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## Aloha 'Āina: The United States Military and Its Controversial Use of Hawaiian Land

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**Aloha 'Āina:**  
**The United States Military and Its Controversial Use of Hawaiian Land**

**Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College**

**by  
Kai Bernier-Chen**

**Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2016**

**Mahalo nui loa to all who refuse to give up and continue to fight for the preservation of  
Hawai'i, its culture, and its land.**

**- K.B.C.**

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my mother for making any of this possible. You've opened my eyes to the wonders of the world and I cannot wait to explore it further. Thank you for always being there to lend a listening ear, provide invaluable advice, and above all, supporting me in everything I do.

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Mahalo.

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Tradition.

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## Introduction

*“Ua mau ka ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono”*  
The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness  
— King Kamehameha III

This project is intended as a study of the continued military use and management of Hawaiian lands by the United States government. In the past few decades, this particular issue has gained widespread notoriety due to the heavy contestation between native Hawaiians and the United States government over the military use of lands such as the island of Kaho’olawe and the Pōhakuoloa Training Area (PTA). While the islands’ history has undoubtedly changed its preconceived notion of landownership, since the annexation of Hawai’i much of the discourse has not only evolved into a protracted dispute between native Hawaiians and the United States government over who the land truly belongs to, but also concerning the use and care of the aforementioned properties.

This continued disagreement has, in more recent years, resulted in the revival of the *Aloha ‘Āina* movement, a campaign firmly rooted in the importance of the relationship between man and nature. In more traditional times, this connection was expressed through customary mediums such as *hula* (dance) and *mo’olelo* (story) as well as quotidian tasks such as farming. Quite literally translating to “love of the land,” the cultural crusade also resulted in the establishment of a namesake political party, which later changed its name to the Home Rule Party of Hawai’i in 1900 and became known for its close ties to Hawaiian nationalism.

Nevertheless, the *Aloha ‘Āina* campaign did not reach its pinnacle until the 1970s during an epoch now referred to by many historians simply as the “Hawaiian Renaissance.” As the name would suggest, this was a period of cultural awakening — one which saw many Hawaiians

reconnect with more traditional lifestyles, customs, and beliefs. It was during this time that the term *Aloha ʻĀina*, literally translated to “love the land,” regained popularity as it had gone beyond its original purpose of stressing environmental concerns and began addressing the cultural and political plights of the Hawaiian people. The social movement now not only focused on land struggles, which were at its foundational core, but also extended itself to providing a voice on issues of ecological preservation, demilitarization, and Hawaiian sovereignty. As a result, by the 1980s several organizations such as the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻŌhana, Save Waimānalo, and the Hawaiian Nation, had formed and began voicing significant opposition to occupied Hawaiian land.

In order to more fully understand this debate, it is essential to first have a grasp on the traditions and values of Hawaiʻi. In many respects, Hawaiian culture is simple; at its very core is the fundamental notion of an interlocked three-part unity between nature, man, and deity. Given the interconnection of these cultural elements, the cultivation of firm relationships amongst them is vital as “the life of each depends on the life of all.”<sup>1</sup> The bond between man and land is a deeply spiritual one. The *ʻāina* (land) is sacred and, therefore, wardship thereof is an honorable responsibility undertaken by all. In fact, the belief that “what happens to the land happens to the people” is widely considered to be an accepted truth in Hawaiian culture.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, prior to western contact, the aforementioned tenet was evident throughout much of Hawaiian culture as many Hawaiians “long believed in the power of the land

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<sup>1</sup> Noyes, Martha H. *Then There Were None*. Honolulu: Bess Press, 2003. Print. page 7. [Henceforth Noyes (2003)]

<sup>2</sup> Bauknight, Catherine. "Hawaiian Sovereignty Connection to the 'Aina." The Huffington Post. HPMG News, 13 Nov. 2013. Web. 26 Dec. 2015. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/catherine-bauknight/hawaiian-sovereignty-connection\\_b\\_4269222.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/catherine-bauknight/hawaiian-sovereignty-connection_b_4269222.html)>. [Henceforth Bauknight (2013)]

to heal individuals, families, communities, and the nation.”<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon was largely explained by the shared belief in the presence of *mana* (spiritual power) within the *‘aina*. Simply put, it is understood as the existence of supernatural powers in the land. Furthermore, it has been understood throughout Hawaiian culture that certain places such as Mauna Kea, Waipi’o Valley, and Kealakekua Bay, have stronger spiritual presences, thus explaining the widespread erecting of *heiaus* (temples) at these sacred locations.<sup>4</sup> It is also interesting to note that the island of Kaho’olawe — nicknamed the Target Island due to it being one of the most heavily used locations in the Hawaiian Islands by the United States military — is also believed by locals to be another such site that possesses exceptional *mana*.

This sanctified relationship was once explained to me during my childhood when I was told that Hawaiians attend church every day. At the time, I did not understand what was meant, however years later, not only have I processed the meaning but even learned to cherish it. To Hawaiians, church is not one building one day a week. Instead, church is everywhere. When one wakes up, they see *Kāne* in the sun. When one sleeps they see *Hina* in the moon. When one sees dark rain clouds over the cliffs, they see *Lono*. When one’s fingers touch the soil, they feel *Haumea*. When one’s feet touch the ocean water, they feel *Kanaloa*. When one drinks coconut milk, they drink of *Kū*. Everything one does is an interaction with those who came before and those who will come after. Thus, as one lives to respect, care and nurture the *‘aina*, life itself is an act of worship for Hawaiians. In the words of legendary Hawaiian activist George Helm, “the

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<sup>3</sup> Aluli, Noa Emmett, and Davianna Pomaika’i McGregor. "*Aina: Ke Ola O Na Kanaka 'Oiwī*" ["*Land: The Health of Native Hawaiians*"]. National Library of Medicine. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2016. <<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/avoyagetohealth/pdf/LandandHealth.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> "Six Sacred Sites of Hawaii." Smithsonian Magazine. N.p., 16 Nov. 2011. Web. 3 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/six-sacred-sites-of-hawaii-272451/?no-ist>>.



church of life is not in a building, it is the open sky, the surrounding ocean, the beautiful soil”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as native Hawaiians not only attempt to “prevent their own culture from becoming extinct but [also] to secure Hawaii nei from...destruction of its natural resources,” their care for the land far predates any current environmental fad or sustainability movement.<sup>6</sup>

My family is from the Big Island — the colloquial term given to the southernmost island of the Hawaiian archipelago by locals — and having spent a significant part of my youth in the small towns of Hilo and Kamuela, I have grown to develop a deep love for Hawai’i. While I have lived in and traveled to numerous places all over the world, Hawai’i will forever be special to me. Perhaps it is due to my family ties on the islands or the years I spent living there making unforgettable memories. Regardless, wherever I go — however far away — Hawai’i is always on my mind. Some may call it an obsession, but to me it is simply a strong passion for the people, culture, and above all, the *‘āina* of Hawai’i.

There is a unique vibe the Hawaiian Islands retain that simply cannot be understood by those who have not spent time in Hawai’i. As pointed out by Jack London when describing the warmth associated with the common usage of the word *aloha* (love), “in what other land save this one is the commonest form of greeting not 'Good day,' nor 'How d'ye do', but ‘Love’?”<sup>7</sup> The air of positivity that flows throughout the archipelago and manifests itself in the form of *aloha* is one which is rooted in a bottomless love for the land and culture. This positivity has resiliently withstood drastic cultural and political changes from the banning of the Hawaiian language to the

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<sup>5</sup> "Ka Mo'olelo O George Helm" ["The Story of George Helm"]. Kū'ē Hawai'i. Weebly, n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2016. <<http://kuehawaii.weebly.com/ka-mo699olelo-o-george-helm.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Bauknight (2013)

<sup>7</sup> London, Charmian. *Our Hawaii*. 1917. N.p.: Palala Press, 2015. Print. page 16.

loss of sovereignty. Yet despite all the challenges the Hawaiian people have faced, they have continued to remain optimistic, proud, and largely united in their beliefs.

Growing up in a family and community that championed outdoor activities over televised cartoons, it was easy to develop a love for the land from an early age. Whether camping in the backwoods of northern Quebec or deep sea fishing off the coast of Northern California, I was used to spending the majority of my time *al fresco*. Nevertheless, it was not until I devoted an entire summer to working for the Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps (HYCC) that I truly felt as one with the *'āina*. The experience allowed me to gain a new understanding of the land and further my appreciation for Hawaiian culture and the respective way of life. As I had the rare privilege of visiting and studying sacred locations such as Kaho'olawe and Ka'ūpūlehu, I became increasingly fascinated by the role and importance of geographical place in Hawaiian identity. What proved even more intriguing was the seeming constant disagreement between native Hawaiians and the United States government — which I repeatedly found at the root of all the land and cultural issues.

To provide an even better understanding of the ongoing debate surrounding Hawaiian land, as well as its complicated past, this project relies on information, stories, and opinions from a wide range of sources. Aside from providing numerous pertinent quotes, these various references also help expand the overall breadth of this study. From James L. Haley's *Captive Paradise* to Gavan Daws' *Shoal of Time*, the contentious history of the Hawaiian Islands is finally untold. While both undoubtedly focus on the archipelago's past, with special attention devoted to the major part played by Western influences— especially the United States — in the shaping of present-day Hawai'i, they do so in a relatively unbiased manner. That is to say that

while some of the other employed sources clearly show traces of opinion, the two aforementioned authors' books are void of such prejudice. Instead, they simply provide factual evidence and stories which lend themselves to further describing the complicated history of the Hawaiian Islands.

