

# Restoring Balance to Hawai'i: "Kūpa'a i Ke Kahua o Hawai'i"

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Dr Crabbe presents a broad overview of the sociohistory of Hawai'i following western contact and its colonisation by the United States (US). He describes the constant political, societal, and psychological struggles of *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) against the never-ending tides of foreign influences to the shores of Hawai'i. Within his sociohistorical overview, three significant issues for *Kānaka Maoli* are emphasised. One issue is that of 'Āina land. (The word 'Āina is capitalised throughout because, in the Native Hawaiian worldview, 'Āina is a living entity who gives and sustains life; it is an ancestor of the Hawaiian people, and it is important to the existence of *Kānaka Maoli*.) The second issue has to do with *Kānaka Maoli* identity, which has been impacted by various foreign contacts and US colonisation that has negatively impacted traditional Hawaiian practices, customs, beliefs, language, and society. The constant struggle of *Kānaka Maoli* in regaining *sovereignty*, or self-determination, is a third issue of significance in Dr Crabbe's article. This article will briefly discuss the interplay among, and significance of, these three issues: 'Āina, *Kānaka Maoli*, and *sovereignty*, focusing on the importance and relevance of the first for the second and third.

The title of Dr Crabbe's article, *Kūpa'a i Ke Kahua o Hawai'i* represents both a literal and figurative summation of his views on the plight of Native Hawaiians. Literally, it means what his subtitle states, 'stand firmly behind the foundation of Hawai'i'. Figuratively, it has a deeper meaning rooted in the *one hānau* (birthplace) and the *kulā'iwi* (burial grounds) of our Hawaiian ancestors. The 'foundation of Hawai'i' that Dr Crabbe refers to in the figurative sense is the 'Āina of the Hawaiian archipelago.

To *Kānaka Maoli* the 'Āina is more than the source of their nourishment, the provider of shelter and clothing, or the producer of other life-sustaining resources. The 'Āina is an elder sibling found in the genealogical roots of all *Kānaka Maoli*. It is the offspring of *Papahānaumoku* (mother earth) and *Wākea* (sky father); it is from which *Hāloa* (the first human) emerged; and it is the source of our *ea* (sovereignty). Interestingly, *ea* means both sovereignty and life because to the *Kānaka Maoli* they are one and the same and directly linked to the 'Āina. The official motto adopted by the State of Hawai'i inadvertently proclaims this notion, *Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono*, which they translate as, 'the life

of the land was perpetuated in righteousness'. However, from the *Kānaka Maoli* perspective, it means that there can only be life in the land when a balance (another translation of *pono* besides righteousness) between *nā Ākua* (the gods), *nā kānaka* (humans), and 'Āina is established and maintained (Agard & Dudley, 1990). When any one of these entities is disrupted, *pono* cannot be achieved and all life is adversely affected.

With that said, the US colonisation of the 'Āina of Hawai'i and their blatant disregard for the *Kānaka Maoli* way of life and their federal policies of assimilation (e.g., adoption of US-lifestyle, values, and ideologies) has led to physiological, psychological, and social discord for *Kānaka Maoli* (Trask, 1984). Discord is evident in the high rates of chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes, obesity, and cancer), substance use (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs), domestic violence, poverty and poor education among modern *Kānaka Maoli*. These are in sharp contrast from the health and societal status of *Kānaka Maoli* prior to contact with westerners, and prior to US occupation of Hawai'i. Blaisedell (1989) succinctly reports the health and societal status of *Kānaka Maoli* prior to, and during, western contact. The psychological sequelae

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(e.g., depression, demoralisation, alienation) associated with such physiological and societal problems only serve to perpetuate the poor health and societal status of *Kānaka Maoli*. Pre-western contact *Kānaka Maoli* knew no deadly illnesses (e.g., socially transmitted diseases, small pox, measles, etc.) that plagued the west. They enjoyed an active lifestyle that included fishing, farming, sports, and other outdoor activities. What has happened to the relationship between 'Āina and *Kānaka Maoli* to have caused such physiological, psychological, and social discord in modern *Kānaka Maoli*?

With the exploitation, colonisation, and socio-political control of our 'Āina by foreigners (people with no genealogical relationship to the 'Āina of Hawai'i), *Kānaka Maoli* are essentially prevented from interacting with, caring for, and enjoying their elder sibling: 'Āina. The reciprocal relationship of mutual respect, observance, and nurturing amongst *nā Ākua*, *nā kānaka*, and 'Āina is necessary in order for harmony and balance to be maintained. This reciprocal relationship cannot be upheld today because *Kānaka Maoli* have been disenfranchised from the elder sibling and vice versa. The 'Āina and *Kānaka Maoli* are continuously exploited (e.g., by tourism and US military presence) and injured (e.g., by pollution, over population, urbanisation) by US-style capitalism and imperialism and foreign investors. All the while, *Kānaka Maoli* lack the political and societal power in their own homeland to protect their elder sibling and themselves from such exploitation and injuries.

For modern Native Hawaiians, cultural revitalisation and restoration of *Kānaka Maoli* identity are directly linked to the 'Āina, because it is the 'Āina from which our identity is formed and maintained. It is from the 'Āina that the necessities of life are provided. It is from the 'Āina that the health, well being, and prosperity of *Kānaka Maoli* will be realised, as it was realised by our *kūpuna* (ancestors) of times past. What is the mechanism by which *Kānaka Maoli* and 'Āina can be

reunited to begin the process of healing and rebuilding of *ka lāhui Hawai'i* (the Hawaiian nation)?

The title of a book written by an eminent Native Hawaiian scholar, Dr Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa (1992), poses the question *Pehea lā e Pono ai?* (How do we live in harmony?). This question is being asked by many *Kānaka Maoli* today and, for many, the answer resides in our *mo'okū'auhau* (genealogy) and *mo'olelo* (history). The answer also resides in the motto of the State of Hawai'i, *Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono*. The answer is sovereignty — the spiritual, psychological, and physical reunion of *Kānaka Maoli* with the 'Āina. This reunion involves decolonisation of Hawai'i and restoration of Native Hawaiian beliefs, customs, and practices. Essentially, it is when the life of 'Āina is restored via *ea* shall *Kānaka Maoli* once again achieve harmony and balance in this modern world. That is social justice, and peace, for Native Hawaiians.

### Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Nicole Mehanaokāla Hind, a Native Hawaiian scholar and cultural practitioner, for her review and comments of the initial draft of this discussion.

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