challenges the very notion of what constitutes a genre, itself a subcategory of literature which exists in

physical and oral form. Therefore, by way of its form, content, and revival, *hula* defies Euro-American traditions and their colonizing imperatives to deny or delegitimize alternative practices of articulating histories and relationships to place as legitimate acts of sovereignty and resistance.

In its modern resurgence, *hula* has come to be regarded as having two distinct forms: *hula kahiko* and *hula auana*. Indeed, *hula kahiko* is the more traditional and ceremonial style, whereas *hula auana* is the more modern, non-ceremonial variation that tourists often enjoy at *luaus*. While this is an important distinction, there are a great deal more variations of *hula* than are illuminated by this polarizing separation of “modern” from “traditional.” Moreover, the differences between *hula kahiko* and *hula auana* expand beyond temporal designations. For example, *Ai kahiko* translates to “in the ancient style,” while *auana* roughly translates to “to wander.” While the former translation quite clearly communicates the earlier origins of *hula kahiko*, the latter conveys the stylistic difference of *hula auana*, which consists of less rigid movements than does *kahiko*. Typically, the movements of *hula auana* are more fluid, so dancers’ hands, hips, and feet appear as though they are “wandering” about in more free-flowing gestures, hence the dance’s name (“The History of Hula”). Additionally, the two are distinct in that the more common *hula auana* features the more melodic music of the ‘ukulele and the steel guitar, while *hula kahiko* is typically accompanied by percussive instruments and melismatic chanting.

While these are the two prominent categories of *hula*, myriad other stylistic variants exist and thrive still today. Such variants include the *hula ‘ai ha ‘a*, a high energy dance that requires dancers to maintain a low-to-the-ground stance,

accompanied by chanting ("Hula"). Another form is the sacred *'Aiha 'a Pele* dance, which is ritualistic in honoring the volcanic powers of Hawai'i. Because this particular variation is practiced in honor of Hawai'i's volcanoes, dancers are expected to sweat as if they were approaching a volcano's edge. Therefore, the choreography of this style is quite demanding, featuring more rigid movements and greater muscular exertion than others. In order to expand on this style, I analyze its performance, as demonstrated by the folks at Unukupukupu of Hilo, Hawai'i. Unukupukupu is a traditional Hula school, or *Hālau Hula*, wherein students learn about the history, purpose, etiquette, and execution of *hula*. The class is taught by Dr. Taupōuri Tangarō, who prefaces the performance of this ceremonial dance with the following speech, which I reproduce at length:

We're born from chaos. When the Universe began to form itself, and it was very chaotic, we were born from that. We descended from the stars, upon the Earth. From the chaos comes linearity: how to live in kinship with your environment. From the chaos and the birth of our communities, we found that over the historical timeline, dreaming was always something that was risked from the ancient times. So, all of our stories tell us to keep dreaming. Don't forget to dream, and pray that when you wake up, your dreams are right by your side... (Unukupukupu Halau Hula 06:53-07:38)

As Tangarō so eloquently depicts it here, *hula* is as much a cosmological and genealogical storytelling device as is the *Kumulipo*. That is, he first notes how the movements and recitations of the dance expresses that "We're born from chaos." Similarly, the *Kumulipo* details in spoken and written words that humans derived from a chaotic, generative slime. Moreover, Tangarō asserts that "We descended from the stars," which the *Kumulipo* confirms by telling us that stars are *ali'i*, or ancestors who

were ruling chiefs. The consistencies between the intention and material of both the *Kumulipo* and *hula* are extensive, which reveals how essential both forms are in preserving and representing *Kanaka* culture. Furthermore, these consistencies demonstrate the importance of the topics on which both mediums focus: inheritance, family, cosmogony, reverence, connection to life forces outside of the self, to name a few. Another topic that is central to *Kanaka* identity is the relationship between *Kānaka Maoli* and their environment. Specifically, Dr. Tangarō suggests that our history and origins tell us “how to live in kinship with your environment,” which he insists will subsequently be demonstrated by the Unukupukupu Hālau Hula. Once again, this topic is central among various mediums of *Kanaka* storytelling, revealing its persistent importance as a piece of the *Kanaka* identity. What Dr. Tangarō herein calls “kinship with your environment” is what lies at the heart of the *Kumulipo*, which details our familial relationship with the *‘āina*, and which informs us about why and how we should honor that relationship.

He then goes on to tell the audience that the dancers will be “recreating the chaos with a drum, the heartbeat of our Mother, and the *Pū*, the vibrations of our Sky Father” (7:49-7:57). He remarks that, “For us, the drum is our Mother Earth and the *Pū* that we send out...is what calls all the elements of the sky to be present. And when the father and the mother is present, then we may be born” (7:58-8:08). This is yet another reminder that this dance is communicative of our cosmogony and inheritance, and that it is meant to honor our origins as *Kānaka Maoli*. Dr. Tangarō then prefaces the dance by commenting on the purpose of this particular variation:

The dancers will dance a set that honors our volcanoes. And the idea is to dance very hard so they begin to sweat. If you go to a lava flow and you're not sweating, something's wrong with your body. You should be sweating. You're at the edge of life and death and you should be sweating. And so, we ritualize that. We bring the water from our inner bodies through the dance and we wet the floor, and in doing that we feed this indigenous landscape here (8:26-8:58).

Tangarō then comments on the effect of the temple drums, explaining that the drum dances express “how it is that we are going to be in kinship with our environment. These stories that come through the dances tell us exactly what to do, what not to do, and how to evolve” (9:10-9:23). Tangarō herein conveys that *hula* communicates essential *Kanaka* knowledge in its music and choreography. More specifically, that knowledge often pertains to *Kanaka* land relations, or how to “be in kinship with our environment.” This reveals just how fundamental mankind’s relationship with *‘āina* is to *Kanaka* identity, seeing as *‘āina* is part of our genealogy, our relations, responsibilities, and obligations that attend them, and not simply a resource for human exploitation.

This description of *‘aiha ‘a pele*, the dance that honors volcanic powers, reveals just how integrated the practice of *hula* is with the inspiration for each variation. Dances are not simply conceived with an inspiring idea and executed in an abstract fashion. Rather, each dance is deeply connected to a particular history, and every word, every action of a dance is enacted in order to honor its specific historical inspiration. No part of *hula kahiko* is nonessential or without meaning. The execution of this particular version of *‘aiha ‘a pele*, performed by the Unukupukupu Hālau Hula, is exemplary of this dedication to honoring *Kanaka* history.



Fig. 5. A screenshot from “Unukupukupu Halau Hula” video, posted to YouTube by Library of Congress.