Yet of all the sources utilized throughout the course of this project, few can compare to the sense of pathos found in the profound storytelling of Martha H. Noyes' *Then There Were None* — a historical account of the gradual decline of the Hawaiian Kingdom, its culture, and its native people. Through her use of both powerful prose as well as vivid pictures and poignant quotes from bygone figures, Noyes allows readers to empathize with the history of Hawai'i, one which is both filled with pride and also largely dominated by themes of pain and loss. In this regard and in contrast with the previously discussed sources, *Then There Were None* is unapologetically skewed to recount the plight of native Hawaiians. However, as described by the author, her book intends “to give voice to *kūpuna* (elder) who became strangers in their own land, a land that once nourished their dreams and now cradles their bones.”<sup>8</sup> As such, her writing is an invaluable reference when discussing the social, cultural, and political suffering of the Hawaiian people.

In addition to the use of books, this project also relies heavily on newspaper articles and digital media. Partly due to the Hawaiian Islands' isolation from the outside world and its relatively low-profile in international matters, news concerning the islands seldom leaves Hawai'i unless it effects the United States mainland or the rest of the global community. As such, the vast majority of articles referenced herein are from local newspapers in Hawai'i such as *The*

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<sup>8</sup> Noyes (2003). page vi.

*Hawaii Independent*, *Civil Beat News*, and *West Side Today* to name a few. Furthermore, sources like *‘Ōiwi TV* — a website dedicated to promoting social movements in Hawai’i through the publishing of videos, images, and interactive stories — also help provide an invaluable wealth of information regarding both historical and contemporary sociopolitical issues. The site’s documentaries on the Protect Kaho’olawe ‘Ohana (PKO) and the history of the island as well as that regarding the life of the iconic George Helm, also included rare interviews with prominent local figures associated with the *Aloha ‘Āina* movement. In short, access to these aforementioned sources greatly assisted the composition of an accurate account of both the cultural history and ongoing political struggles of Hawai’i, as well as to educate readers on the continuous debate between native Hawaiians and the United States military.

For those not from Hawai’i, the archipelago is known for two notable reasons. The first, its perception as a stereotypical version of heaven on earth, is largely due to the islands’ natural beauty. The classic postcard image consisting of pristine white sand beaches, lush palm trees, and the warm tropical sun have long served as an obvious explanation for the hordes of tourists have continuously travel to the islands and use its picturesque landscape for reasons ranging from honeymoons, family vacations, and even living out one’s twilight years. In addition to their natural beauty, the notion of the Hawaiian islands as a paradise is also in part due to its isolated geographical location in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, lending itself to the perception of Hawai’i as an exotic, tropical destination secluded from the outside world and its countless problems.

Unfortunately, that would be proven false by the islands’ second claim to fame — the attacks on Pearl Harbor — which thrust Hawai’i in the very middle of World War II and

disproved the notion of it being immune to international disputes. On December 7, 1941, hundreds of Japanese fighter planes infamously attacked the United States Naval base at Pearl Harbor, just miles outside of Honolulu. With four naval battleships sunk and the loss of over 2,400 American lives, this tragedy remains the second largest domestic attack in national history. In addition to putting the Hawaiian Islands on the international stage, the attacks on Pearl Harbor also reiterated its importance as a strategic military location — one of the original leading reasons for the United States annexation of Hawai'i and hence explaining the abundant military presence throughout the islands.

Yet while Pearl Harbor placed Hawai'i at the forefront of international political history, it has never quite been a major player on the global stage. Instead, much of the political attention throughout the Hawaiian Islands is focused on domestic issues. Among these, disputes between native Hawaiians and the United States government over the use and ownership of local land have experienced a steady escalation since World War II and the Hawaiian Renaissance. However, this should come as no shock given how since their discovery by Captain James Cook in 1778, the Hawaiian Islands have been seen as a prized commodity by the world's imperial powers. For hegemonic empires such as Britain, Russia, and the United States, the archipelago represented the most strategically important refueling point in the Pacific Ocean and a must-have if one desired control over the seas and its trade routes.

In short, land in Hawai'i has long been a highly valued commodity to both Hawaiians and westerners alike. Perhaps because of the obvious geographical limitations, land has proven to be the archipelago's most prized natural resource. To that end, it should come as no surprise that presently the two largest landowners in Hawai'i are the state and federal governments,

respectively. Of the combined two million acres they own throughout the islands are two of the most highly contentious properties in Hawaiian history: Kaho'olawe and the Pōhakuloa Training Area.<sup>9</sup>

The military's longtime interest in the Hawaiian Islands is largely due to the legacy and political philosophy of Alfred T. Mahan, arguably one of the greatest naval strategists in history. A onetime admiral, he "stressed the vital importance of securing naval mastery and connected the links between sea power and commercial expansion, which...assured the fundamental well-being of the nation."<sup>10</sup> He believed it essential that the United States acquire strategic naval outposts around the world in order to not only better secure existing trade routes, but also to further expand into either untapped or contested international markets. This school of thought fed off the nation's desire to expand its economic and political might and commandeer the changing geopolitical climate. Simply put, Mahan believed that a large and powerful naval fleet was needed in order to have both a thriving economy as well as support national expansion. The longstanding notion of Manifest Destiny resulted in westward expansion and also caused the American public to desire increased commercial growth. With the closing of the frontier came the realization that overseas economic expansion, more specifically into Asia, may very well be the sole manner in which to pursue new commercial opportunities. As such, Mahan's expansionist political ideology capitalized on the nation's desire for continued economic growth and, in order to successfully capitalize on the desired oriental market, Hawai'i would prove to be the most strategically ideal location from which to protect America's Pacific regional interests.

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<sup>9</sup> Cooper, Jeanne. "Hawaii's Top 10 Largest Landowners." San Francisco Chronicle. Hearst Communications, 29 June 2012. Web. 26 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.sfgate.com/hawaii/alohafriday/article/Hawaii-s-top-10-largest-landowners-3671077.php>>.

<sup>10</sup> Milne, David. *Worldmaking: The Art and Science of American Diplomacy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. Print. page 38.

Over the course of this project, I will address the land and cultural issues that surround the controversial use of Kaho'olawe and the Pōhakuloa Training Area by the United States government and the large-scale opposition to them on the part of the Hawaiian people. For the better part of the Hawaiian Islands' history, the United States military has faced intense criticism from local environmental and political organizations in regards to their leasing, use, and management of native Hawaiian lands. Leaving much to be desired, the United States military has had an ever-growing presence since 1941, when the tragic attacks on Pearl Harbor cemented Hawai'i as a strategic armed force outpost. While as an industry, the military has undoubtedly helped support the economy of the Hawaiian Islands by employing countless locals, it remains a highly contentious entity in terms of its continued seeming disregard toward native Hawaiian people, land, and culture.

## Chapter One: An Untold History

“I could not turn back the time for political change, but there is still time to save our heritage. You must remember never to cease to act because you fear you may fail.”

— Queen Liliuokalani

Many people have long claimed to know Hawai’i. They know of the deep blue seas and lush green mountains. They know of flower leis, mahimahi, pineapples, and macadamia nuts. They know of the ukulele’s sweet sound and of hula dancers’ swaying hips. They know of the palm trees that line the beautiful sandy beaches and the coral reefs that fringe the vibrant ocean floors. They know of the erupting volcanoes, thunderous waves, and tropical downpours.

Yet they do not know the struggle, oppression, and sorrow that make up the Hawaiian story. They do not know the extent to which the people, culture, and land of Hawai’i have suffered in order to survive. They do not know because they have not bothered to understand the islands’ history. They do not understand as unless they hold Hawai’i near and dear to their hearts, they have not experienced it for themselves.

With the earliest signs of habitation on these islands dating back to approximately 150 BC, it is believed that the first Hawaiians arrived over two thousand years ago. Using outrigger canoes to traverse the Pacific Ocean, these navigators relied solely on celestial navigation to help guide them from their ancestral Polynesian home to the archipelago of Hawai’i. Due to the nature of this journey, this intimate connection between nature and man — deeply embedded in Hawaiian culture — has in recent years resulted in the revival of the aforementioned epic journey by certain organizations such as the Polynesian Voyaging Society, which is behind the *Hōkūle’a*, a recreation of the canoe used by the first Hawaiians.<sup>11</sup> The courage and ingenuity of

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<sup>11</sup> "The Story of Hōkūle’a." Polynesian Voyaging Society. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.hokulea.com/voyages/our-story/>>.



the ancient navigators' odyssey enabled the Hawaiian Islands to be largely void of outside contact and separated from the Western world by the seemingly endless Pacific Ocean for a period of over 1,500 years.

