



THE POWER OF THE STEEL-TIPPED PEN

Reconstructing Native Hawaiian Intellectual History

NOENOE K. SILVA

WITH A FOREWORD BY NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O

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NOENOE K. SILVA

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For Sam L. No‘eau Warner and
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Foreword

NGŪGĪ WA THIONG'O

The popular African proverb that until the lions have their storytellers, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter, applies to the two connected binaries of the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed. Telling tales is part of the whole realm of a people, any people, naming the world. To name is also to claim a particular relationship to the named. Language is a vast system of naming the world, which expresses that community's total relationship to their environment, their economic activities, their political and social relations, and ultimately their view of themselves in the world.

Oppressors and their oppressing system understand that it is not enough for them to seize people's land, impose their rule, but they go further and control the culture and the value system of the conquered. Economic and political control are incomplete without cultural control. The entire edifice of economic, political, and cultural control remains shaky without control of the mind of the conquered. Hence, in history, the conqueror has always felt it imperative to control the mind of the conquered. The easiest route to that conquest is language. Colonization of a people's naming system is an integral part of an oppressing system.

The story of Hawaiian is the struggle of many marginalized languages in the world today, which have been buried under or sidelined by conscious laws and education programs. Prior to conquest and annexation, Hawaiian had been the root center of Hawaiian being. But from 1898 to 1978, it was pushed to the margins through laws banning it and educational programs that forcibly put English at the center. But Hawaiian orature survived the onslaught: so also some of the writings in the language.

Resistance to oppression includes reclaiming a people's land, politics, and culture, for economic and political liberation can never be complete

without the cultural. The struggle for their own language is central to the entire enterprise. And once again the fight-back spirit of the Hawaiian culture has ensured the survival and even renaissance of the language. The excavation of the intellectual history produced in the language is an integral part of the struggle for its continued being.

One of the ways in which suppressed languages are marginalized is by convincing its users that it is not an adequate basis for intellectual production. Hence the importance of this work: *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen*. The two Josephs, Kānepu‘u and Poepoe, produced ideas in Hawaiian. This book ensures that the young generation has something concrete to help them feel connected to a rich intellectual ancestry.

But the work as a whole has a resonance that goes well beyond Hawai‘i to other areas in the world where a people are still struggling to decolonize their minds. It is a welcome addition to the global movement for the decolonization of languages and the minds.

When the dispossessed finally get their storytellers and their own workers in ideas, then the story of the struggle will finally glorify the people’s heroism and their resistance spirit. Their language becomes the center from which to connect with other languages and cultures.

NGŪGĨ WA THIONG’O is Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. His 1984 book, *Decolonizing the Mind*, has become a standard text in decolonial studies and theory.

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KE AU HAWAI‘I

Auē nā ali‘i ē	O my chiefs
O ke au i hala	Of times past, I feel your presence even more now
E nānā mai iā mākou	To see and observe us
Nā pulapula o nei au e holo nei	The sons and daughters of this current time
E ala mai kākou e nā kini, mamo o ka ‘āina aloha	Let us rise up, o multitudes, descendants of the beloved ‘āina
Aloha wale ia ‘āina, ko kākou kahua	I am moved deeply with concern for the ‘āina, our true foundation
Auē ka ‘ili‘ili ē i ka ho‘opuehu ‘ia nei	We grieve the little stones that are being scattered
E paepae hou ‘ia ka pōhaku i pa‘a maila ke kahua hale hou	The large stones must be reset in place so that a new house foundation is completed
No kākou e nā pua e ho‘olulu ai	For us, the children, to find security in
E ala e ka ‘Ī, ka Mahi, ka Palena	Rise up, families of the ‘Ī, the Mahi, the Palena
I mua a loa‘a ka lei o ka lanakila.	Go forward until we gain the lei of victory.

—Larry Kauanoe Kimura

Introduction

We, as Native Hawaiians, must continue to unveil the knowledge of our ancestors. Let us interpret for ourselves who our ancestors are, how they thought, and why they made certain decisions. In the process, we treat them with honor, dignity, love, and respect.

PUALANI KANAKA'OLE KANAHELE

The main purpose of this book is to further the project of mapping Kanaka Hawai'i (Native Hawaiian) intellectual history. How can we know that our ancestors were (are) intellectual beings, and know more specifically in whose path we are now following? Fortunately, our ancestors took great pains to write down our mo'olelo; lyric, epic, and other forms of poetry; political and economic analyses of their times; interpretations of *their* ancestors' philosophies, histories, and oral literatures; and so on.

As we read what they wrote, which is overwhelmingly in their native language, 'ōlelo Hawai'i, we inevitably gain an appreciation of the depth of their thought and their artistic genius. As Pualani Kanahele articulates in the epigraph, when we do this work of interpretation, we honor and respect our ancestors. We are also then able to consciously continue distinctive Kanaka thought and intellectual production. This book, then, mainly consists of reading the works of our ancestors, concentrating on the writing careers of two men. The first, Joseph Ho'ona'auao Kānepu'u, was a school-teacher from Kalawao, Molokai, who lived his adult life on O'ahu and contributed a wide variety of writing to Hawaiian-language newspapers. He was a strong advocate for the newspapers, the native language, and native ontologies and epistemologies. He published between about 1856 and 1883. The second is Joseph Moku'ōhai Poepoe, who was an attorney, writer, editor, and politician from Kohala, Hawai'i, who also lived his adult life in the

capital of Honolulu. He published in the Hawaiian-language newspapers, starting with translations of European tales, from about 1870 to 1913.