Notice the body language of the dancers in this featured screenshot: raised arms with upward-facing palms and faces, expressing communication with the gods above. The dancers’ knees are bent so that they are nearer the ground, indicative of physical and spiritual proximity with the *‘āina*. Further emphasizing this “kinship with the environment,” the dancers’ bare feet are planted firmly on the ground to connect with the *‘āina*. Dr. Taupōuri Tangarō explains this connection in his introduction: “We bring the water from our inner bodies through the dance and we wet the floor, and in doing that we feed this indigenous landscape here.” This transfer of energy and sweat from dancer to dance floor is one essential means by which this dance communicates kinship with the environment and proximity to volcanic powers. Moreover, one must keep in mind that this dance would typically be executed on *‘āina*, rather than on a wooden

floor, as is seen in this particular video. When the dance is indeed performed on the land, the dancers' sweat more directly “feed[s]” into the physical “indigenous landscape,” as well as the social and cultural landscapes to which Dr. Tangarō alludes. However, its performance is nonetheless symbolic of grounded *Kanaka* relationships with the land when it is demonstrated indoors. The conception of this dance and its historical, ceremonial performance is always done in homage to this relationship, so its significance persists regardless of setting.

Another means by which reverence toward land, or *‘āina*, is expressed in this dance is through the playing of *Pū*, or conch shells. The following is a screenshot of the *Unukupukupu* dancers summoning the elements of the sky by playing the *Pū*:



Fig. 6. A screenshot from “Unukupukupu Halau Hula” video, posted to YouTube by Library of Congress.

The particular sound that the *Pū* emits is akin to that of a trumpet, and it is meant to convey “the vibrations of our Sky Father.” This is one ceremonial piece of this dance, seeing as the acknowledgment and summoning of Mother Earth (Papa) and Sky Father (Wakea) signals a beginning--in terms of both cosmogony and choreography. As Dr. Tangarō states, “when the father and the mother is present, then we may be born.” This dance herein reveals yet another distinct parallel to the *Kumulipo*, which begins with a detailed account of the origins of Papa and Wakea, before chronicling the birth of subsequent creations. The dance begins with the drums that summon the mother, and the *Pū* that summons the father, alluding to that same generative, life-giving pair. As a result, the forces and the dancers together breathe physical and ceremonial life into the dance.

This performance persists for forty minutes, demanding an incredible level of tact, physical exertion, and memorization from the dancers. I am particularly interested in expanding on one of Dr. Tangarō’s remarks, in which he notes that the drum dances explain “how it is that we are going to be in kinship with our environment. These stories that come through the dances tell us exactly what to do, what not to do, and how to evolve.” This quote reveals the purpose and origin of *hula*. It is not simply aesthetic, nor is it overtly sexual, nor was it created strictly as entertainment for audience enjoyment. *Hula*, at its core, is an expression of relationship. It is a storytelling vehicle, a means by which *Kānaka Maoli* communicate with our ancestors, keeping in mind that our ancestors are not only human, but also the *taro* plant, the ocean, the stars, ferns, and flowers. This designation is what Dr. Tangarō alludes to when he suggests that the dance explains how to “be in kinship with our environment.” This is essential to

understand when investigating the value and purpose of ceremonial *hula*, no matter the particular style that is under analysis.

As a final example of the sacred, spiritual nature of *hula*, let us turn to the concluding moments of this Unukupukupu Hālau Hula performance.

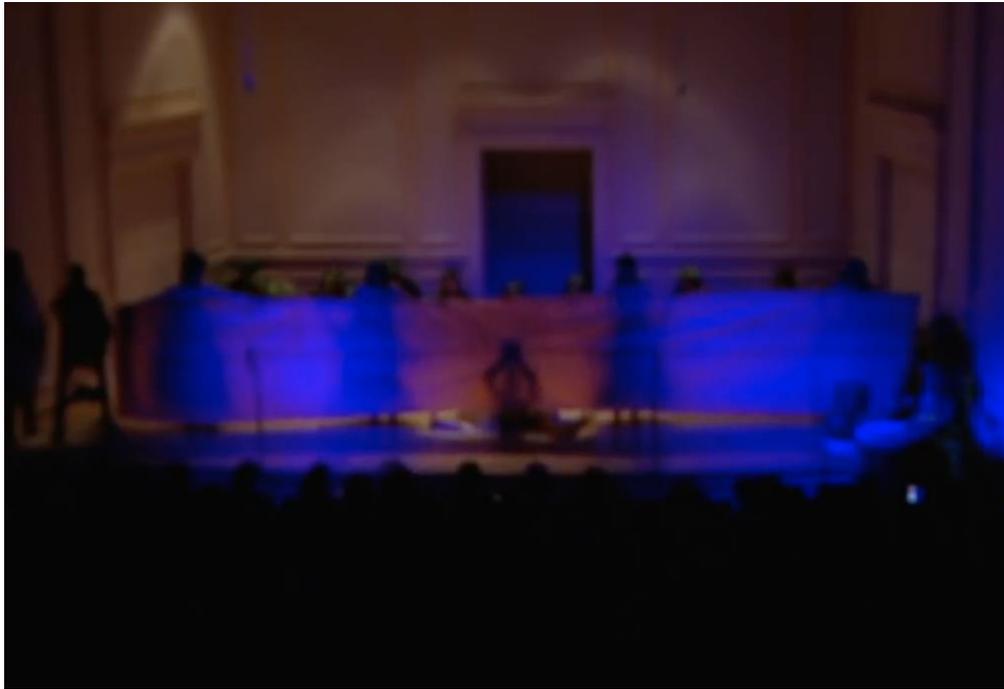


Fig. 7. A screenshot from “Unukupukupu Halau Hula” video, posted to YouTube by Library of Congress

In the final section of their dance, the *Unukupukupu* students hold up a sheet, as seen above, in order to create a silhouette of their *kumu hula*, Taupōuri Tangarō. This demonstration is done to emulate “the veil that separates the known from the unknown, the conscious from the unconscious,” and to portray the role that *hula* dancers fill as storytellers and representatives of *Kanaka* culture, navigating the space between what is and is not known by others (9:44-9:48). In fact, Tangarō explicitly states that the role of *hula* dancers is “to go between the world of the known and the unknown, and live

amongst [their] communities” (9:56-10:01). Therefore, this symbolic gesture of the *kumu hula*’s silhouette, guarded by the “veil” of a sheet, represents the sacredness of the *hula*, as well as the responsibility that each dancer has in fulfilling their designated roles as storytellers and knowledge-bearers.

In this section, Tangarō also explains that this dance is meant to “encourage dreaming” (9:34-9:36). The altered state of a dreaming, sleeping brain is illustrated by the separation of a sheet as “the veil that separates...the conscious from the unconscious.” The subtle and highly intentional movements of the dancer whose silhouette is visible represent the dream itself. As I mentioned earlier, Tangarō remarks that “dreaming was always something that was risked from the ancient times. So, all of our stories tell us to keep dreaming. Don’t forget to dream, and pray that when you wake up, your dreams are right by your side...” In his suggestion that dreaming has long been “risked” by *hula* dancers, Tangarō is likely alluding to the vulnerability that is required of the dancers-- and of many *Kānaka Maoli* when we dream. As Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua writes in “Dreaming is an Everyday Act of Resurgence,” “...dreaming opens portals to different ways of being and perceiving, ways to which we do not have immediate access when we are awake” (84). Therefore, to dream is to allow oneself to potentially go between the threshold that separates the living and the dead, the known and the unknown, and other such domains to which we do not typically have conscious access. This may be a harrowing endeavor, hence Tangarō’s description of dreaming as a risk. However, the wisdom that is to be gained from these unconscious insights can be immense, which is why Tangarō suggests, “pray that when you wake up, your dreams are right by your side...”