That ended on January 18, 1778, when Captain James Cook and the crews of the HMS *Resolution* and *Discovery* became the first documented Europeans to come across the secluded archipelago. After two decades of dedicated service to the British Crown, both as a naval lieutenant and navigator, the captain embarked on his third explorative voyage, this time commissioned by the Earl of Sandwich. Despite the original purpose of the expedition being to chart the acclaimed Northwest Passage — albeit under the pretense of returning a native Tahitian to his home to avoid international attention — Captain Cook instead found himself stumbling upon the Hawaiian Islands as he ventured west toward his intended destination. After spending a brief period of time in villages on both Kaua'i and Ni'ihau, attempting to learn the indigenous culture and trading iron with the natives for much needed supplies, he departed in hopes of discovering the highly sought-after Northwest Passage.

It is only upon his return to the Hawaiian Islands some months later that his relationship with the natives began deteriorating rapidly. As he continued to explore the islands, Captain Cook realized that as “the most isolated archipelago yet discovered on earth, their strategic importance to future trade and imperial power must become vast.”<sup>12</sup> Yet while his initial visit had been largely characterized by trading and a genuine attempt to learn the indigenous culture, his return was not only marked by intentions to claim the land for the British Crown, but also by colossal cultural misunderstanding and misfortune.

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<sup>12</sup> Haley, James L. *Captive History: A History of Hawaii*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014. Print. page xxxiii. [Henceforth Haley (2014)]

In addition to knowingly spreading venereal diseases such as syphilis amongst the natives, Captain Cook's crews also proved to lack adequate cultural awareness in relation to the Hawaiians. As they sailed from island to island surveying the land, both the HMS *Resolution* and *Discovery* ended up on the island of Hawai'i, docking at Kealahou Bay. As it happened, their arrival coincided with the annual Makahiki Festival during which Hawaiians worship the god Lono. It is believed that "because the sails of the English ships resembled the white *kapa* banners of Lono; because the English vessels were so big as to belike the floating islands on which Lono said he would come back; and because Kealahou, the place where the English arrived, means The-Pathway-of-the-God," Captain Cook and his crew were greeted as a gods.<sup>13</sup> However after both overstaying their welcome and having their mortality revealed following the death of a sailor, the Hawaiians became hostile with the British, eventually forcing their departure in early February 1779.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless rough seas forced Captain Cook's crews to return to the island of Hawai'i, where tensions continually rose and eventually lead to the death of a high Hawaiian chief and, subsequently, of Captain Cook himself.

Ever since, the issue of land ownership has consistently been a heavy point of contention throughout the Hawaiian Islands. As the first American sailors, missionaries, and businessmen who came to settle in Hawai'i brought with them "the ways of the western world and ideas of trade consistent with a market economy," local understanding of the aforementioned concepts began to change.<sup>15</sup> In the past, the notion of privately owned property was unknown to native Hawaiians as "kings were the sovereign owners of all the land which was in turn controlled by

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<sup>13</sup> Noyes (2003). page 9.

<sup>14</sup> "Cook Discovers Hawaii." History. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 23 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/cook-discovers-hawaii>>.

<sup>15</sup> *Land in Hawai'i*. N.p.: Re3 LLC Real Estate Services, 2004. Print. page 2.

the *ali'i nui* or high chiefs and tended or farmed by the *kānaka* or commoners.”<sup>16</sup> This feudal system of real estate, which was prevalent throughout the Hawaiian Kingdom until encounters with western influences, prioritized the importance of social hierarchy as well as that of communal farming. Although individuals devoid of a title were only allowed to work the lands and not own them, they were still able to live off the land and sustain themselves — further reiterating the philosophical oneness between man and nature in Hawaiian culture.

While Captain Cook’s story may be just a small slice of a long, entangled history between native Hawaiians and western foreigners, the formerly described anecdote also marks the beginning of another cultural narrative — one dominated by themes of political greed and blatant cultural disregard. In the following decades early western encounters proved to be detrimental as they opened the door for further foreign involvement and the development of global interests in the Hawaiian Islands. Unfortunately, these foreign interests were largely centered around the archipelago’s strategic location in terms of geopolitics — placing very little regard on the vibrant culture of the islands and instead focusing on the acquisition of property. On the home front, this newly piqued international interest in the Hawaiian Islands led to reinforced notions of land ownership among its residents. While for some this meant a belief in the continued stewardship of the land by native Hawaiians, foreign investors who prioritized economic gain over the preservation of culture continuously pushed for the ability of non-Hawaiians to own land in Hawai’i.

Despite its foreshadowing of the archipelago’s future, the period immediately following Captain Cook’s death was one of the most lucrative in terms of development of Hawaiian history.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. page 1.

For one, in 1810 the islands were finally brought together under one ruler, Kamehameha the Great, “honored today as the ‘unifier’ of the Hawaiian Islands.”<sup>17</sup> Known for his military prowess and brutal reign, he began his rule in the 1790s and continued until his death in 1819. While he steadfastly endorsed the increased trade of certain resources, such as *iliah* (sandalwood), with the likes of the United States and Great Britain as beneficial to the development of his kingdom, Kamehameha I also firmly believed land ownership should be kept solely amongst those of native Hawaiian descent. This attempt to maintain absolute control over the land while simultaneously reaping the economic benefits of trading with foreign powers would eventually lead to the downfall of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the coming generations.

Yet perhaps more notable than being remembered as the chief who united the Hawaiian Islands was the dynasty that Kamehameha I left behind. Following his death, his son Liholiho, also referred to as Kamehameha II, would succeed him and carry on his father’s legacy. It is during the son’s rule that the first American missionaries arrive in the Hawaiian Islands and, in the words of Hiram Bingham, are “allowed to walk over the ashes of idols, and, in the name of [our] God, to set up [our] banners on the ruins of pagan altars of abomination.”<sup>18</sup> As his reign was more distinctively marked by the constantly changing socioeconomic climate of Hawai’i rather than the policy changes implemented by his administration, Kamehameha II was often said to have “lived in two worlds — an old world dying, a new world being born.”<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, he died in 1824 after catching measles on a diplomatic visit to London. This

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<sup>17</sup> Haley (2014). page 28.

<sup>18</sup> Noyes (2003). page 21.

<sup>19</sup> Daws, Gavan. Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968. Print. page 68.

tragedy gave way to the rule of Kamehameha III, who undoubtedly left the biggest footprint in terms of land ownership and property rights.

The third of six monarchs in the Kamehameha dynasty, Kamehameha III was the younger son of Kamehameha I and ruled until his death in 1854. During the course of his rule, Kamehameha III enacted four major pieces of legislation. The first, in 1839, occurred when he introduced the Bill of Rights of the Hawaiian Islands which guaranteed that commoners' lands would not be taken from them. This law reassured many native Hawaiians that the lands they both resided on and cultivated would be kept solely for Hawaiian use during the foreseeable future. Just a year later, in 1840, the first Constitution of Hawai'i was drawn up — containing in it a provision proclaiming that land had greater economic purpose to people than merely the production of goods and resources. This way of thinking, unlike that of the past, suggested the possibility of using these land parcels to further adhere to western philosophies of development and strategic ownership. The third piece of legislation enacted by Kamehameha III came in 1845 when he created the Land Commission, a committee designed to distribute land amongst individuals. However, with the feudal system still in place at the time, the Land Commission was rendered essentially useless as individuals did not hold land titles and thus awarding land claims was deemed impossible. This continued to be the case until 1848 when Kamehameha III instituted the Great Mahele — indisputably his most memorable contribution to Hawaiian history.

Literally translated to the “great land division,” the Great Mahele was a way for the king and his high chiefs to divide the land while addressing the evolving notion of property ownership. In essence, the land would be divided into three main categories. The first of these were Crown Lands which, as their name would suggest, were owned by the monarch and kept

for his private use. Of the approximately four million acres of land throughout the Hawaiian Islands, nearly a quarter were designated as Crown Lands. As for the remaining unclaimed property, half of it was labeled Government Lands while the other 1.5 million acres became Konohiki Land, simply given to the high chiefs who were loyal to Kamehameha III. The Great Mahele not only restructured the existing feudal system that had thrived throughout the islands for hundreds of years, but also caused certain new issues to arise amongst the native population. Perhaps most notable was the fact that commoners, who “were often in possession and cultivating the lands,” were now having their rights restricted as the lands they worked on were being sold. That is to say that although they still harvested from these aforementioned properties, they no longer held any rights to what was being produced as the land was now privately owned by another individual. To solve this issue, the Land Commission decided in 1850 that commoners who physically occupied the Konohiki Lands they tilled and improved, would be eligible to be awarded land titles. These parcels, later known as Kuleana Lands, were generally the richest and most fertile in the kingdom as they had long been used for harvesting vegetation.<sup>20</sup>

The Great Mahele not only resulted in the restructuring of the old feudal system but also promoted western notions of land ownership; it became growingly apparent that while the Hawaiian Kingdom remained politically sovereign, its way of life, culture, and politics were being increasingly tainted by western influences. At the core of this transformation was a departure from the traditional relationship between man and nature, or more specifically, land. This trend of divorce extended far beyond the 18th century as “the separation of the Hawaiians

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<sup>20</sup> *Land in Hawai'i*. N.p.: Re3 LLC Real Estate Services, 2004. Print. page 3.

from the land continues to today.”<sup>21</sup> A society which once thrived on the concept of communal harvest and could not fathom the notion of private property, now engaged itself in foreign trade and sought a place on the international stage by leveraging the most valuable resource at its disposal — land.