The study of these authors—a concentrated reading of their works—forms part of the resurgence of a Hawaiian world, working toward a hegemony of Hawaiian ways in Hawai‘i nei. What I mean by resurgence is our creation of a world in which we speak, write, and compose in our native language; take care of our ‘āina (land) and waters; reinvoke and appreciate our native deities; and live (at least mentally) free from the destructive settler colonialism in which we now find ourselves. This is inspired by Taiaiake Alfred’s work on Onkwehonwe (Mohawk): “It is time for our people to live again. [This means] a living commitment to meaningful change in our lives and to transforming society by recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past.”¹

Thousands of people are creating or regenerating a more Hawaiian world for us and our descendants to live in. Hawaiians all over Hawai‘i (and other places to a lesser extent) are opening or reopening lo‘i and planting kalo with other native plants, using diverse cropping as our ancestors did; learning, speaking, and teaching ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; creating master’s and PhD programs in Hawaiian language and Hawaiian studies; writing master’s theses, dissertations, books, and newspaper columns in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; composing Kanaka language- and culture-based music; broadcasting Hawaiian music shows with all commentary in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; broadcasting news in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; building, consecrating, and voyaging on wa‘a (vessels often misnamed canoes) that are inspired by ancient forms; founding, administering, teaching in, or attending native Hawaiian culture-based charter schools; rebuilding our ancestors’ fishponds; making and using fishing nets in the styles of our ancestors; learning, dancing, and teaching hula and all the art forms associated with hula; participating in makahiki and other ceremonies and festivals; and so on. Separately, these are coincidental initiatives that satisfy various desires to make life better for specific segments of our lāhui (people; nation); together they function as a network of significant sites in which to live native lives: to be educated, work, speak, have a spiritual life, be an artist, grow one’s food, sail the oceans, be entertained, contribute politically, and so forth, in native rather than the foreign hegemonic ways that have been imposed on us for too long. A child can conceivably now receive an education from a Hawaiian immersion preschool in Pūnana Leo to a PhD in programs conducted in Hawaiian or which are Hawaiian-centered, and spend her spare time in voy-

aging, lo'i farming, hula, or other Hawaiian arts, and, thus, while still surrounded by a hegemonic American culture, live a life that is substantially based in Hawaiian culture.

This book is my contribution to this resurgence: it is intended to demonstrate the full and dynamic intellectual lives that our recent ancestors (ca. 1856 to 1913) lived, many as public intellectuals, producing and engaging literature and politics in their own native language. It is crucial that in addition to reestablishing our self-sufficiency, spirituality, and art forms, we reclaim our history of intellectual efforts and accomplishment. We must do the hard work of both reading our ancestors' writing in our heritage language and also analyzing our ancestors' places in our history.

The method that I used to do this began with collecting everything I could that each of these authors wrote. The thousands of pages of Hawaiian-language newspapers have never been indexed, and at the time I began the research, only a portion of them had been digitized, and a much smaller portion had been OCR'd so that they were searchable. Thus, it was necessary to first determine which newspapers each author worked for and published in, then go through those page by page to pull out the news reports, histories, geographies, mele (songs and poetry), mo'olelo (narratives), and letters they contributed. From that collection, I compiled bibliographies and, from there, I read. In order to understand what I was reading, I also read the works around them, the day-to-day politics of each paper, the debates and outright fights between editors and writers at different papers, and the treasures their fellow contributors published. I researched the editors and publishers of each of the papers to get a sense of the political and cultural landscape of the time.

Both of the authors studied in this book were committed to recording and interpreting not only the wisdom of their ancestors, but also their own political and cultural circumstances. They needed to set down in print their engagement with the intellectual traditions of ancestors of previous eras and they needed to analyze their world, and thereby not only describe what Hawaiian intellectual life is or was, but to live it. Our intellectual engagement is part of our specifically Hawaiian ontology, our way of being in the world. This ontology is not and has never been static but is constantly formed in relation to our 'āina and our ancestors.

The two very different men in this study wrote within different contexts. Nevertheless, I found some similarities in their motivations for writing and publishing and commonalities in their philosophies. First is a deeply ingrained commitment to our people and land: aloha 'āina; second, acceptance of the

kuleana to teach through writing and publishing; and, third, an ethic and orientation to the world I am calling mo'okū'auhau consciousness. I will now briefly describe these terms.

Aloha 'āina is a central ideology for our ancestors that is striking in the works of both Kānepu'u and Poepeo and also in our current movement(s) of resurgence. Aloha 'āina is a complex concept that includes recognizing that we are an integral part of the 'āina and the 'āina is an integral part of us. Part of that is a regenerated belief in our ancestors' cosmogonies, which include mo'olelo, mo'okū'auhau (genealogies), and mele ko'ihonua (genealogical chants) that tell us that the earth is Papahānaumoku, the expanse of the sky is Wākea, and that among their children and descendants are the kalo, Hāloa, and his younger brother Hāloa, the first human being. Within this idea of aloha 'āina is the concept of kino lau, or multiple physical bodies of spirits. Such spirits may include that of individual humans; 'aumākua, ancestors whose spirits were transformed into specific animals or elements; and akua (deities or other spirits), who may manifest in animals, plants, or elements such as rain, rainbows, clouds, volcanic fire, and so on. Our familial relationships to these beings are part of our feeling and our ethic of aloha 'āina.