While Tangarō's wisdom is intended for all, it is especially relevant for *hula* dancers, seeing as they are expected to demonstrate higher consciousness as inheritors and storytellers of sacred traditions. Seeing as *hula* often honors deities and ancestors, and tells of our cosmogony and genealogy, it is indeed a sacred practice. Because of this, the dancers are asked to be alert, aware, and in tune with the messages that they uncover as their studies, dreams, and dances take them beyond the veil of what is known. Once again, Tangarō herein emphasizes the sacredness, as well as the heightened consciousness, that is so fundamental to the practice and choreography of *hula*. Not only is *hula* a physical practice, but it is also mental, spiritual, and emotional.

This cultural understanding of the medium can be uncovered through such scholarly research as my own; however, it can also be cultivated through an education at a hula school, or, a *halau hula*. Many *Kānaka Maoli*, such as the aforementioned dancers from the Unukupukupu Halau Hula, attend these schools in order to learn choreography, but also to be trained in the ways of a traditional *hula* dancer. This training means an education in etiquette and self-conduct, rituals, diet, exercise, and prayers. Inspired by a long-standing tradition, students at a *halau hula* will learn about Laka, the goddess who “is dancing through the dancer,” as well as other deities that inspire a host of other dances ("The Hawaiian Electronic Library"). Moreover, some of the more traditional rules that students might be expected to follow include the limiting of sugar intake, the forbidding of cutting one's hair or nails, sexual abstinence, no back-talk toward instructors, and strict upkeep with personal hygiene. These are only a handful of guidelines that *hula* students would be expected to uphold in accordance with traditional rules. Some schools cling to these mandates, called *kapu*, more closely

than others, but every *halau hula* enforces some variant of these guidelines. The head teacher, or *kumu hula*, of each class will decide which rules and rituals will be upheld. Not only would students elect to uphold their instructor's *kapu* to demonstrate obedience toward their *kumu hula*, but also to demonstrate reverence to the *hula* gods. By honoring the *kapu*, students position themselves as likely recipients of blessings from such *hula* goddesses as *Laka*. *Hula* dancers who uphold the *kapu* enforced by their *kumu hula* are believed to receive blessings of enhanced talent and improved memory.

In large part, *halau hula* are responsible for the modern resurgence and survival of traditional *hula*, and this schooling continues to be popular among *Kānaka Maoli* still today. A student of *halau hula* will be well-informed on the cosmogony, culture, and history of Hawai'i. Therefore, this schooling is essential to the perseverance of cultural pride and to the survival of Native narratives. In this modern age of consumerism, which often attempts to commodify and sexualize the ceremonial *hula* tradition, *halau hula* are imperative to the resurgence of *Kanaka* culture. The popular *hula auana* is neither immoral nor inferior as far as stylistic variants are concerned; however, it is a byproduct of tourism, and one whose narrative function is often lost on uninformed--or perhaps uninterested--tourists. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with attending a more tourist-aimed performance of *hula*; after all, many of those participating are *Kānaka Maoli* and likely use such venues for economic support and security. It is to assert, however, that the popular, modern understanding of *hula* as the horizon of knowledge and experience is entirely lacking. This can be astutely expressed by Taupōuri Tangarō as he explains the role of *hula* dancers: "Our job is not to entertain, you see. Our job is to go between the world of the known and the unknown,

and live amongst our communities” (Unukupukupu Halau Hula 9:50-10:01). A performance of *hula* is most always aesthetically pleasing, but the beauty of the dance extends far beyond its visually-striking components, and deep into the cultural significance of its resurgence.

Hula is one significant means by which *Kanaka* culture survives still today. Scholarly research like my own is another important aspect of this survival, but it is certainly not more relevant nor more important because it is a product of academia. I argue that *hula* is of equal importance to the survival and resurgence of *Kanaka* culture, seeing as it is a practice that calls upon a deeply-entrenched relationship with the history and nuances of Hawai‘i. Similarly, academia calls upon scholars to investigate and enter into conversations surrounding the historical and present-day realities of Native culture. Therefore, scholarly work is complementary to other on-the-ground forms of resurgence such as *hula*. Both call for integration with *Kanaka* culture, and both are essential to the modern resurgence and preservation of *Kanaka* culture. As Kīhei de Silva writes in *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, “The everyday-ness of resurgence requires us ‘ōiwi [indigenous persons] to persist- to continue to do, say, grow, and dance that which our lāhui [nation] always has” (Silva 19). Engaging with literature about *Kanaka* culture can be conducive to bountiful insights, as can the persistence of pre-colonialist practices like *hula*. Ultimately, it is because of folks who “continue to do, say, grow, and dance that which our lāhui always has,” that Hawai‘i will refuse to be swallowed up by colonialist erasure. While Dr. Tangarō continues to dance and teach *hula kahiko*, Queen Lili‘uokalani chose to translate the *Kumulipo* so that our genealogy survives into modernity. Neither act of resurgence is more Hawaiian, nor more impactful; rather,

each act of resurgence builds upon each other as we continually strive to preserve and build *Kanaka* culture.

These acts of preservation are always combating the threat of erasure, which Kīhei de Silva explains: “‘Hula’, ‘Aloha’, and the Hawaiian ‘Lei’ have suffered much co-optation and attempted assimilation at the hands of colonizers and capitalists. Our continued survival as *kānaka maoli* will depend on our youth’s willingness and ability to see through the false reflections of ourselves that the colonizer’s mirror shows us, and on their stubbornness in maintaining our connections with land *lāhui* cherished by our people’s true practices and attitudes” (19). In accordance with the historical agenda of colonialism, the sexualization and commodification of *Kanaka* culture will persist. In response, we, too, must persist in our efforts to reject the perversion of the practices and traditions that define *Kānaka Maoli*. If *Kanaka* practices like *hula* are not preserved, they become subject to trivialization as tourist commodities. This, in turn, furthers ideas that suggest *Kānaka Maoli* are commodities, ourselves; subjects to be exploited and modulated according to the wants of a dominant discourse. In a modern, diasporic existence, efforts of preservation may materialize in the attendance of lectures by *Kanaka* scholars, the reading of *Kanaka* texts, or the practice of *hula*, to name only a few means of cultural resurgence. In the next chapter, I explore another avenue for *Kānaka Maoli* resistance, revitalization, and resurgence: the oral tradition.