From that point on, land took on a new meaning throughout the Hawaiian Islands. While to many it still remained an integral part of local culture, it now became increasingly sought after by foreign investors who saw the land not as sacred grounds through which native Hawaiians connected to their gods and ancestors, but merely as a means to make a fortune in an untapped market. The fertile lands once cultivated by natives to grow foods such as taro were now being used to harvest more profitable goods like sugar cane and pineapple. Furthermore, the Great Mahele, which was enacted with the assistance and under the tutelage of several American ex-missionary advisers, paved the way for an increase in western influences within the local government.

By the mid-19th century, the ruling monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom was more of a figurehead than anything else. As American missionaries and investors began self-appointing themselves to cabinet and advisory positions, the interests of the Hawaiian Kingdom found themselves vested in economic gain and the Americanization of the islands. In line with this claim is the amendment made to the Great Mahele in 1850, declaring foreigners to be allowed to purchase land titles of their own. In essence, as land is one of the most valued resources in the archipelago, the gradual combination of both cunning American influence and native Hawaiian credulousness resulted in “the lifeblood of Hawai’i [flowing] out like water from a broken

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<sup>21</sup> Bauknight (2013)

gourd.”<sup>22</sup> While the selling of property to foreigners may have provided temporary economic support for the kingdom, it also weakened the latter’s hold over it’s own affairs, because with land acquisition came an increased sense of political power.

Yet still for many foreigners, especially Americans, the importance of Hawai’i lay not in the abundance of fertile land but rather in the strategic location of the islands in terms of geopolitics. Following a Mahanian political philosophy, many saw the advantages presented by the island as being the halfway point between the west coast of the United States and Asia. With the latter being an increasingly prosperous trade market, the United States envisioned the Hawaiian Islands as the perfect location to not only set up trading posts and refueling stations, but also military bases that would help protect the seas and trade routes.

More specifically the United States had long eyed Pearl Harbor, which “was the most capacious and most sheltered harbor in the Pacific.”<sup>23</sup> Yet as a sense of urgency began to foster following Japan’s launching of a “highly ambitious program of naval building...that threatened to tilt the balance of power in the Pacific toward Japan,” American strategists such as Mahan believed that in order “to assert American interests in the Pacific, and forestall Japan’s potential advance,” the Hawaiian Islands had to be under Washington’s control.<sup>24</sup> As for how to assuage native Hawaiian qualms regarding the takeover of Pearl Harbor, certain pro-American individuals tried to give reasons for how the naval lease would not only benefit the United States but the Hawaiian Kingdom as well. The main argument provided by figures such as Henry Whitney, publisher of the *Hawaiian Gazette*, was that the presence of a naval base in Hawai’i

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<sup>22</sup> Noyes (2003). page 37.

<sup>23</sup> Haley (2014). page 220-221.

<sup>24</sup> Milne, David. *Worldmaking: The Art and Science of American Diplomacy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. Print. page 51.



would deter any foreign invaders as well as “postpone all projects for the annexation of [the] islands.”<sup>25</sup> Despite countless attempts to convince the kingdom and its people to lease Pearl Harbor, the American proposal was met with heavy resistance from within the native Hawaiian community.

However, this desire to utilize the islands’ geographic location to their advantage eventually led the United States to sign the Reciprocity Treaty with King Kalakaua in 1876. As an abundance of land was being acquired by American investors and used to grow profitable goods such as sugar cane and pineapples, the Reciprocity Treaty allowed Hawai’i to export these goods solely to the United States without inquiring tariffs. Naturally, there was a catch in the agreement. In order to benefit American interests, the treaty also required the use of Pearl Harbor to be restricted to Uncle Sam. As would later come to light, the pressured signing of this treaty and release of the most coveted harbor in the islands to the United States “was a partial concession of Hawaiian sovereignty.”<sup>26</sup> In fact less than a decade later in 1887 the Hawaiian League, a political group seeking to absolve the Hawaiian Kingdom in favor of American interests, forced King Kalakaua to sign the Bayonet Constitution, all but stripping the monarch of his powers. However, even more consequential were the voting restrictions enforced by the new constitution. In order to vote, one not only had to be male but also “[own] a minimum of three thousand dollars worth of property or [have] a minimum annual income of a least six hundred dollars.”<sup>27</sup> This provision meant that the overwhelming majority of qualified voters would be white, as the vast majority of native Hawaiians could not meet the stated requirements.

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<sup>25</sup> Haley (2014). page 221.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. page 49.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. page 49.

Following King Kalakaua's death in 1891, his sister Queen Lili'uokalani took over the throne and, unknowing at the time, would become the last ruling Hawaiian monarch. Unlike her brother, the queen refused to cooperate with American businessmen and investors who now seemingly controlled her kingdom. Instead, she took a stance against any further Americanizing throughout the islands. In fact, she went one step further and, in 1893, declared that she would enact a new revised constitution which would restore the rights and power of the Hawaiian monarchy. Naturally, this displeased many Americans whose interests went against those of a sovereign Hawaiian Kingdom and so, the Committee of Safety, a pro-annexation group led by Lorrin A. Thurston was formed with the goal of overthrowing the monarchy and formally rendering the islands as part of the United States.

This objective was realized on January 17, 1893 when, with the assistance of the United States minister in Hawai'i and the Marines aboard the U.S.S. *Boston*, the Committee of Safety successfully overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani and replaced her with a Provisional Government entirely made up of white politicians, businessmen, and investors. After a transitional period between 1893 and 1898, during which the archipelago subsequently became the Republic of Hawai'i and later a United States territory before finally gaining statehood later on in 1959, the Hawaiian Islands were never again the same. This sad truth became blatantly clear as the kingdom and its people once so traditionally focused on subsistence now found itself being ruled by a foreign government so enamored by both financial greed as well as a thirst for political power. Actually, it was due to the avarice of American missionaries and businessmen alike, who strongly supported the rapid commercialization of sugar cane and pineapple plantations, that

Hawaiians gradually began witnessing drastic changes in their “social, cultural, and economic sustainability.”<sup>28</sup>

In terms of land, Hawai’i’s loss of sovereignty and eventual incorporation into the United States would be detrimental. Not only were the three land divisions outlined in the Great Mahele redistributed, but they were done so in a way that most benefitted the United States. First of all, the Kuleana Lands were now owned by whoever had purchased their land titles, which in most cases meant white businessmen. As for the Crown Lands, approximately half were retained by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop — the last of the Kamehamehas — while the rest, along with the Government Lands, were left under the trust of the United States.

Aside from the creating of the Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park and Haleakala National Park, the vast majority of United States government land throughout the state is used for military purposes.<sup>29</sup> As previously mentioned, this is largely in line with the philosophy of Alfred T. Mahan and the islands’ empirical strategic location. Beginning in the early to mid-20th century, military installations began surfacing more readily throughout Hawai’i. Aside from the previously mentioned importance of Pearl Harbor, test facilities like Kaho’olawe and training grounds such as the Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA) became increasingly important in shaping a new Hawai’i — one which to this very day still credits the military as being the second largest revenue-producing industry, behind only tourism.

Of course, the increased military presence on the islands culminated with the attacks on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In addition to putting Hawai’i on the international stage as a

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<sup>28</sup> Bauknight (2013)

<sup>29</sup> Cooper, Jeanne. "Hawaii's Top 10 Largest Landowners." San Francisco Chronicle. Hearst Communications, 29 June 2012. Web. 26 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.sfgate.com/hawaii/alohafriday/article/Hawaii-s-top-10-largest-landowners-3671077.php>>.

military location, the tragic event also placed the islands under martial law for three years. During that duration, nearly every aspect of quotidian life was managed by the United States military. In addition, it also resulted in the increased opening of military installations throughout the archipelago as a military threat to Hawai'i was now a proven reality.

Yet unfortunately, neither the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy nor the increased military presence on the islands marked the end of “the separation of the Hawaiians from the land as it continues to today.”<sup>30</sup> As such, while the defense of the islands remained important for American economic and strategic interests, many Hawaiians who still believed in the old traditional lifestyle of the Hawaiian Kingdom began advocating for better management of the lands on which military sites were located. Perhaps due to the native belief in a deep spiritual connection between man and nature, or simply because of the lack of political representation in local government and concern over the use of these lands, the *Aloha 'Āina* movement began promulgating throughout the islands' remaining native Hawaiian population as a new discourse was born — one between native Hawaiians and the United States military concerning the latter's use and management of local lands.

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<sup>30</sup> Bauknight (2013)

## Chapter Two: The Target Island

“Philosophically, Kaho’olawe represents a conflict between two different attitudes and ideas in the way man should relate to his environment. What we’re involved in is a conflict between concern and apathy.”  
— George J. Helm, Jr.

As most people somewhat familiar with the Hawaiian Islands know, the archipelago is made up of eight islands. Of these, seven of them — Hawai’i, Maui, O’ahu, Lāna’i, Kaua’i, Moloka’i, and Ni’ihau — are permanently inhabited. The eighth, Kaho’olawe, is not only widely considered “the driest, windiest, and least habitable of the major islands,” but has also been “one of the most controversial pieces of real estate in the United States.”<sup>31</sup> Located approximately seven miles southwest of Maui, the 45-square-mile island has served as both a spiritual landmark as well as a heavily used military facility. While it undoubtedly represents different things to different people, few can deny that countless intertwining stories have helped make up the history of Kaho’olawe as we now know it.