Kekuewa Kikiloī summarizes the importance of aloha 'āina to the well-being of the lāhui Hawai'i:

Hawaiian well-being is tied first and foremost to a strong sense of cultural identity that links people to their homeland. At the core of this profound connection is the deep and enduring sentiment of aloha 'āina, or love for the land. . . . The 'āina sustains our identity, continuity, and well-being as a people. . . . Place names are important cultural signatures etched into the Hawaiian landscape and are embedded with traditional histories and stories that document how our ancestors felt about a particular area, its features, or phenomena. They help to transform once-empty geographic spaces into cultural places enriched with meaning and significance. . . . The concept of aloha 'āina is one of great antiquity that originates from the ancient traditions concerning the genealogy and formation of the Hawaiian Archipelago.²

Aloha 'āina, moreover, is an important political concept. It includes the kuleana to mālama or care for the 'āina. Kuleana encompasses right, authority, and responsibility, and it suggests a familial relationship.³ Because we are not in charge of our own lands today, we are forced to struggle politically on many fronts: we must defend our 'āina from further encroachment; try to

win back ‘āina lost in the past; regain and protect our fresh and ocean waters; stop the desecration of places like Mauna a Wākea (Mauna Kea); and protect our ancestral remains. Working for the independence of Hawai‘i from US control is one way this has been expressed in recent years.

Aloha ‘āina is a concept that must be taught. Just as our ancestors felt that ‘ōpio (youth) of their day needed to be taught aloha ‘āina, we must continue to teach it. It is neither an instinctive knowledge nor an essentialist quality. On January 6, 1893, one week before the overthrow of Lili‘uokalani’s government by a conspiracy of missionary sons and the US Consul, in the preface to the mo‘olelo of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole, John E. Bush wrote,

Aole he loihi o ka noho ana o ka lahui a nalo aku mai ke ao, ke hoomaloka a hoopoina lakou i ka hiipoi ana me na ohohia nui i na moolelo a me na mele o na ano a pau, a kamailio mau imua o ka poe opio i kumu e mau ai na hooipo a me na li‘a ana o ka naau o ke kanaka i ke aloha aina mamuli o ka hooni ana o na moolelo a me na mele e pili ana i kona one hanau, na wahi pana, a me na hana kaulana a kona mau kupuna.⁴

It is not long before a people will disappear from sight should they disbelieve and forget to cherish with enthusiasm the mo‘olelo and mele of every kind, and discuss them in the presence of young people as a foundation to perpetuate the love and desire of people for aloha ‘āina based on the stirring nature of the mo‘olelo and mele about their birth sands, the storied places, and the famous deeds of their ancestors.

Bush thus explicitly describes aloha ‘āina as something to be cultivated in young people for our continuation and, I would add, resurgence as a lāhui. It is through literature that Bush (and Pa‘aluhi, his coauthor) decided to perpetuate the love and desire for ‘āina that is aloha ‘āina. While some, perhaps many, stories were being told in homes and enacted in hula performances, published literature provided an additional vehicle for aloha ‘āina, one that assisted in teaching and perpetuating it in a different and differently enduring way.

In the analyses of literature in this book, aloha ‘āina is apparent in such literary devices as ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverbs and poetical sayings), where many, if not most, poetical sayings draw upon characteristics of the land, its plants, animals, elements, and place names to cleverly mask and reveal multiple

meanings. The Kanaka geographer Kapā Oliveira explains, “Because place names are so closely tied to our kūpuna and the ‘āina, place names play a significant role in narrating our identity.”⁵ She goes on to explain that “place names are the words of our ancestors. Each time we recite a place name, we are quoting our kūpuna. Those things that our kūpuna did not tell us while they were alive are embedded in the place names, orature and physical presence of the land.”⁶

Kānepu‘u and Poepoe, along with Bush and Pa‘aluhi and the other ancestors in our intellectual history, saw themselves as teachers. They took opportunities within their narratives to provide information about the ‘āina, such as place names, and to explain ‘ōlelo no‘eau, history, and geography. They also taught through their works how to unravel kaona (discussed below), how to read ancient mele, and so forth. Poepoe was also committed to teaching the law to those who were monolingual in Hawaiian.

These commitments characterize a certain mode of thought and action that I am calling mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogical) consciousness. Kānepu‘u and Poepoe (among many others) thought about the Kanaka descendants of the twenty-first century, and they wrote with us in mind. They drew on their ancestral knowledge and accepted and carried out the kuleana to record it so that Kānaka in their own time(s) as well as in the distant future would benefit from it. Here I build on much recent work that highlights the importance of mo‘okū‘auhau for our lāhui. In her groundbreaking 1992 book, Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa analyzed mo‘okū‘auhau as one of the defining concepts for ruling ali‘i in Hawai‘i throughout the nineteenth century.⁷ More recently, to give several examples, ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui uses the concept of mo‘okū‘auhau to analyze the various iterations of the Pele and Hi‘iaka literature and thus sets up the idea of an intellectual genealogy in our literature. Also, perhaps more important, ho‘omanawanui emphasizes the idea of Kanaka intellectual history throughout her book.⁸ Oliveira introduces her book on Kanaka geographies with a chapter on mele ko‘ihonua, the poetic cosmogonic form of mo‘okū‘auhau because they “illuminat[e] the genealogical connection that Kānaka share with the ‘āina . . . are crucial to understanding a Kanaka worldview, and [because] through these cosmogonic genealogies we learn of the formation of the ‘āina, the first living organisms, and the birth of the akua (gods) and the people.”⁹ Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahēle also begins her book on “the unwrapping of the epic tale of Pele” with mo‘okū‘auhau, which in that context she explains as “a literary introduction to a family lineage. The family line may include humans, elements of

nature, sharks, or other forms of life.”¹⁰ Furthermore, Marie Alohalani Brown astutely explains that “in terms of intellectual endeavors, mo’okū’auhau refers to the worldview we have inherited as ‘Ōiwi, which informs how we conceive, reason about, and understand thought and artistic production.”¹¹