CHAPTER 4 | Oral Storytelling

In previous sections of my research, I have demonstrated how the practice of oral recitation is essential to the preservation and resurgence of *Kanaka* culture. Just as the genealogy of the *Kumulipo* was preserved for centuries by means of memorization and oral recitation, so too were many *hula* dances and *meles*. Prior to the arrival of Captain James Cook in 1778, *Kānaka Maoli* primarily recorded their stories by such means of oral storytelling and performance. It has always been a fundamental facet in this and other Native cultures (King). However, as LeAnne Howe observes in her article “Tribalography: The Power of Natives Stories” (1999), “In the western intellectual tradition, the act of writing stories has been given hegemony over the act of telling stories. This phenomenon led to a privileged view of text, so much so that written stories of the past became labeled as ‘history,’ and their authors ‘historians’” (122). Settler colonial modernity has encouraged the migration of stories from memories to books, from spoken to written. This push has effectively worked to discredit those stories that have persisted through orality, as if the writing down of words is the only means by which they become legitimately authoritative. A Native woman herself, Howe reports that her writing uses “...the terms story, fiction, history, and play, interchangeably because [she is] from a culture that views these things as an integrated whole rather than individual parts” (118). Although Howe is referring to her narrative understanding as a Choctaw woman, the same ideology applies to *Kanaka* narration, which is fundamentally multi-generic in its use of *hula*, *mele*, written text, and orality to tell stories. No single form is more appropriate or more meritorious than the next, according to *Kanaka* knowledge. However, modern Euro-American standards might

suggest otherwise. In order to ensure the contemporary survival of our histories, then, such scholars as Queen Lili‘uokalani have translated and recorded our stories that have long circulated through oral storytelling. Nonetheless, the practice of oral storytelling is itself a tenet of *Kanaka* culture, so its continuation is an essential defense against cultural erasure.

In my own lifetime, I have inherited a great deal of familial knowledge through this long-standing tradition of storytelling. Specifically, I have learned about my own genealogy through stories told by my grandmother, by my Auntie B, and especially by my Auntie Betty. Betty Kealoha Snowden Duarte was the proud agent of reclamation who rescued my family’s *Kanaka* history from erasure. Following a period of intensely anti-Hawaiian colonialism that poisoned the early years of the 20th century (Snowden), my Auntie Betty decided to research and record the histories that had almost been lost to the silencing of *Kanaka* voices.

While I will engage with and expand upon the stories that my Auntie Betty would recite at family gatherings, preserved via video recording, I will be carefully avoiding the reproduction of certain written documents. In particular, the document that she created for my mom and her daughters, *The Trustees Handbook I*, is prefaced with the following wish: “Please do not give copies of this to anyone; duplicate any part of it; put it on computers; or allow anyone to copy any part of it...” (Snowden). Out of respect for my Auntie Betty and my *Kanaka* inheritance, I will therefore reference this document on occasion but will refrain from reproducing anymore of its contents, which were not intended for mass publication. I believe that the rationale behind her adamant request for this preservation of privacy lies in the fear that the documented information

might somehow be perverted or used against our family. This fear would be entirely reasonable, seeing as she had endured more than her share of frustration at the misuse and maltreatment of our stories and inheritance. As Eve Tuck writes in “R-Words: Refusing Research” (2014), “Refusal, and stances of refusal in research, are attempts to place limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, what is not up for grabs or discussion, what is sacred, and what can’t be known” (225). By limiting who is allowed access to my family’s genealogies, to documentation concerning the burial of our ancestors, and to personal stories about family members, my Auntie Betty preserved our most sacred documents and knowledge for our family. In doing so, she reclaimed some agency on behalf of our entire lineage, making us the sole inheritors of certain stories, and effectively “plac[ing] limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits” to outsiders.

One particularly upsetting instance of the misuse of our family documents occurred while my Auntie Betty was fighting for the rights to our inherited Kaua’i beach in a drawn-out court case. Though there were many, one of the primary obstacles that made this trial difficult for my Auntie was a lack of written records indicating that our property was in fact ours. This deficiency was in large part due to the reality that our records had long been preserved orally, rather than in written documents. My Auntie Betty shared with us younger generations that the court had used any existing documentation to inquire about particular names, places, relations, and dates, and to interrogate her with undue scrutiny. If she answered particular questions in a manner that did not align exactly with what was written on a sheet of paper, it would mark one strike against my Auntie Betty as she attempted to gain back the rights to our family

beach, our *'āina*. The major issue with this system of interrogation was that my Auntie Betty was answering questions about family, tradition, and history based largely on the stories that she was told, rather than the particular words of the documents being used against her. This means that the people who were interrogating her were operating under assumptions about the accuracy of written and oral literature. As Thomas King articulates in his book *The Truth About Stories* (2003) the “assumption about written literature is that it has an inherent sophistication that oral literature lacks, that oral literature is a primitive form of written literature, a precursor to written literature, and as we move from the cave to the condo, we slough off the oral and leave it behind” (100). This is exactly the assumption that fueled such undue scrutiny in this court case, and it is one of the driving reasons behind why gatekeeping our familial histories became a necessary cause to which my Auntie Betty was passionately dedicated. Let it also be known that it is all thanks to her diligent research, commitment, and bravery that our beach once again belongs to our family, following its seizure by military forces in the mid-20th century. Our beach, Lawai Kai, is where my ancestors are buried, it is where my family would gather in my childhood, and it is the setting for the stories that my Auntie Betty last recited to my family nineteen years ago.

In the following section, I will transcribe these stories, engaging with them in a more immersive, narrative discourse than has been typical of this thesis. Indeed, the form and contexts of these exchanges, and my own positionality with them and the histories and relationships they articulate, demand this shift in methodology. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), “When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity

of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, people participate differently, and problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms” (93). I therefore consciously make this methodological shift as a *Kanaka* woman, as a firsthand recipient of my Auntie Betty’s stories, and as the descendant of the people of whom these stories tell. Moreover, I wish to describe the storytelling in a manner that is more reflective of the narrative style in which the stories were circulated. Telling stories amongst family was not a formal event, although reverence was expected when elders were speaking. Instead, the activity was a conversation, in which all of our *ohana* was involved and welcomed to contribute. Therefore, my methodology in the subsequent sections will attempt to emulate the style of immersive dialogue in which these stories were shared with me.

The Setting

In the summer of 2001, my family gathered around my Auntie Betty in a semicircle. Some of us were sitting cross-legged on the floor, others propped up in chairs at the kitchen table of our rental house. Comforted by the warm, gardenia-scented air of Kaua’i, us Oregonians settled in to listen to my dad recite my Auntie Betty’s stories, which she had typed up and printed for us to take home at our eventual departure. Though I was only three years old at the time, I was just as essential to the congregation as was my mom, my sister, my cousin, and my grandma. The recitation of these stories was in large part to teach us younger family members about our inheritance, about morality, and about a long-spanning, collectively-held wisdom that we share as *ohana*. Stories like these are not told solely to entertain. Though my family

would laugh and reminisce throughout their telling, we knew that my Auntie Betty shared these stories in the hopes that we would share them with future generations. We knew that she told us about our ancestors so that we would understand our origins and be empowered to identify with our *Kanaka* heritage. On this day, in 2001, she shared with us stories about Lawai Kai, our family beach in Kaua'i. And she took care to do so prior to our visiting the beach, so that we might understand the sacredness of the land before we were overwhelmed by its picturesque beauty.