Geographically speaking, the island is unique from the rest of the Hawaiian Islands. Aside from being largely uninhabited, Kaho’olawe is also known for its harsh climate and rugged topography. It is often described as “a barren and forgotten landscape made up of eroding hills, crumbling sea cliffs, grass, cactus, and mesquite.”<sup>32</sup> This characterization as a vast wasteland is largely due to the lack of rain which Kaho’olawe is subject to. Despite the presence of seasonal trade winds, the island’s low elevation paired with the fact that it is squarely in the rain shadow of Maui’s high volcano, Haleakala, result in it being deprived of significant precipitation levels. That said, over time more than a quarter of the island has eroded, severely

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<sup>31</sup> Adler, Peter S. "Wounded Island." *Beyond Paradise: Encounters in Hawai'i Where the Tour Bus Never Runs*. Woodbridge: Ox Bow Press, 1993. 197-235. Print. page 197.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. page 197.

curbing the land's fertility as well as “[damaging] the ancient fishing spots and the marine ecosystem” as a result.<sup>33</sup>

It is widely believed, as per ancient chants and archeological evidence, that Kaho’olawe had been inhabited for over a thousand years prior to its current state. For the most part, its early settlers were subsistent on fishing and farming, living off the land like the vast majority of native Hawaiians. This natural inclination toward seafaring life also led to the island gradually becoming “a place where *kahuna* (priests) and navigators were trained and played an important role in early Pacific migrations.”<sup>34</sup> According to the late Uncle Harry Kunihi Mitchell, a *kūpuna* of the Protect Kaho’olawe ‘Ohana, places such as Halona Point, an observation site for approximately 260 different winds, also lend themselves to the island being regarded as an ideal location to study seafaring conditions.

Furthermore, Kaho’olawe is considered to be highly sacred amongst natives as it was, at some point, named after the Hawaiian god of the ocean, *Kanaloa*. However, native Hawaiian worship of the island went far beyond merely naming it after a founding deity. In fact, the island itself is a locale for many religious sites and artifacts. On the northern shore of Kaho’olawe lies the remains of one of the earliest *ko’ā* (fishing shrine); marked by coral and *opihī* (sea snails), this site is one of the few of its kind remaining and continues to transcend the island’s past. In the words of archaeologist Rowland B. Reeve, “Kaho’olawe offers a place where one can come, and quite literally, touch the past.”<sup>35</sup> As such, the island’s cultural importance has long been

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<sup>33</sup> Corbin, Amy. "Site Report: Kaho'olawe, Hawai'i." Standing on Sacred Ground. Ed. Christopher McLeod. N.p., 1 July 2006. Web. 15 Mar. 2016. <<http://standingonsacredground.org/film-series/islands-sanctuary/kahoolawe-hawaii/site-report-kahoolawe-hawaii>>. [Henceforth Corbin (2006)]

<sup>34</sup> "Mo'olelo 'Āina." Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, 2016. Web. 13 Mar. 2016. <<http://www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/molsquoolelo-lsquo256ina.html>>.

<sup>35</sup> Holt, John Dominis, and Ekela Kaniaupio, narr. Kaho’olawe Aloha ‘Āina. Dir. Nā Maka o ka ‘Āina. Prod. Protect Kaho’olawe ‘Ohana. ‘Ōiwi TV, 2011. Film. [henceforth “Kaho’olawe documentary (2011)”]

understood by natives as a place where native Hawaiians can not only go to learn about their past but also interact with it in the form of the aforementioned artifacts.

Nevertheless, things began changing, like all else in Hawai'i, following western contact. Under the reign of Kamehameha III, the death sentence was abolished and instead replaced with the punishment of exile. Thus, Kaho'olawe, once held to be one of the most sacred sites in Hawai'i, became a male penal colony around 1830. For the next two decades, the island would serve as home for hundreds of men, young and old, who had perpetrated crimes ranging from stealing to simply being members of the Catholic Church.

In the following years, Kaho'olawe underwent another uneasy transition. As part of Kamehameha III's enacting of the Great Mahele, the island was entirely designated as government land. As such, in 1858, the Hawaiian government issued the first of many ranch leases. With these said ranches came an abundance of livestock, including invasive species, such as wild goats, which promptly overgrazed much of the island, rendering it largely barren and resulting in the extensive erosion thereof. Yet even in spite of the aforementioned environmental issue, Kaho'olawe remained leased and under ranch management until 1910 — throughout the duration of the Hawaiian Kingdom and its transition into the Territory of Hawai'i. Later that same year, the Territorial Board of Agriculture declared the island a Forest Reserve, a designation which it held until 1918 when it became readily clear that “the proliferation of goats continued to degrade the island” due to regulations preventing their hunting.<sup>36</sup> After control of Kaho'olawe was transferred over to the Commissioner of Public Lands, the island was once again leased — this time to form the Kaho'olawe Ranch. Unlike the previous tenants, this ranch

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<sup>36</sup> "History." Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, 2016. Web. 14 Mar. 2016. < <http://www.protectkahooolaweohana.org/history.html> >.

was obligated to take certain measures to would help limit the excess livestock and assist revegetation efforts.

Yet, none of the aforementioned changes to Kaho’olawe would compare with that which took place following the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. In addition to prompting the United States to join World War II, the tragedy also resulted in the declaration of martial law throughout the state of Hawai’i. This state of military rule went beyond curfews and strict civilian monitoring, also extending to matters of land ownership. Aside from the suspension of ordinary law in favor of military governance, the implementation of martial law also meant that the military had the ability to commandeer any land it viewed as necessary to the ongoing war effort. As a result, the Navy seized Kaho’olawe for its use as a bombing range. Despite how “at the time the military said the island would be returned after the war and that all ordinances would be removed,” in 1953 President Eisenhower “transferred the title of Kaho’olawe to the Navy, with the provision that it be returned in a state ‘suitable for habitation’ once it was no longer needed for military exercises” and the island remained under the military’s control for over fifty years until 1994.<sup>37 38</sup>

For the military, Kaho’olawe presented the perfect location for bombing practice in a strategically important location — especially considering the recent attacks on nearby Pearl Harbor. Simply put, the uninhabited island’s importance “lies in the fact that it is one of the few areas in the world that allows for the practice of combined arms operations involving ships, aircraft, and ground troops training exactly as they would in an actual combat environment.”<sup>39</sup> In

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<sup>37</sup> Kaho’olawe documentary (2011)

<sup>38</sup> Corbin (2006)

<sup>39</sup> Kaho’olawe documentary (2011)



addition to various parts of the island being subject to daily aerial target bombings, the latter's ocean vicinity also proved to be an ideal place for the Navy to conduct testing to "determine the survivability of warship structure and installations," an essential preparation during times of war.<sup>40</sup>

The most notorious weapons testing conducted on Kaho'olawe was a series of explosions that took place in 1965 known as Operation Sailor Hat. In order to better "study the effects of shock and blast on warships built to contemporary design standards," the Navy detonated 500-ton charges of TNT on three separate occasions to determine the explosions' effects on nearby battleships stationed offshore.<sup>41</sup> The use of such a high quantity of explosives was explained by the military as being necessary in order to properly simulate a nuclear weapons blast without actually employing an atomic bomb. Yet regardless of the reasoning, it became rapidly clear that the military bombings on the island were leaving significant longterm effects on its ecology.

One example where ecology has suffered tremendously is in a place called Sailor's Hat — appropriately named after the aforementioned series of TNT tests. Where the original site of detonation during those tests once stood, a large water-filled crater now sits as the explosions "cracked the cap rock under this portion of the island, encouraging the ground water to seep out and be lost forever to the ocean."<sup>42</sup> On an island where fresh water was, and continues to be, such a prized commodity due to the lack thereof, this ecological result from the military's operations on Kaho'olawe upset a great deal of people — especially native Hawaiians who long long revered the island for its cultural richness.

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<sup>40</sup> Operation "Sailor Hat" Explosive Tests, February - June 1965. Denix. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Mar. 2016. <[http://www.denix.osd.mil/nr/crid/Coral\\_Reef\\_Iniative\\_Database/Kahoolawe\\_files/Explosive%20Tests%20Kahoolawe.pdf](http://www.denix.osd.mil/nr/crid/Coral_Reef_Iniative_Database/Kahoolawe_files/Explosive%20Tests%20Kahoolawe.pdf)>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Kaho'olawe documentary (2011)

Over the course of the military's control of the island, Kaho'olawe became "the focal point for the discussion about how land in these Hawaiian Islands [was] to be used and whether the native population had any say in the matter."<sup>43</sup> While even amongst the native Hawaiian community, opinions regarding the ongoing explosive testing on Kaho'olawe were split, the issue was quickly gaining support from the mainland as well as internationally. More and more, testimonies began pouring in supporting an end to the island's use as a bombing range and calling for it to be returned to native Hawaiians. While certain noise complaints from neighboring Maui and Lāna'i residents were adhered to, resulting in the relocation of certain target placements on Kaho'olawe, those voiced by the native Hawaiian community mostly fell on deaf ears. For many Hawaiians, the militarization of the island and destruction of its cultural and natural elements struck a deep chord within. Just as Kaho'olawe had once been a place where native Hawaiians could interact with their ancestral past, it now became a place where they could feel the island's pain and witness the blatant desecration of their culture at the hands of the United States military.