Although “mo’okū’auhau” gets translated as “genealogy” in English, mo’okū’auhau consciousness should not be confused with contemporary theoretical strands called genealogical, as in the works of Nietzsche, Foucault, and others. While, as ‘Umi Perkins has pointed out, the two are not necessarily inherently contradictory, what I am describing here is a specifically Hawaiian orientation to the world (that shares some aspects with other Oceanians).¹²

Throughout this book, we see the ways that our intellectual kūpuna of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used mo’okū’auhau consciousness to perpetuate our language, mo’olelo, mele, and so on. They positioned themselves within the mo’okū’auhau of our lāhui; that is, they greatly valued the narrative and poetic traditions of *their* kūpuna and used their talents to record them for their descendants. In the twenty-first century, we are who they foresaw: descendants whose primary language is now that of the colonizer, but who need and are benefiting from their efforts to write in Hawaiian. Many of us are similarly building on their foundations—or as Larry Kauanoe Kimura put it, re-laying the large stones of the foundation—to have a Kanaka house in which we and our descendants can live.¹³

Joseph Kānepu’u exemplified mo’okū’auhau consciousness when in 1862 he wrote a letter to the editor protesting the shortening of chants in Kapihenui’s “Moolelo o Hiiakaikapoliopole”:

Ua ike au, ua hakina ka moolelo o Hiiakaikapoliopole, ua hakina kona mau mele e pili ana i na “huli,” a pehea la anei e loaai ai na koena i na hanauna hope o kakou, ke makemake lakou e nana, aole no e loaai, e hele ana kakou i ka nalowale, e hele ana o Kau ka makuahine o M. G. Kapihenui [mea kakau moolelo Hiiakaikapoliopole] i ka nalowale. E makemake ana ka hanauna Hawaii o na la A.D. 1870, a me A.D. 1880, a me A.D. 1890, a me A.D. 1990.¹⁴

I see that the mo’olelo of Hi’iakaikapoliopole has been broken off, its mele about the “huli” or volcanic upheavals, have been cut off; and how will the generations after us obtain the remainder when they want to see them; they won’t be able to get them [because] we

are disappearing, Kau, the mother of the author, Kapihenui, will be gone. Generations of Hawaiians in 1870, 1880, 1890, and 1990 are going to want [these mo‘olelo and mele].

While Kānepu‘u obviously was worried about Kanaka Hawai‘i and our ancestral knowledge disappearing, his response to that was to foresee future generations and to work to ensure that that knowledge was preserved in print so that we might know who we are, who and where we come from, in order that our lāhui continues to thrive in our specifically Kanaka ways.

I hope this work on these two authors will encourage similar studies. The idea is that as we gather the bibliographies of each author, study the works, and put them into political, cultural, and historical context, we can map our intellectual history. We will then have a far more detailed picture of who our intellectual ancestors are, and not only what each of them wrote, but who influenced whom and in what ways. These are the writers who influenced the various mō‘ī and ali‘i nui, who were determining how their country and islands were governed, how the economy developed in their times, and how everyday life was conducted. How will our picture of Hawaiian history, them, and ourselves change when we know their names, their politics, and the extent of their written philosophies, literature, and so forth? I envision a future bookshelf of studies of how these ancestors’ philosophies and theories developed, genealogical studies of who responded to whom with new ideas. In order to get there, I suggest we compile the bibliographies, read and contextualize them, with a view to whom each writer was responding, and whom they inspired. These will also be acts of mo‘okū‘auhau consciousness as we lay down foundations for more study by our descendants.

Besides the themes just outlined, it is helpful to align this work with recent theoretical developments in American Indian and indigenous studies, especially Robert Allen Warrior’s work on intellectual sovereignty, which has been built upon by a number of other scholars, and Alfred’s concept of indigenous resurgence, discussed earlier.¹⁵

Warrior argues that “a process-centered understanding of sovereignty provides a way of envisioning the work Native scholars do,” and he examines “the role of American Indian intellectuals in the struggle for sovereignty.”¹⁶ He “contend[s] that it is now critical for American Indian intellectuals committed to sovereignty to realize that we too must struggle for sovereignty,

intellectual sovereignty, and allow the definition and articulation of what that means to emerge as we critically reflect on that struggle.”¹⁷

In other words, our intellectual work is necessarily bound to our sovereignty struggles. Warrior notes, “[Vine] Deloria believed that the key to an American Indian future was the return to Native ceremonies and traditions within a framework of asserting sovereignty.”¹⁸ Although Deloria worried about the strategies of the American Indian sovereignty movement and its mistakes, he noted approvingly that “the militants gravitated with ease toward traditional spiritual leaders very early on, asserting that a truly liberative American Indian politics would have at its center an affirmation of culture, spirituality, and tradition.”¹⁹

Using these ideas, I posit that both writers in this book can be seen as asserting and exercising native intellectual sovereignty. That is, they were committed to writing *mo’olelo*, *mo’okū’auhau*, *mele*, and other works in *‘ōlelo Hawai’i*, and to perpetuating our ancestral knowledge, including spiritual, geographical, cultural, astronomical, and other knowledge. The work to honor our ancestors is part of the resurgence of our native ontology.