Fig. 8. A partial view of my family's *'āina*, Lawai Kai Beach, Kaua'i. This photo was taken from the burial grounds of my ancestors. Taken by Denise Harden, 2002.

Story I | Keali'i Kaapuni Honua

The first story shared in the video recording of our family gathering tells about the origins of one particular family name, Keali'i Kaapuni Honua. This name has been bestowed upon one *kane* (male) from every generation of our family for centuries. The story details what the name means and why it is significant to our family. Furthermore, it reveals the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and *'āina* as it details an account of the original settlers on our family's beach in Lawai Kai Valley. Written by Betty Snowden, and herein recited by William Harden, the story goes as follows:

On a small island in the Pacific lived a powerful chief. He knew that if he could double his territory, he could be the most powerful chief in the area. So, from the day that his beautiful little daughter was born he plotted how he would marry her off to his rival on a neighboring island. To accomplish this, he had to present the young wife, who had never been with a man. After she was born, the chief placed his daughter in a simple hut on a white sandy beach on the end of the island. Behind the hut, he placed guards to watch the princess day and night, and keep her from uninvited visitors. No one could get to her without leaving footprints in the sand. The princess grew up in her lonely prison with only family as visitors.

Imagine the fury and confusion when she turned out pregnant. The furious chief called his guards to find out what happened. They swore that every day and night they had checked the area around her hut, and the only footprints were left by crabs and turtles. The chief took matters into his own hands. During the evening, he hid on the grassy area overlooking the beach. Soon after dark, sand crabs scuffled and played on the sand near the hut. Much later, a large sea turtle climbed out of the sea and ambled toward the hut. The chief heard his daughter squeal and giggle with delight. For days, he watched the hut, only to see every morning the footprints of the sea creatures.

Meanwhile, the princess grew larger, infuriating the chief who saw his plans of conquest disappearing before his eyes. He commanded his guards to build a raft upon which he would put the princess. He would have her towed out to be set adrift to die, but his curiosity would not let her go without finding out who was the father of the unborn child. The princess replied, "It was the turtle. He came each night into the tent, and when I touched him he turned into this handsome prince. But he had to

return to sea each dawn, or the sun would find him and seal his doom to remain a turtle forever.” The chief was so angry at the princess for telling him lies that he had her immediately put on the raft and towed out to sea. Left alone to die, the sobbing princess was relieved to see a giant sea turtle rise up from the deep and go under the raft, lifting it gently upon his back. This way they traveled until they reached Hawai‘i. When their child was born they named him Keali‘i Kaapuni Honua, which means “the Chief who is carried on the back of the turtle.” That was the name King Kalakau gave to Uncle Lorin in 1881 so that he would not forget. (Snowden)

The way in which relationships are depicted in this legend is essential to understanding *Kanaka* reverence for ‘*āina* and for the animals that inhabit it. Whereas the princess’s father denounces her and offers up her life in exchange for power, the turtle-turned-prince provides the princess with love, a safe voyage, and refuge from the perils brought upon her by humankind. Furthermore, their peaceful arrival at Lawai Kai signifies the sanctity of Hawaiian ‘*āina*, which is a solace from the prison that was the princess’s home. The story concludes with the recognition that Keali‘i Kaapuni Honua was the name that King Kalawao gave to our Uncle Lorin in 1881 “so that he would not forget.” Ending the story on this note not only evidences how oral storytelling has allowed our stories to survive, but it reveals just how essential the stories are in defining our lineage, the identities of individual family members, and our long-standing relationships to and claims upon this place.

The atmosphere in which this story was recited is also an important detail by which *Kanaka* storytelling can be characterized. My dad is not a *Kanaka Maoli*, but he specifically was invited to recite my Auntie Betty’s writing. When it came time to pronounce “Keali‘i Kaapuni Honua,” a chorus of praise and applause can be heard in the recording, as his pronunciation was exactly correct. My life experience has taught

me that this extension of grace and welcoming to non-*Kanaka* family members is commonplace for *Kānaka* folks. While our genealogies are sacred and aid in defining one's identity, the inheritance of our lineage has not been strictly tied to biology or "blood." Rather, those family members like my dad who are not *Kānaka Maoli* are just as much a part of our family history as is my *Kanaka* mom. Moreover, my aunts would welcome and encourage him in a loving manner as a reciprocal gesture of the same love and interest that my dad invested in learning about *Kanaka* culture. Their reaction of joy and applause is further exemplary of the overall tone of our gathering, since we were gathered together to learn, to share, and hopefully to feel empowered by these stories. The tradition of storytelling in my family, and in *Kanaka* culture at large, builds a shared sense of community among the storytellers and listeners involved.

Indigenous scholars like Jeff Corntassel have discussed this idea of community in accordance with Native practices, elaborating on how the Native idea of family "extends beyond fatherhood, motherhood, and well beyond those artificial boundaries that we construct around relations, such as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd cousins. Such artificial distinctions can distance us from each other and obscure the depth of our familial sense of belonging. At the end of the day as Indigenous nations, we all belong to each other" (34). In Native practices, kin-making is not limited to the nuclear family nor to any other "artificial distinction" that might attempt to suggest relationality. Technically, my father is my Auntie Betty's nephew-in-law, but that arbitrary title does not determine their closeness nor my father's ability to participate in *Kanaka* storytelling. It is through our love for one another, and through our shared efforts to preserve our family's histories that we are interconnected.



Fig. 9. My family standing on the steps of Queen Emma's summer cottage, located on our family beach in Lawai Kai, Kaua'i (2000). Back row (L to R): Jordan Kalani Harden; my grandma, Mabel Kalani Duarte Kampstra. Front row (L to R): my sister, Jenna Denise Kalei Harden; my mom, Denise Elaine Kampstra Harden.

Story II | Mo'ō

“The name Lawai: la is sun, wai is water. And our stories tell us that the turtle, and the mo'ō, or lizard, came from Tahiti. They were so tired, so they lay on the sand, out of the water to dry. Lawai was where they came to the sun to dry.” Auntie Betty

pauses as my cousin knocks on the door outside. Everyone waits for him to enter, welcomes him inside, and turns back to Auntie Betty. “You have our undivided attention,” my grandma assures her.