In the eyes of many, the Navy's ongoing use of Kaho'olawe following the end of World War II was viewed as unfair and in complete violation of existing agreements. Nevertheless the island continued to be bombed and as such, many began feeling it their duty to help put an end to the prolonged military use of Kaho'olawe. Like many in the native Hawaiian community, Dr. Emmett Aluli explains that the island called him "to a commitment to stop whatever destruction was happening" and he "decided then that [he] had to follow [his] *na'au* (guts) to fight to end the bombing of Kaho'olawe."<sup>44</sup> This is the same sense of cultural obligation that led others to form

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (PKO), a political organization led by George Helm dedicated to “[perpetuating] *Aloha ʻĀina* throughout [the] islands through cultural, educational, and spiritual activities that heal and revitalize the cultural and natural resources on Kahoʻolawe.”<sup>45</sup> Among the first to repopularize the ancient concept of *Aloha ʻĀina*, the PKO committed itself not only to ending military occupation of the island but also to restoring its cultural and natural elements.

The grassroots organization’s efforts began taking public form on January 4, 1976, when a group of nine native Hawaiians members successfully docked their boats and landed on Kahoʻolawe — in direct violation of United States law. Their stated intention was clear. They were simply there to protest the Navy’s ongoing use of the island. While the majority of the group was arrested almost immediately following their landing onshore, Walter Ritte and Dr. Emmett Aluli managed to evade capture for two days before eventually turning themselves in. Nevertheless despite their rapid arrests, the “Kahoʻolawe Nine” undoubtedly left their mark and helped pave the way for a series of native occupations that would soon follow — helping shed light on the devastating effects of the military’s occupation of the island.<sup>46</sup>

For many of those involved, “this movement crystallized a number of concerns for Hawaiians, among them was the expressed need to reclaim the island for Hawaiian use.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, one of the leading arguments shared in the activist community was that the cultural and natural destruction would have never taken place had the island stayed under native control in the first place. As such, the PKO took their actions one step further and, later on in 1976, filed a federal civil suit demanding the United States government “comply with environmental, historic

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<sup>45</sup> “Vision & Mission.” Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana. N.p., 2016. Web. 1 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/vision--mission.html>>.

<sup>46</sup> “Kahoolawe 9.” First Landing. WCOE Living Wisdom Media, 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2016. <<http://firstlandingmovie.com/kahoolawe-9/>>.

<sup>47</sup> Kahoʻolawe documentary (2011)

site and religious freedom protection laws.”<sup>48</sup> Now with a lawsuit looming over their heads, both the United States government and military could no longer afford to ignore the requests and complaints of the native Hawaiian community.

Eventually, in 1980, this combination of public pressure and litigation resulted in a consent decree signed between the United States Navy and the PKO “requiring the Navy to begin soil conservation, revegetation, and goat eradication programs.”<sup>49</sup> In what appeared to be positive progress, the agreement also outlined specific ways in which the PKO would be allowed access to the island for religious and educational purposes. Additionally, the restoration of several ancient *heiaus* (temples) and the opportunity for native Hawaiians to hold monthly ceremonies on Kaho’olawe were also consequences of the 1980 consent decree. The following year, in yet another seeming act of good faith, the island was placed on the Register of Historic Places as the Kaho’olawe Archaeological District. However even in light of its designation as a historic landmark, Kaho’olawe continued to be both repeatedly bombed on a daily basis and subject to countless explosive tests.

The more contentious the situation grew, the more momentum the PKO gained — which, despite its widespread popularity, still remained relatively divided in terms of support garnered from within its own community. Nevertheless, the shocking death of two members, including the organization’s animated leader, George Helm, added fuel to the fire — giving the cause even more sympathetic public support. In March 1977, while stranded on Kaho’olawe during a protest, both George Helm and Kimo Mitchell attempted to swim back to Maui but were never

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<sup>48</sup> "Mo'olelo 'Āina" ["Story of the Land"]. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. N.p., 2016. Web. 2 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/moolelo-aina.html>>.

<sup>49</sup> "Kaho'olawe History." Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Apr. 2016. <<http://kahoolawe.hawaii.gov/history.shtml>>.

found. In a way, this tragedy gave the movement the edge it needed, as they no longer simply represented an opposition to the Navy's continued use of the island, but were now also fighting to honor their fallen brothers and native culture.

The PKO would finally succeed in ending the United States military's bombing of Kaho'olawe on October 22, 1990, when President George H. Bush issued an executive order to Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney with instructions "to discontinue use of Kaho'olawe as a weapons range effective immediately."<sup>50</sup> A congressional committee was also formed to help structure terms for the eventual return of the island to the state of Hawai'i. While this undoubtedly provided tangible progress, it was not until 1993 that the landownership issues concerning Kaho'olawe would finally be put to rest. That year, U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye sponsored Title X of the Fiscal Year 1994 Department of Defense Appropriations Act which not only handed Kaho'olawe back to the state but also ordered the island be cleaned of unexploded ordinances. In addition, Congress also aided the long-awaited transition by allocating \$400 million to assist the state in the environmental cleanup efforts.

Nevertheless, the cleanup process would be nothing short of a disaster. For the duration of the cleanup, the Navy continued to retain access control over the island, which it subsequently contracted out to the Parsons Corporation. Unfortunately, the cleanup did not commence until over five years later, in 1999, due to "extensive problems in finding buried weapons and handling dangerous material while protecting cultural and archaeological sites."<sup>51</sup> When the cleanup was finally completed in 2003, only three-quarters of the island's surface was deemed to

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<sup>50</sup> "History." Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana, 2016. Web. 2 Apr. 2016. < <http://www.protectkahoolaweohana.org/history.html> >.

<sup>51</sup> Corbin (2006)

be clear of unexploded ordinances. Of this area, under ten percent was cleared beyond the required safety minimum of four feet below the surface. As for the remaining quarter of the island, it remained either uncleared or was determined to be unsafe to access. While the cleanup process left much to be desired, perhaps the most consequential outcome from it was the forming of the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) by the Hawai'i legislature to help manage the current and future restoration efforts.<sup>52</sup>

Now with the island back in Hawaiian hands, the discussion regarding Kaho'olawe has shifted from being one about the reclaiming of native land to one focused largely on the rehabilitation of the island and its fragile environment. As one would expect, after continuous years of government-sanctioned bombing and explosive testing, Kaho'olawe was, and continues to be, in desperate need of help. Simply put, it is a wounded island. Even worse than the superficial damage, are the many environmental issues which still remain as a direct result of the military activities conducted during their extended use of the island. While some problems, such as that regarding the abundance of invasive and nonnative plant species, can be traced back to before the United States military's longterm presence, the vast majority are correlated. For one, the loss of topsoil — already a concern due to overgrazing by goats — was only exacerbated by the daily bombings the island underwent between 1941 and 1990. Furthermore, in addition to Operation Sailor Hat, which resulted in the capstone of the island's water supply being broken, the countless explosives tested across the island have also managed to taint the few remaining underground water reserves with chemicals and fuels. Thus, Kaho'olawe not only remains

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

largely uninhabitable but also provides subpar conditions for the restoration its native environment.

Nevertheless, the KIRC has continued to tread forward in their mission to rehabilitate the island. Aside from working tirelessly to ensure the movement continues to have the adequate support and funding needed to realize their outlined goals, the organization also manages the majority of the restoration efforts and access to the island. As such, it began conducting widespread revegetation efforts in 1999 — resulting in over 350,000 new native plants on the island. These plantings not only mark the beginning of new life and hope on Kaho’olawe, but the concerted use of native plant species also demonstrates the instilled respect and care for the island’s cultural significance.

On their end, the PKO has also persevered as it continues to maintain the island as a traditional native Hawaiian cultural center. Primarily through “organizing visits of over 5000 people per year, restoring and rededicating old shrines, and conducting religious ceremonies,” the group has managed to find a purpose beyond their founding political motivations — the education of young Hawaiians on their spiritual and cultural past.<sup>53</sup> As the Kaho’olawe experience has proven invaluable as a source for studying the effects of culture on politics, it is imperative that both current and future generations of Hawaiians be not only aware but engaged in the preservation of their culture. As stated by the PKO on their website, “restoring the island [can] provide a place and a purpose for a new generation of Hawaiians to be trained in the rights

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

and responsibilities of ‘kahu o ka ‘āina’ or stewards of the land,” with some going as far as to claim that it has helped them rediscover their Hawaiian identity.<sup>54</sup>

Since its heyday, the KIRC has funded the vast majority of its operations through a \$44 million trust fund established by the federal government following the return of Kaho’olawe to the state of Hawai’i. While the federal funding helped make numerous restoration efforts possible, after twenty years the endowment is down to just \$350,000 as of February 2016.<sup>55</sup> To some, the dwindling funds are due to the absence of state funding for the KIRC. In fact, the latter had not received any funding from the state up until 2015 when the Hawai’i legislature finally approved \$2 million as part of the commission’s biennium budget.<sup>56</sup> Yet seeing as how the current decrepit state of the island’s environment is largely due to the federal government and its military’s actions, it would seemingly make sense — at least for many involved— that the federal government bear the brunt of the responsibility and pay for the majority of restoration costs. Nevertheless, regardless of who is to blame, the organization’s current and future challenge is clear — secure more funding to continue restoration efforts.