Our ancestral knowledge includes close relationships with people in the *pō* (the realm from which we come and to which we return at death; therefore the realm where our deceased *kūpuna* continue to exist). Joseph Kānepu‘u, in a slightly fictionalized autobiography, writes that it was predicted at birth that his alter ego would learn the art of *kilokilo*, or reading signs (*hō’ailona*) in weather phenomena, not from a physical teacher but “*e aoao mai no na aumakua o ka po ia, i loa ai ia ike*” (the *‘aumākua* of the *pō* would teach him so that he would receive that knowledge).²⁰ This ability to receive knowledge from the spirit world is a persistent belief and practice among Kanaka Hawai’i to this day. In the novel *Waimea Summer* (1976), John Dominis Holt writes of life in rural Waimea: “People don’t *believe* in spirits here. . . . They *live* with them.”²¹ Manulani Meyer found that dreams play an active role in contemporary Hawaiian epistemology. She writes, “Many mentors used their dream states to connect with past relatives, create a composition, receive a name for a child, or simply as a vehicle for learning.”²² Similarly, as Kikiloi writes in the preface to his groundbreaking article in native archaeological methodology, “As Native Hawaiians, each of us has the ability to tap into a preconscious reservoir of past experiences and to access all that exists in a storehouse of knowledge called ancestral memories.”²³ He credits the idea of ancestral memories to Pualani Kanahele, who writes that her book, *Ka Honua Ola*,

is a portal to the expanse of ancestral memory. Ancestral memories offer us many lifetimes of experience, love, pain, belief, understanding and wisdom. They come to our lāhui as a gift and we can decide how this gift is used. . . . The primary source for all Hawaiian knowledge, including the mele in *Ka Honua Ola*, is the kūpuna, the ancestors and keepers of Native Hawaiian intellect from time immemorial. Often the channels are open, and information flows freely through dreams, thoughts, and participation in hula and other aspects of daily Hawaiian living. Written records by various compilers capture some of this collective intelligence.²⁴

I see here, along with mo'okū'auhau consciousness, an unabashed commitment to Kanaka ontology and epistemology, which also can be called practicing intellectual sovereignty. Here intellectual sovereignty means that we are not ceding ground to empiricist or other haole ideas of what counts as knowledge. It is important that we describe our reality, as did Joseph Kānepu'u, despite opening ourselves to possible ridicule as superstitious primitives or primitivists by the hegemonic culture. Further, this is not so far from Deloria's work in his final book, *The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*, itself a project of intellectual sovereignty.

Kānepu'u and Poepoe shared a penchant for using Hawaiian systems of knowledge and organization, such as telling time and counting using the Hawaiian monthly moon night names and special numbers for fours, among other linguistic forms that were receding in Kānepu'u's day and had nearly disappeared during Poepoe's. By Kānepu'u's time, American weekday names had nearly replaced the indigenous names of the moon nights; counting in the American style was also on the ascendant. Fishers and farmers continued to use the old systems, but they were in the minority. Poepoe and Kānepu'u, among many, strove to keep this knowledge alive in their writings, which might be seen as acts of intellectual sovereignty.

Kaona

Kaona is one of the most common and most intriguing features of Hawaiian speech, prose, and poetry and thus requires discussion here. This integral characteristic of the Hawaiian language recurs in many places in this book. In "Songs (Meles) of Old Ka'u, Hawaii," Mary Kawena Pukui defines kaona as the hidden meanings in songs. That is, kaona is a story, a critique, or an-

other kind of message discernible to the recipient of the message, those who know the people involved, or whomever the composer might inform.²⁵ The message is made up of a series of metaphors, allusions, connotations, and evocations associated with words and place names. As Brandy Nālani McDougall notes, Pukui warns against imputing or reading kaona into songs when one is not knowledgeable about the composer or whatever situation the song is about. McDougall correctly goes on to assert that this should not discourage us from our important work of interpretation.²⁶ McDougall, with her coauthor, Georganne Nordstrom, notes that in prose as well as mele many layers of kaona are expected: “there is the literal meaning; references to the ancient through myths, events, gods, and chiefs; the intertextual use of chants and proverbs; and finally, [that other] possible layer” of a hidden story that Pukui described. McDougall and Nordstrom elaborate:

The composer is expected by Hawaiian audiences to employ kaona, and they know to look for kaona as they hear or read a composition. Kaona demands both an in-depth knowledge of the subject in terms of the audience as well as poetic acumen so as to appeal to the audience’s sense of aesthetic. The kaona the composer employs is thus a direct reflection of his or her knowledge of the targeted audience(s) and a reflection of his or her level of rhetorical skill. The complexity involved in creating and deciphering kaona has resulted in it being traditionally regarded as a “skill to be honored at the highest level and an indication of one’s intelligence” . . . that is at once both aesthetic and rhetorical.²⁷

Further, Kekeha Solis notes how valued figurative speech in Hawaiian was among early twentieth-century speakers and writers, some of whom bemoaned a diminishing ability to produce kaona. Solis quotes a pseudonymous writer from 1928:

O ka olelo Hawaii me ke kaona o kona manao, ka pookela o na olelo i waena o na lahui o ka honua nei, ma na hua mele a na kupuna e ike ia ai ka u’i, ka maikai o ke kaona o ka manao, aole hoi e like me ko keia au e nee nei, he hoopuka maoli mai no i ka manao me ka hoonalonalole iho i ke kaona.²⁸

The Hawaiian language with the kaona of its meanings is the finest of all languages among the peoples on earth; the beauty and the excellence

of the kaona is seen in the song lyrics of its ancestors; not like it is today, where the meaning is just said with no hiding of the kaona.