She continues, this time reciting a story from memory⁵ without the narrative aid of my dad:

So, I’ve told you a little bit about they came over on the back of the turtle. That’s a legend. It’s probably not really what happened. There’s another story about how there were three lizards, and we call them mo‘o. And they’re like demi-gods, they’re like gods that take the form of different things like lizards. Well there were three of them, big giant ones. And they wanted to come from Tahiti to see what was on this side of the world. So, they swam all the way from Tahiti and they were almost here, they got really tired. They get to Ni‘ihau. And the lady lizard, the sister, said “I’m too tired, I’m gonna stay here. I’m not going any further.” And the brother lizard said, “Nah, I’m going to go over there and see what’s over there.” So, the male lizard came over and he landed in Lawai Kai Valley, on our beach, and decided that is where he’s going to stay and make his home. His sister stayed on Ni‘ihau and married, and the legend says they were the original gods of the people on Ni‘ihau. And our family is the Royal House of Keali‘i from Ni‘ihau, who came over and married the royal family on Kaua‘i, who was Mo‘ikeha. And so that’s the original royal families here. (Snowden)

Before I begin an analysis of this story, I want first to acknowledge my Auntie Betty’s remark about the preceding story: “That’s a legend. It’s probably not really what happened.” If the story about Keali‘i Kaapuni Honua is “probably not really what happened,” then why is it significant in defining and understanding our family history?

⁵ I am transcribing my Auntie Betty’s language verbatim, as it is heard in the video recording. I do this in an effort to preserve the authenticity of the stories and the manner in which they were told. I have also chosen not to use the standard [sic] to recognize any inaccuracies according to Standard American English. By refraining from asserting any notations about inaccuracy, I hope to recognize the legitimacy and comprehensibility of any interspersed Hawaiian Pidgin English.

What purpose does it serve if it is not factual? Regardless of whether the events in the story occurred, they speak to the relationality of our family to the sea, sun, animals, and land. Just as fables and fairytales feature unrealistic elements of symbolism that teach about morality and other relevant lessons, so too do our family's stories. In the instance of the story about Keali'i Kaapuni Honua, supposing that the story's events did not in fact occur, the story nonetheless teaches about the value in our family's *'āina*, which has historically been a reprieve for people and animals alike. The story models a relationship between humankind and animals that suggests how closely related the two are to one another. It recognizes characteristics of bravery, cleverness, reliability, and ingenuity. So, the listener of this story can choose to believe or reject these events as having really happened. Regardless, the story teaches about the relationships and values that define our lineage.

To put this contemplation of truth into a popular Western context, consider LeAnne Howe's discussions of what she terms "epitomizing non-events" that often structure Indigenous and other stories: "Whether the non-event in question ever happened matters very little to the people who believe it. Witness the [1999] *Shakespeare In Love*, the life of the author retold through his fiction or play, *Romeo and Juliet*. Therefore story creates attitudes and culture, the very glue which binds a society together" (121). Here, Howe astutely recognizes that the fictionalization of any given story does not necessarily undermine its function as a meaning-maker. The question of whether there ever existed a turtle-turned-prince does not require an answer in order for my Auntie Betty's story to carry meaning in defining my family's lineage, relationships, and culture. The story nonetheless "creates attitudes and culture" regardless of its

“truth.” Indeed, in framing relationships in specific ways, such moments draw attention to alternative “truths” that exceed the demands of historical corroboration or empirical verification.

The same can be said of the second featured story, which reveals a great deal about the purpose and value of the stories that have survived for generations. This tale about mo‘o details the origins of familial names, and focuses on a royal genealogy, much like the *Kumulipo*. As my Auntie Betty explains, our beach, Lawai Kai, gets its name from the components “la,” sun, and “wai,” water. The corresponding story focuses on these elements of ‘āina, explaining how the sand and sun provided reprieve for the exhausted turtle and mo‘o. And, as we observed in close reading the *Kumulipo*, animals are our progenitors. That is, the ‘āina serves the animals, which inhabit and care for that ‘āina, which human descendants eventually inhabit and, in turn, care for. Another important, emerging motif in these stories is that of demi-gods and royalty, and specifically *ali‘i nui*, or, ruling chiefs. Demi-gods are ever-present in Hawaiian myths and legends, being the stepping stone between gods and humans (Cartwright). They often take on roles as creators, troublemakers, or figures who otherwise set events--natural and superficial--into motion. In this particular story, three lizards are the demi-gods who establish communities on the islands of Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau. They also begin the royal lineage that I would eventually inherit as a descendant of the Royal House of Keali‘i. As demonstrated in this story, the original *ali‘i nui* were demi-gods, and so their descendants inherited their spiritual ties to ‘āina and to the generative darkness of *Pō*. Considering that demi-gods are the progenitors to all *Kānaka Maoli*, this means that *Kānaka Maoli* all inherit these ties to ‘āina and *Pō*, regardless of which particular demi-

god is part of our specific genealogies. It is, however, the specific details of our own familial genealogy that ties us--socially, culturally, spiritually, and politically--to this specific site of *'āina* in Lawai Kai. And it is these ties which bind us to our land, even as real estate and tourism threaten to invade it.

As in the previous story narrated by my father, the context in which this story is shared demonstrates not only the reverence that everyone brings to the telling, but also an ethic of love, care, and familial respect in which the story is told. The group pauses at an interruption so as not to miss any of Auntie Betty's story, and my grandma offers her sister assurance in her position as knowledge-keeper, -producer, and -giver, noting, "You have our undivided attention." Such an assurance is an expression of love, informing Auntie Betty that her research, ancestry, and time is not being shared in vain. This gesture reaffirms the importance of the stories and of my Auntie Betty's efforts, which have historically been fraught with pushback from folks who have attempted to seize the land about which her stories tell. After telling this story, my Auntie talks about how Steven Spielberg had approached her with a request to shoot *Jurassic Park 3* at our beach. Of course, she declined after he allegedly suggested that one scene would require our permission for them to "bomb our lily pond." The group exchanges laughs, anecdotes, and expressions of disdain at the whole ordeal before she continues to tell another story about our beach. In this next story, not surprisingly, she expands on why it should be protected from exploitation--no matter the dollar amount promised in exchange or the celebrity of those making the request.



Fig. 10. Jordan Kalani Harden sitting on Lawai Kai Beach, Kaua'i (2002).

Story III | The Kahuna of Lawai

The third and final story that my Auntie Betty recites is welcomed by the consistently quiet audience that fills the living room of our rental house. My mom is behind the camera, and turns to reveal a captive audience, the kids sitting on the laps of parents and grandparents, our backs being scratched with eyes glued to my Auntie as she continues to share with us our inheritance.

Many, many years ago, Lawai Kai was like the college of kahunas. And kahuna means, 'the keepers of the secrets.' And they were the scientists of before. They could navigate boats without instruments because they could follow the stars. They could cure people who were sick, they did surgery. They were the kahunas of dance and chant. But the most famous kahuna stories of Kaua'i was why King Kamehameha could never conquer Kaua'i. And it was because of our Five Kahuna. And our Five Kahuna were so powerful that they could command the wind. And they would say, 'Wind, come up,' and the wind would come. Or they would say, 'Waves, go down,' and they would go down. It's in our history books. The first time they came over to try to conquer Kaua'i, the Good King and our people said, 'We have to go talk to the Kahuna of Lawai Kai.'