In terms of public support, there are also several non-political ways in which the KIRC can obtain assistance to further serve its mission. On an individual level, one can donate to the organization’s Kaho’olawe Rehabilitation Trust Fund, with the proceeds going directly to help support restoration projects on the island. For those who prefer a more hands-on approach, there is also the possibility of volunteering with the KIRC to help assist directly in the field. Yet

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<sup>54</sup> "Mo'olelo 'Āina" ["Story of the Land"]. Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. N.p., 2016. Web. 2 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.protectkahoalaweohana.org/moolelo-aina.html>>.

<sup>55</sup> Hofschneider, Anita. "Kaho'olawe Reserve Commission Scrabbles For Funding." Honolulu Civil Beat. Peer News, 10 Feb. 2016. Web. 5 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.civilbeat.com/2016/02/kahoalawe-reserve-commission-scrabbles-for-funding/>>.

<sup>56</sup> Chao, Eileen. "Legislature Approves \$2 Million for Kaho'olawe Commission." The Maui News. N.p., 4 May 2015. Web. 3 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.mauinews.com/page/content.detail/id/597699/Legislature-approves--2-million-for-Kahoalawe-commission.html?nav=10>>.



another alternative is the opportunity to participate in cultural trips with the PKO and other programs such as the Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps (HYCC) which sends adolescent volunteers annually to help assist in the restoration of the island's local environment. While some of the latter may not result in increased funding or the completion of labor tasks, it most certainly not only helps educate and raise awareness for the story of Kaho'olawe but also for the culture of Hawai'i.

### **Chapter Three: Paradise's Largest Military Installation**

“As a national playground and as the key to peace in the Pacific, Hawai’i is of tremendous importance.”  
— Lorrin A. Thurston

The youngest and largest of the eight islands, Hawai’i, more commonly known as the Big Island, is not only where one can experience the majesty of Mauna Kea and revere the birthplace of Kamehameha the Great, but also where my family and I call home. However, like much of the state, the island is not void of military presence, nor is it exempt from the debate on land usage. Located roughly in the middle of the Big Island, the Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA) has also long been at the forefront of discussions surrounding the United States military and its controversial leasing, use, and management of native Hawaiian lands. While much like Kaho’olawe in the sense that it too has been subject to an extended military presence, it also bears certain distinct factors which render it significantly different from the latter.

First and foremost, it is located on an island of nearly 200,000 residents. More specifically, the training area — which finds itself situated at 6,200-foot elevation in the high plateau between two of the most sacred sites in the archipelago, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa — is in relatively close proximity to the nearby towns of Hilo and Kamuela, sitting approximately thirty miles from both. Furthermore, one of the island’s most frequently traveled highways, known locally as Saddle Road, also runs along the military grounds, often providing drivers with a brief glimpse of the ongoing tactical training. Yet regardless of its unique characteristics, and its being the single largest Department of Defense installation in the state at 133,000 acres, PTA has remained a relatively low profile military outpost — at least for those outside the islands.

Similar to Kaho’olawe, the high plateau on which PTA finds itself is also of great cultural and ecological importance. In fact, the entire training area is within a designated conservation district. While the rest of the encompassed land has remained either unused or is used solely for cattle grazing, PTA continues to be the only actively used portion within. It is equally important to note the critical habitat that “exists in the northeastern portion of the site for the endangered Palila bird.”<sup>57</sup> The use of this region for restricted training activities is allowed, however there are strict limitations regarding weapons and the number of troops that can participate. Additionally, there is also an area to the northwest of the aforementioned which “is presently being investigated for the possible presence of three endangered plant species.”<sup>58</sup> Along with a cave which many believe could be considered for nomination to the National Register, it is clear that PTA is located in a fragile environment.

As for the territory encompassed by PTA — consisting of three separate parcels of ceded land — it was leased by the State of Hawai’i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to the federal government for military purposes on August 17, 1964. Yet the most important components of the agreement were the duration of the lease and the specific provisions concerning the conservation of the local environment. The property deal between the two parties was for a period of sixty-five years, until 2029, and included a non-negotiable clause stipulating that the military “remove or deactivate all live or blank ammunition upon completion of a training exercise or prior to entry by the said public, whichever is sooner.”<sup>59</sup> Largely due to the

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<sup>57</sup> "Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA)." Global Security. Ed. John Pike. N.p., 2016. Web. 9 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/pohakuloa.htm>>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Clarence Ching (et al) v. William J. Aila Jr. (et al) No. 1:14-cv-00253. Slip op. 1-8. 1st Cir. 28 Apr. 2014. Print. page 5. [Henceforth Ching v. Aila (2014)]

Department of the Attorney General acknowledging the importance of the area's restoration at the time, the aforementioned proviso was intended to help set a precedent for the future management of PTA.

Initially founded during World War II as an artillery live-fire training area for the United States Marine Corps, PTA was home to multiple divisions that fought in the Iwo Jima and Saipan military campaigns.<sup>60</sup> At that time, the facility was still relatively unbuilt with very few structures on the grounds. That would change following the end of World War II as PTA would change hands on two separate occasions; first to the Hawai'i Territorial Guard, equivalent to the present-day Hawai'i National Guard, and then the United States Army in the mid-1950s. It was under the Army's control that much of the 80-acre cantonment area, including the Quonset hut barracks, dining facilities, fueling station, etc. were built. Also constructed during that time was the Bradshaw Army Airfield, built in 1956, and its 3,700-foot runway — both of which are solely used for military purposes.

Ever since then, the base has also helped serve other United States service branches, including the National Guard, Army, Air Force, and Navy, as well as those of allied countries. Aside from being an ideal strategic location for the training of forces in the Pacific region, PTA is used for international training exercises largely because it “offers realistic training in settings not found elsewhere and can support up to 2,300 military personnel.”<sup>61</sup> As such the region has continued to be the setting for countless multipurpose training operations involving troops, weapons, and aircrafts. In fact, the ability to simulate a variety of overseas combat environments,

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<sup>60</sup> "Pōhakuloa Training Area." Military Bases US. Sun Key, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.militarybases.us/army/pohakuloa-training-area/>>.

<sup>61</sup> "Pōhakuloa Training Area." Hawaii Island Economic Development Board. HIEDB, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.hiedb.org/pohakuloa-training-area/>>.

such as that currently faced by troops in the Middle East, has furthered the military's claim that the training area is fundamentally essential to its operations and, more specifically, its combat readiness and preparation.

Yet according to the military, some of the training area's facilities did not meet certain Army standards; chief among these shortcomings was the lack of a modern battle course for infantry platoons to train on. As such, the Army looked to Congress for the necessary funding and received \$29 million in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 for the construction of an "automated infantry platoon battle course."<sup>62</sup> In short, this new facility provides the Army and National Guard with a battlefield fully equipped with state of the art technology such as thermal targets, night illumination devices, battle-sound effects simulators, and so on. As such, it is expected that the battlefield could result in the addition of upwards of 158 live-fire exercises — including reconnaissance and raid operations — for infantry and Stryker brigades every year. This sharp increase in military training exercises will undoubtedly also result in the increase of environmental risks faced by the area as it will involve the use of more weapons and ammunitions. In fact, military experts have predicted that over "1.7 million rounds of rifle and machine gun-class rounds of ammunition," "1,800 grenades and 4,500 assorted munitions including C-4, Mortar, and Claymore explosives," and "9,800 rounds...from attack and assault helicopters," will be fired per year at PTA's new battlefield course.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to the approved building of the \$29 million training battlefield, further support for expansion was voiced by U.S. Representative Colleen Hanabusa. In 2014, she introduced the

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<sup>62</sup> United States. Cong. House. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. 112th Cong., 2nd sess. H. Doc. 4310. Washington: GPO, 2013. Print.

<sup>63</sup> Gaddis, Nate. "Army to Build \$29 Million "Battle Course" at Pohakuloa." Big Island Now. N.p., 16 Aug. 2013. Web. 17 Apr. 2016. < <http://bigislandnow.com/2013/08/16/army-to-build-29-million-battle-course-at-pohakuloa/>

Asia-Pacific Region Priority Act — a bill that would provide additional improvements to PTA. The primary focus of the renovations was the “archaic 1950s-era electrical distribution system [which needed] upgrading to handle modern loads and to accommodate solar energy production.” Also included in the proposed legislation was the building of a longer runway that would be able to accommodate bigger military aircrafts and the transportation of equipment such as the Stryker armored vehicle. While these renovations were undoubtedly needed to render the base a cutting edge facility, they were also seen by many as being a testament to Hanabusa’s genuine political ambitions — interpreting her fervent support for military expansion simply as an avenue to her own Senate bid. After all, as the late U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, a longtime champion of defense spending, demonstrated, politicians in Hawai’i who “regularly [secure] large amounts of federal dollars for the state” often have little trouble cementing their place in local politics as increased military spending generally translates into widespread employment — given that the military is the second largest industry in the state.<sup>64</sup>

Interestingly, despite PTA’s long continued use as a firing range the base was perceived by some as “a vanguard of environmental and cultural protection,” with numerous workers said to be solely dedicated to protecting endangered species and cultural resources.<sup>65</sup> However in the past few years, concerns over the military’s management of the land have been raised amongst native Hawaiians and environmental activists alike. As one would expect, the constant firing of small-arms and crew-served weapons as well as that of artillery and mortars has led many to question the current state of the ecosystem, most notably the water supply and high levels of

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<sup>64</sup> Caron, Will. "Hanabusa Prioritizes Military Money." The Hawaii Independent. Hawaii Independent Corporation/Archipelago, 30 Apr. 2014. Web. 17 Apr. 2016. <<http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/hanabusa-prioritizes-military-money/>>.