One can see that this writer did not refer to kaona only as specific hidden stories within mele; rather she or he uses the word “kaona” to refer to figurative speech more broadly. Thus as readers and listeners, it is our kuleana as well as our delight to consider all possible implications of each word and phrase, to unspool the threads of connotations and allusions, and to let our minds run with composers’ metaphors and other wordplay. In this book I attend to these webs of associations, allusions, and connotations, and to the Hawaiian propensity for metaphor and figurative speech, including the tendency to eschew direct, easily understood prose. I use the word “kaona” in this extended way: beyond just a specific, hidden story within a mele, to describe the rich and layered nature of Hawaiian writing. I note as well here that writing and print allowed for more kaona even than speech and spoken poetry, as words that may have been easily distinguishable to the ear became homographs in print. The words “pua,” “pu‘a,” and “pū‘ā” serve as examples; before the use of the macron to distinguish them from each other, they were homographs, that is, they looked identical on the page. “Pua” can refer to a blossom, a child, the young of a fish, or the act of issuing or emerging, among other meanings; “pu‘a” can be a whistle or to excrete; and “pū‘ā,” a herd or flock, a sheaf or bundle, to pass food from mouth to mouth, and more.²⁹ The possibilities for punning and allusion using this one collection of letters in its unmarked form are endless.

A preponderance of kaona is drawn from the ‘āina (including the ocean) and its elements, reflecting the depth of aloha ‘āina in the culture. Place names are a favorite in mele as well as in ‘ōlelo no‘eau. Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini write in the preface to *Place Names of Hawai‘i* “an important element—one virtually unknown in Euro-American culture—that added zest to the use of place names and encouraged their proliferation is the pleasure they provided the poet and the jokester.”³⁰ They note the pervasive expression of aloha ‘āina in the language, especially in proverbial or poetic sayings:

Like most Polynesians, Hawaiians are fond of proverbial sayings that are memorized verbatim and are used less for didactic purposes than as displays of wit and as praise of the land. They differ from Euro-American proverbial sayings in that they rely heavily on place names. . . . Many sayings that use place names describe emotional states or important

events, but the largest proportion show aloha ‘āi-na [*sic*] “love for the land and the people of the land.”³¹

According to George Kanahele, 40 percent of the ‘ōlelo no‘eau in Pukui’s book mention place names.³² Oliveira suggests that in addition, many, many more concern the ‘āina; each of her chapters is illustrated with a plethora of ‘ōlelo no‘eau about ‘āina and human relationships to it.³³

Why Joseph Kānepu‘u and Joseph Poepoe?

Joseph H. Kānepu‘u first came to my attention during a seminar on Hawaiian religion taught by John Charlot. Charlot presented the class with Kānepu‘u’s 1862 protest letter (described earlier). I next saw Kānepu‘u’s name within other letters published in the first Kanaka-oriented newspaper, *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, which led me to understand that he was one of the group of Kānaka who established that paper. A further impetus to my choice was his very long letter detailing the history of Kanaka-oriented newspapers that appeared on the front page of *Ko Hawaii Pae Aina* in 1878. As I read more of his letters and other publications, I came to see that he loved the Hawaiian papers and understood their importance for his lāhui. His exhortations to readers to have their copies bound so that they might return to them in later years may have had a significant impact on our ability to read the papers now. He likely was not alone in this practice; rather, he was a reporter who reflected sentiments of the intelligentsia in the islands.

Furthermore, Charlot used Kānepu‘u’s fictionalized autobiography liberally in his analysis of traditional Kanaka educational practices.³⁴ Solis also chose Kānepu‘u for his graduate course on Mea Kākau (authors), the other being the very well-known Samuel M. Kamakau.³⁵

Kānepu‘u is an intriguing writer, born on Molokai before the arrival of missionaries there, so it is likely that his frames of reference included much Hawaiian orature. His formal schooling consisted only of the primary missionary school in Kalua‘aha, Molokai. Thereafter he seems to have been self-taught. He never wavered from his love of Hawaiian language and literature, although he was interested in learning English, and he wanted to offer that opportunity to his daughter as well. As important, Kānepu‘u is of the first generation of Kanaka writers to offer written forms of mo‘ōlelo

ku‘una (traditional, hereditary histories/stories/literature) for publication in the nūpepa.

More than twenty years ago, Rubellite Kawena Johnson, in a class on Hawaiian literature, assigned me the task of writing a short biography of Joseph Moku‘ōhai Poepoe, and she suggested to me that a larger biography of him was warranted. All these years later, here is the result of that suggestion. Why had she suggested this? He was the author of long versions of the mo‘olelo of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole and Kawelo and was closely associated with Ho‘oulumāhiehie, which is likely a pseudonym that either he used on his own or he used with other writers.