On top of Kaua'i 'iki until today is the most famous heiau [temple] in the South Pacific. That's because our people were the keepers of that famous heiau, and our family are the caretakers of that heiau. And you have to be the top kahuna in wherever you were before you could go into it. There were only twelve kahuna at the time of Kamehameha who could enter that heiau because that was where the secrets of the wind and the water, and pestilence, and thunder and lightning were kept. Well, Kamehameha came over. He was gonna conquer Kaua'i. And he went up to our little heiau and he talked to the kahuna, and the kahuna came down and said that they would take care of it. So, Kamehameha came across, and they hid on the other side of [inaudible] Beach, is what they call Mahaulepu.

He hits Mahaulepu and a giant wave came, and dumped 25,000 Hawaiian warriors into the ocean, and most of them drowned. And the boats floated up into the sea and the Kaua'i warriors went and hailed them for them, and when the enemy warriors came onto land, the Kaua'i warriors said, 'Get in it and out of here,' and off they went. So, the attempt to capture Kaua'i failed. The [second] time King Kamehameha-- now, this is about 1800-- Kamehameha decides to come over, and he's gonna get Kaua'i because he's got the rest of the islands. So, when he hits Honolulu, the Kaua'i king goes up to the heiau, to our kahuna-- "Oh, we'll take care of it."

So, the next morning at daybreak, 40,000 warriors jump into canoes to come to Kaua'i. Guess what? One hour out to sea, everyone felt mysteriously sick. More than half of them died from what they call pestilence. They had a strange disease that nearly killed them, and the few that were left paddled back to Oahu and never made it out of the bay. So, the third time came, and Kamehameha said, "This is nonsense. Stories about the kahuna is not real. We are going to Kaua'i." Fifty thousand warriors get into canoes, and they left Hilo and picked up people in Maui...[inaudible]...and bring armies from all the other kings. They're gonna capture Kaua'i. This is it. Well our five kahuna who's out

here in the bay do they thing. The waves came, the thunder and lightning, and all kinds of things. The canoes were all destructed, upside down, nobody lived. That was the end of Kamehameha's attempt, that was 1800. And it's in the history books. They don't know what happened, they never made it. Kaua'i was never captured by King Kamehameha. Still today, it never was. (Snowden)

This story offers immense insight regarding *Kanaka* relationships with *'āina*. Specifically, it demonstrates the powerful connection that the *Five Kahuna*, or “keeper of secrets,” had with the *'āina*. The *kahuna*, who “could follow the stars” and “command the wind,” used their spiritual connection with the elements and the intellectual bodies of knowledge such relationships produced to defend Kaua'i from Kamehameha's attempts at conquering the land. As the story goes, the *kahuna* knew how to access and control such elements as the “wind and the water, and pestilence, and thunder and lightning...” The *kahuna* used this relationship with the *'āina* so as to offer security for their people and their territory, demonstrating a relationship wherein *Kānaka Maoli* and *'āina* both strive to protect one another. The *kahuna* called upon the *'āina* to act as an omnipotent and destructive force against invaders, benefiting those who desired to honor the power of the *'āina* and who did not wish to conquer it. As an attack against Kamehameha's warriors, “a giant wave came” and drowned invaders, and “More than half of them died from what they call pestilence.” It is because of the *kahuna*'s sacred connection to the *'āina* that the original inhabitants of Kaua'i were able to maintain their land. This relationship is exactly what is intended by the *'Ōlelo Hawai'i* phrase *aloha 'āina*, which essentially suggests that humans and *'āina* are in kinship with one another and must take mutual care of each other. If one tends to, honors, and respects the *'āina*, then the *'āina* will reciprocate this care.

King Kamehameha, himself an ‘*Ōiwi* (Native son of Hawai‘i), wanted to conquer Kaua‘i so that he could reign over the Islands, motivated by a desire to unite them all against increasing incursions by European imperialists. Though the Islands were threatened by separation from such invasions, the individual *ali‘i* who ruled various Islands did not want to concede to the dominion of one King or ruler; hence, the intense defense of Kaua‘i. This is important to understand: even in stories wherein *Kānaka Maoli* attempt to conquer land, there is a consistent reverence for ‘*āina*, the desire for its acquisition stemming from a desire for protection and unification rather than for its commodification or manipulation. Moreover, the separation of the islands prior to Kamehameha’s Kingdom speaks to the autonomy that each island once enjoyed, separate communities operating under individualized ethics of governance. As a once-independent island, my ancestors were able to defend Lawai Kai, and Kaua‘i at large, in a manner that is now impossible for modern residents of the nation-state.

Another way in which a *Kanaka Maoli* might express reverence toward the ‘*āina* is through the preservation and sharing of the stories that reveal its power, just as my Auntie Betty did when she passed along these stories, which I now reproduce. The survival of our individual stories allows my family to maintain a relationship with our ancestors that is grounded in shared experience, all of us having learned some variation of the same tales. Moreover, having all been audience members to the telling of these stories ensures that the same behaviors and values are modeled to each generation, specifically reverence for ‘*āina* and elders. As Kīhei de Silva writes in *Everyday Acts of Resurgence*, “The everyday-ness of resurgence requires us ‘*ōiwi* to persist-- to continue to do, say, grow, and dance that which our lāhui always has” (19). Especially in the face

of an ever-expanding tourist industry that dominates the Islands, and as newer generations grow temporally and geographically distanced from our ancestors, the continued reproduction of these stories in their many forms offers a chance for cultural resurgence and survival.

Prior to colonial invasion, *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i* survived entirely through orality, ceremony, song, and performance. It was Euro-American colonizers who introduced the Hawaiian alphabet which exists today, aiding in colonialist efforts to erase and replace *Kanaka* culture with existing Euro-American methods of being and doing.⁶ Because of this forced assimilation, *Kanaka* scholars like Queen Lili‘uokalani have made efforts to preserve our stories by translating and transcribing them so that they might survive into modernity, according to contemporary methods of storytelling. Queen Lili‘uokalani’s written translation of the *Kumulipo*, which she performed while imprisoned by foreign invaders, is exemplary of the *Kanaka* refusal of erasure. While the push to written language, and particularly to written English, was made in order to oppress *Kānaka Maoli*, it has in fact become yet another means by which we can preserve our stories. Through *hula*, orality, written works, and *mele*, our stories will survive in perpetuity.