Poepoe is of a later generation and had much more formal education than Kānepu‘u, born into a world in which American-style education was the norm. He learned several languages and began his illustrious career as a translator of tales from English into Hawaiian. He is much more well known among Hawaiian-language and Hawaiian studies scholars than Kānepu‘u. Some of his work, under the pseudonym Ho‘oulumāhiehie, is the subject of recent and forthcoming translations.³⁶ Poepoe, very much like Kānepu‘u, also never wavered from his love of Hawaiian language and literature, and he advocated for the perpetuation of both in times much harder for our language and culture. He did this primarily through writing and editing Hawaiian-language newspapers.

Background on Nūpepa (Hawaiian-Language Newspapers)

Calvinist missionaries, as an integral part of their project to Christianize Kanaka, developed an orthography for Hawaiian and began the work to establish literacy in the islands.³⁷ Soon afterward, according to Kamakau,

learning to read became popular. The chiefs saw the value of education and of observance of the Sabbath. . . . Teachers were sent all about the country districts. Every chief’s household had a teacher, some of them women. There were as many as forty such schools in Honolulu and an equal number at Waikiki, and education spread widely in those years. . . . The wish of the king [the young Kamehameha III], his sister, and his guardians acted upon the people like a lightning flash stimulating all hearts. . . . The spread of knowledge was very rapid in Hawaii.³⁸

In 1834 at the first missionary secondary academy, Lorrin Andrews instituted the first newspaper in Hawai‘i, *Ka Lama Hawaii*, as curriculum for the students. As he wrote in a letter, he did so,

First, to give the scholars of the High School the idea of a newspaper—to show them how information of various kinds was circulated through the medium of a periodical. Secondly, to communicate to them ideas on many objects. . . . Thirdly, it was designed as a channel through which the scholars might communicate their own opinions freely on any subject they chose.³⁹

Ka Lama Hawaii lasted less than a year, but it can be considered a success, because it set the foundation for more than a century of Hawaiian-language newspapers. Later the same year the mission headquarters in Honolulu started its own newspaper, *Ke Kumu Hawaii*, which lasted five years. In contrast to *Ka Lama* it had a much expanded readership. It seems to have reached all of the most populated islands, judging from the letters sent to it. The content of *Ke Kumu* was mainly evangelizing by missionaries, with some letters from students and community members.

In 1841, the slightly less evangelical and more newspaperlike *Ka Nonanona* appeared. This paper, however, was still edited by a missionary, Richard Armstrong, called Limaikaika (Strongarm) in Hawaiian. *Ka Nonanona* published news and opinions of the ali‘i in Honolulu as well as letters by residents from various islands.

Ka Elele Hawaii followed *Ka Nonanona* and was even less evangelical; it published not only news from the capital, but also the treaties that Hawai‘i negotiated with other countries, and laws that went into effect. It continued the practice of publishing letters from people around the archipelago.⁴⁰

In 1861, the first Kanaka-centered newspaper emerged, *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, and from that time until World War II, Kānaka wrote in, edited, and published a fairly wide variety of newspapers, including church, government-sponsored, and independent papers. There they published, along with international and local news, their political opinions, literature, works of geography, many kinds of mele, and so on.

Structure of the Book

In this book, I demonstrate our intellectual ancestors' dedication to aloha 'āina, use of kaona, and Hawaiian epistemological frames as practices of intellectual sovereignty and mo'okū'auhau consciousness. I examine in detail works of literature drawn from the oral tradition and other writings by both authors. The book is in two parts.

Part I begins with a literary biography of Joseph Ho'ona'auao Kānepu'u, concentrating most of all on his published works and his fulfillment of his perceived kuleana as a public intellectual and schoolteacher. It includes his role in establishing and supporting various newspapers, as well as the criticism he received from other Kanaka writers, notably Samuel M. Kamakau.

Chapter 2 is a reading of Kānepu'u's works of literature. This chapter concentrates on his most important full-length works of mo'olelo ku'una. One is the longest version of a mo'olelo that has been found and another is the only version. This chapter discusses his mastery and use of many specifically Kanaka literary devices.

Chapter 3 is a review and analysis of Kānepu'u's works of geography. His longest work is called "Ka Honua Nei: a me na Mea a Pau maluna iho," a Kanaka rewriting of a world geography text used in the public schools. Perhaps his most valuable is a geography of his home island of Molokai, a five-part series of which only three parts have survived.

Part II similarly begins with a literary biography of Joseph Moku'ōhai Poe-poe. Poepoe was highly educated and multilingual, an attorney qualified to litigate in all courts in the country, and a translator to and from English. The chapter includes a discussion of his role in politics, both as a newspaper editor and as a candidate for office.

Chapter 5 is a reading of Poepoe's mo'olelo of Hi'iakaikapoliopole, focusing on the various mele that commemorate the 'āina. It would take an entire book to analyze the whole epic mo'olelo, and these mele demonstrate his dedication to aloha 'āina, as well as his role in teaching readers of his day and today how to read and interpret the mele.

Chapter 6 is an analysis of Poepoe's "Ka Moolelo Hawaii Kahiko" (Ancient Hawaiian history). This post-annexation work is probably the longest of the genre of "mo'olelo Hawai'i kahiko," which comprises cosmogonic genealogies, and the important mo'olelo contained in them or attached to or inspired by them. This work is characteristic of and demonstrates Poepoe's unfailing commitment to our native language and the expression of our

ancestors' philosophies. He wrote it out of and in mo'okū'auhau consciousness, fully aware of the accelerating shift to English that was happening before his eyes and ears.