Our stories, shared by the elders of the family, all tell of our ancestors. Just as the stories paint our ancestors in a reverent manner, the audience to the oral storyteller must demonstrate respect. Once again, the morals of our stories function to reflect aspects of relationality in *Kanaka* culture, defining how we interact with our family as well as the *‘āina*. So just as the stories teach various lessons, so too do the moments in

⁶ See Scott Richard Lyons’s *X-Marks* to read more about how Euro-American language and record-keeping have been significant weapons in committing transgressions against Native populations.

which the stories are shared. As Jeff Corntassel writes, “How we convey Indigenous values and practices to future generations is sometimes just as important as what we’re teaching” (35). By gathering together around my Auntie Betty and patiently listening to her speak, we can learn that sharing is foundational to our knowledge, that joy is central to our interactions, and that orality is as strong and legitimate a means of storytelling, kin-making, and place-making as is writing.

CONCLUSION

As a *Kanaka* woman living in Oregon, I do not have constant, direct access to Hawaiian *‘āina*, so I cannot tend to it, nor connect to it physically. How, then, do I exercise *aloha ‘āina*? In a diasporic existence such as mine, scholarship, music, *hula*, and storytelling are the fundamental means by which I can fulfill this desire and responsibility. Stephani Nohelani Teves writes about her own experiences as a *Kanaka* woman living away from Hawai‘i in her work *Defiant Indigeneity: The Politics of Hawaiian Performance* (2018): “Thinking more broadly about diaspora is required if we are going to account for what its exponential growth means for the future of the *lāhui*. The benefit of this conversation would be a more expansive practice of belonging, one that is grounded in genealogy and *kuleana* (responsibility), not in statist forms that have worked to colonize, remove, and divide us” (Teves 145). According to Teves, the defiance of geographical boundaries is essential to the reclamation of indigeneity and to the survival of indigenous practices. If belonging is indeed founded in genealogy, one can travel and live in any location, their ties to indigeneity not restricted by the confines of time or place.

Beyond these boundaries of place, we must also challenge boundaries of genre which attempt to restrict or remodel our narrative modes as we pass along our stories and practices to younger generations. Oral storytelling is one powerful means by which *Kānaka Maoli* can honor our heritage, recalling and learning from the ways and words of our ancestors. If we connect with our inheritance by emulating these practices, we can recognize that it is rooted in us, unable to be altered or displaced. Teves continues:

[I]t is necessary to change our discussion of indigeneity as something always bounded by and to the land. Our genealogies and responsibilities to the land should be prioritized, but we should not lose sight of the diversity of experiences that exist within Native communities. We need to have a more robust conversation about how ideas of ‘the Native’ are constrained by discourses that privilege presence on the land in contrast to living in the diaspora, and the impact these discourses have on belonging within our nations, communities, and “ohanas.” (145)

I reproduce this quote at length because it so eloquently recognizes the shortcomings of modern perceptions of indigeneity. Having spent my whole life in Oregon, I occasionally felt that I was not “Hawaiian enough” to claim my heritage. I believed that I would be more Hawaiian if I lived on the land where my ancestors are buried. This is a product of an internalized monologue which falsely says that indigeneity is exclusively tied to land. As Teves highlights, “Our genealogies and responsibilities to the land should be prioritized, but we should not lose sight of the diversity of experiences that exist within Native communities.” This diverse range of experiences can include *hula*, scholarship at the Knight Library in Eugene, the exchanging of stories about ancestors, and countless other acts that promote cultural resurgence.

As Daniel Justice writes in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, “Indigenous literatures are a vital expression of that imaginative commitment, righting—and *writing*—relations across time and space” (Justice 116). Therefore, by engaging with Indigenous literatures, we can participate in the preservation and resurgence of our heritage, regardless of place. Especially when considering that our *Kānaka Maoli*

ancestors were voyagers in early times, making homes out of the Islands as they navigated the Pacific,⁷ it seems that migration is part of our inheritance. We are bound to the 'āina not by a static physicality, but by an indestructible spiritual connection that cannot be limited by place. However, this is not to say that place is not important. Certainly, the 'āina is the birthright of *Kānaka Maoli*. 'Āina is family; the hibiscus, the coral, the turtle, the taro all are our relatives despite the distance that exists between us at times in our lives and histories. As Justice reminds us, "These things are inextricably connected: the Hawaiian people, the land with which they are in deep and abiding relation and from which their language emerges, and the political struggle to maintain both in good health and mutual care" (Justice 117). Just as we are tied to the land, so too are we tied to the perpetual call to defend it, and to defend our rights to it, from wherever we are.

There are countless methods by which cultural reclamation and resurgence can be performed. Whether this materializes as song, scholarship, or otherwise, the act of embodying and preserving *Kanaka* practices is both a privilege and a responsibility. *Kānaka Maoli* have long invested immense time and effort in order to reclaim and reassert the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Islands. By reproducing and writing the stories of our ancestors, we can ensure that they will survive for generations to come. Queen Lili'uokalani, and King Kalākaua before her, preserved the *Kumulipo* in writing. Their progenitors preserved it in orality before them. I have now reproduced my Auntie Betty's stories, which she reclaimed and repeated for us younger generations to inherit.

⁷ See Fornander's *Ancient History of the Hawaiian People* for further details.

Hula students continue to learn and preserve sacred practices from their *kumu hulas*, who themselves have taken on the responsibility of preserving and teaching the form. Our narratives survive through the continued passing down of these practices, and through our shared refusal to allow their erasure.

Kānaka Maoli are called to preserve these practices and to honor those who enacted them before us. But what responsibility do non-Kanaka folks have? To any and all readers, *Kanaka* or otherwise, I implore you please to embrace *Kanaka* ways of doing. Investigate all ways of doing, all cultures, and all beliefs that are not prominent in a Western, white American discourse. Read, ask questions, protest when you feel called to do so, investigate, consider why things are the way they are, ask where injustice lies and how it can be combatted. I believe that we are all called to be lifelong learners, constantly inquiring about existing systems and how they can be improved upon. There are so many voiceless people throughout the world. If you have a voice, like I do, I implore you to ask these questions loudly and to speak up on behalf of groups that are so often silenced.



Fig. 11. Jordan Kalani Harden surrounded by *ohana* (2002). Back row: my grandma, Mabel Kalani Duarte Kampstra. Front row (L to R): my Auntie B, Beverly Duarte Kapahu; me, Jordan Kalani Harden; my Auntie Betty Kealoha Snowden Duarte.

GLOSSARY

Note: These are common English translations and do not convey the breadth of *Kanaka* connotations or meaning.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <i>‘āina</i> | land |
| <i>ali‘i</i> | chief |
| <i>ali‘i nui</i> | royal chief |
| <i>hālau hula</i> | hula school |
| <i>heiau</i> | temple |
| <i>hula auana</i> | contemporary hula |
| <i>hula kahiko</i> | old-style hula |
| <i>kahuna</i> | wise elder |
| <i>kumu hula</i> | master hula teacher |
| <i>mele</i> | chant, song, or poem |
| <i>‘ōiwi</i> | Native Hawaiian |
| <i>Pō</i> | the generative darkness from which all life is born |

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