In chapter 7 are concluding thoughts reviewing the purposes of the book, how the two authors exemplify the need for a Kanaka intellectual history, and the current shift to valuing Kanaka thought and language in new ways. How do we embody mo'okū'auhau consciousness and aloha 'āina ourselves? What do we leave for our descendants in the current era of indigenous resurgence and intellectual sovereignty?

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Alfred, *Wasáse*, 19.
- 2 Kikiloi, "Rebirth of an Archipelago," 75.
- 3 Kuleana is described as "right, privilege, concern, responsibility, title, business, property, estate, portion, jurisdiction, authority, liability, interest, claim, ownership, tenure, affair, province; reason, cause, function, justification; small piece of property, as within an ahupua'a; blood relative through whom a relationship to less close relatives is traced, as to in-laws." Pukui and Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, s.v., "kuleana."
- 4 Bush, "Olelo Hoakaka," Jan. 6, 1893, 1.
- 5 Oliveira, "Wahi a Kahiko," 101.
- 6 Oliveira, "Wahi a Kahiko," 102.
- 7 Kame'elehiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*.
- 8 ho'omanawanui, *Voices of Fire*.
- 9 Oliveira, *Ancestral Places*, 1.
- 10 P. Kanahale, *Ka Honua Ola*, 1.
- 11 Brown, *Facing the Spears*, 27.
- 12 Perkins, "Kuleana," 14–27.
- 13 Kimura, "Ke Au Hawai'i."
- 14 Kanepuu, "Ka Poe Kakau Moolelo."
- 15 Alfred, *Wasáse*.
- 16 Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 87.
- 17 Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 97–98 .
- 18 Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 88.
- 19 Warrior, *Tribal Secrets*, 90.
- 20 Kanepuu, "He Moolelo no Kanewailani," Feb. 20, 1868, 4.
- 21 Holt, *Waimea Summer*, 172.
- 22 Meyer, *Ho'oulu*, 166. Meyer interviewed kūpuna with whom she established affectionate relationships; thus she calls them mentors rather than the more distancing and inappropriate term "informant" (141).
- 23 Kikiloi, "Rebirth of an Archipelago," 74.

- 24 P. Kanahele, *Ka Honua Ola*, xiii–xiv.
- 25 Pukui, “Songs (Meles) of Old Ka‘u, Hawaii.”
- 26 McDougall, *Finding Meaning*.
- 27 McDougall and Nordstrom, “Ma Ka Hana Ka ‘Ike,” 101.
- 28 W. Homestead in Solis, “Ma Ka Wahi Wali,” 98.
- 29 Pukui and Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, s.v., “pua,” “pu‘a,” and “pū‘a.”
- 30 Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini, *Place Names of Hawaii*, x.
- 31 Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini, *Place Names of Hawaii*, 266–267.
- 32 G. Kanahele, *Kū Kanaka*, 184.
- 33 Oliveira, *Ancestral Places*.
- 34 Charlot, *Classical Hawaiian Education*.
- 35 See <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/hshk/kawaihuelani/courses-oh/courses-op/>, accessed May 27, 2015.
- 36 Ho‘oulumāhiehie, *Epic Tale of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole*. A translation of Ho‘oulumāhiehie’s biography of Kamehameha I is forthcoming from University of Hawai‘i Press.
- 37 Schütz, *Voices of Eden*, 98–133.
- 38 Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, 270–271 (a translation).
- 39 Quoted in Mookini, *Hawaiian Newspapers*, iv.
- 40 For more on the above papers, see Silva, “Early Hawaiian Newspapers.”

CHAPTER ONE: JOSEPH HO‘ONA‘UAUO KĀNEPU‘U

- 1 J. H. K. [J. H. Kānepu‘u], “He Wahi Moolelo No Kaohele.”
- 2 Kanepuu, “Ka Iniki Poaeae.”
- 3 Kanepuu, “Ka Iniki Poaeae.”
- 4 Kanepuu, “Pau Ole ke Ano Pouli.”
- 5 Kanepuu, “E Malama.”
- 6 For more on this idea, see ho‘omanawanui, *Voices of Fire*.
- 7 See appendix A for a selected bibliography.
- 8 For the serialized essays, see Kanepuu’s “Ke Ano o ka Wa Ui” and “Ka Hana Kupono.” On history, see, for example, “Moolelo no ka Hookumu Ana” and “Ahe! He Nupepa Hou Ka!!” On geography, see “Ka Honua Nei,” “Kahele ma Molokai,” “Ke Awawa o Palolo,” and “Makaikai ia Kauai.” For his short essays, see, for example, “Ka Helu Hawaii.”
- 9 Benham and Heck, *Culture and Educational Policy in Hawai‘i*.
- 10 Chapin, *Newspapers of Hawaii 1834 to 1903*, 52.
- 11 When the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions withdrew their support, the missionaries formed the ‘Ahahui ‘Euanelio Hawai‘i. See Williams, “Claiming Christianity,” 6. Fuller’s name appears only as J. or as Mr. Fuller in most documents; however, his name was given as Jas. Fuller in an account in the *Polynesian*, Mar. 10, 1860, 2.
- 12 Kalaiohauola, “He Wahi Kaa”; Hauola, “He Wahi Kaa.”
- 13 Kuapuu, “He Wahi Moolelo,” Mar. 20, 1861; Mar. 27, 1861; Apr. 10, 1861. Kuapu‘u’s full name is given in the unpublished commonplace book of Kānepu‘u.