<sup>65</sup> "Pōhakuloa Training Area." Military Bases US. Sun Key, n.d. Web. 9 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.militarybases.us/army/pohakuloa-training-area/>>.

toxins and chemicals which have seeped underground. That said, for the native Hawaiian community the health of the land is not the only issue, as the lack of respect and care for the *‘aina* — once again at the hands of the United States military — have become all too familiar.

For native Hawaiians, one of the biggest threats posed by PTA is in fact the environmental damages caused to the local ecosystem and, to an extent even more importantly, Mauna Kea. This high regard for the site is primarily due to the role which the mountain plays in the cultural narrative of Hawai’i. As described by Pualani Kanahēle, an expert on Hawaiian cultural practices,

“Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa to us are *kūpuna* (ancestors). They’re the beginning and the mole, or the taproot, for our island.

Mauna Kea is the first-born to us, like the taro was for food, like coral polyps were for food in the ocean. We have many first-borns. Mauna Kea is the first-born. And so, because Mauna Kea is the first-born, we need to *malama* [care for] Mauna Kea.

That’s where our roots start, that’s where our island begins, that’s where the first rain from Wakea hits, is our mountain. That’s where the first sunlight that rises every morning hits. That mountain is the first for everything we have.”<sup>66</sup>

Thus, at the very heart of Hawaiian culture, the native community’s concern for their sacred mountain and its vicinity, including PTA, is not only understandable but also defensible.

Aside from the stated cultural importance of the region, as previously mentioned PTA is also situated in an extremely fragile environment to begin with. While it has long been known that the heavy munitions firing left an environmentally detrimental footprint in the area — similar to Kaho’olawe — it has taken time for the prolonged effects of the military’s use of the land to become clearer. Currently, one of the leading concerns regarding the military outpost is the large amounts of “unexploded ordnance (UXO) and munitions and explosives of concern

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<sup>66</sup> Kanahēle, Pualani, perf. *Mauna Kea – Temple Under Siege*. Prod. Nā Maka o ka ‘Āina. ‘Ōiwi TV, 2011. Film.

(MEC) [littering] the state-owned ceded land” as a result of previous training operations.<sup>67</sup> While the use of a wide variety of arms, including antitank explosives, air defense artillery, and missiles, undoubtedly raised flags for a concerned few, it is the use of weapons that utilize ammunition containing depleted uranium (DU) which has most contributed to the growing debate surrounding the continued military use of PTA.

Mostly due to a combination of the large-scale military presence in the state and the latter’s use of DU, the radioactive element is not completely foreign to Hawai’i. Besides being used as armor for tanks, the military also employs it “as armor-piercing projectiles because of its high density, ability to self sharpen as it penetrates a target, and propensity to ignite on impact at temperatures exceeding 1000 degrees Fahrenheit.”<sup>68</sup> In Hawai’i, the presence of DU was mostly restricted to the use of M101 spotter rounds between 1961 and 1968 as part of the testing for the Davy Crockett Weapon System, “a recoilless rifle that could fire a 76-pound nuclear bomb.”<sup>69</sup> While since then the military has enforced a policy “[restricting] the use of DU during training to ranges licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission,” — which PTA is not — in January 2006 the Army revealed that “15 tail assemblies from depleted uranium aiming rounds used in [the] 1960s weapon” had been found at PTA.<sup>70</sup> This, along with the fear that Stryker vehicles being tested on the grounds had the capability of firing said ammunition, led many local activists to believe that the military site could present itself as a potential health risk for those residing on the Big Island.

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<sup>67</sup> Ching v. Aila (2014). page 5.

<sup>68</sup> "The Facts about Depleted Uranium in Hawaii." Hawaii State Department of Health. N.p., Aug. 2013. Web. 18 Apr. 2016. <<http://health.hawaii.gov/irhb/files/2013/12/Hawaii-DOH-DU-Fact-Sheet-8-21-131.pdf>>.

<sup>69</sup> Cole, William. "Doubts Remain about Depleted Uranium." Honolulu Advertiser. N.p., 14 May 2007. Web. 20 Apr. 2016. <<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2007/May/14/In/FP705140355.html>>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



In April 2014, just days after Hanabusa's expansion bill was proposed, Clarence Ching and Mary Maxime Kahalelio — both native Hawaiians with extensive ties to the Big Island — jointly filed a lawsuit against William J. Aila Jr., the Chairperson of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), claiming the state had failed to comply with the terms of PTA's lease agreement. Interestingly, the litigation did not hold the federal government responsible but rather placed the blame on the state for failing to live up to its trust responsibilities as trustee of the land. According to the original lease agreement, the state government is obligated "to protect, care for, and maintain trust property" and can be in breach of contract if it mismanages trust assets or allows damages to occur to the said trust lands.<sup>71</sup> In short, the state failed to fulfill its duty to protect the ceded lands at PTA and, as such, not only faced growing pressure from environmental activists but also members of the Big Island's native Hawaiian community.

In light of the lawsuit, the state finally conducted its own environmental inspection of PTA later in 2014. Aside from DLNR photographs which clearly show the damage done onto the ceded lands by continuous military operations, the Army also acknowledged the existence of a document it never sent to DLNR concerning the delayed cleanup of a former bazooka range. In it, the Army admits that the area "was found to be heavily contaminated on the surface with material potentially presenting an explosive hazards (MPPEH) and munitions debris (MD)" and that the latter presented "imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, or welfare or the environment based on the potential explosive or fire safety hazard if not addressed."<sup>72</sup> This admission, paired with the prior discovery of DU as well as that of a groundwater reserve under

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<sup>71</sup> Ching v. Aila (2014). page 7.

<sup>72</sup> Caron, Will. "BLNR to Discuss Pohakuloa Lawsuit on Friday." The Hawaii Independent. Hawaii Independent Corporation/Archipelago, 12 Aug. 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/blnr-to-discuss-pohakuloa-lawsuit-on-friday>>.

the site, has not only given the local community good reason to question the state's commitment to "make every reasonable effort to remove unexploded ordnances," but also call for changes to be made to the overall management of the land.<sup>73</sup>

As such, the plaintiffs main objective was to "prevent the defendants from executing (or entering into) a new lease — or an extension of the existing lease — until the defendants have fulfilled their trust responsibilities by ensuring that the terms of the existing lease have been satisfactorily fulfilled."<sup>74</sup> Simply put, discussions regarding lease extension for PTA should be dismissed until the aforementioned unexploded ordnances and traces of depleted uranium are completely cleared from the grounds. As the original lease between the federal government and the State of Hawai'i is set to expire in 2029, the Army has continuously sought to sign an extension to continue their presence in the area earlier rather than later — especially with all the controversy surrounding their management thereof. Nevertheless, as long as the local native Hawaiian community has any say in the matter, the process of extending the lease will continue to be an uphill battle.

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<sup>73</sup> Isaki, Bianca. "Ching v. Ailā: Protecting Public Trust Lands at Pōhakuloa." The Hawaii Independent. Hawaii Independent Corporation/ Archipelago, 18 Dec. 2014. Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/ching-v-ailaa-protecting-public-trust-lands-at-phakuloa>>.

<sup>74</sup> Caron, Will. "BLNR to Discuss Pohakuloa Lawsuit on Friday." The Hawaii Independent. Hawaii Independent Corporation/Archipelago, 12 Aug. 2015. Web. 22 Apr. 2015. <<http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/blnr-to-discuss-pohakuloa-lawsuit-on-friday>>.

## Conclusion

*“I ku mau mau”*  
Stand together.  
— Davida Malo

Land is without a doubt the most prized commodity in Hawai’i. There is no substitute for it as there is only so much of it. As such, it has long been at the center of heated political disputes between native Hawaiians and the United States government. More specifically, ever since the annexation of Hawai’i the islands’ strategic location in the Pacific region has been readily capitalized on by the United States military. In the cases of both Kaho’olawe and the Pōhakuloa Training Area (PTA), the military either seized or leased land to conduct training operations that would ultimately lead to profound environmental and cultural damages to the respective sites. While PTA is still currently being used by the United States Army and has, to some degree, shown lesser negative environmental effects, the continued struggle to rehabilitate Kaho’olawe’s native environment is indisputable evidence of past military oversights.

In some ways, it may be too late for Kaho’olawe as the damage has already been done and all that remains is the long wait for the wounds to finally heal. However, all is not yet lost for those who stand opposed to the Army’s ongoing leasing and use of PTA for live-fire military exercises. While past mistakes have undoubtedly caused the military to revise their management of these occupied lands for the better, it is also important to continue to learn from these mistakes. As the admission by the military that there were traces of depleted uranium found at PTA dating back to the 1960s and the lawsuit filed by Clarence Ching and Mary Maxime Kahaulelio have shown, there have certainly been a few discrepancies in both the state’s and Army’s management of the Big Island installation. It is imperative that mistakes such as these are

not repeated again. Instead, both native Hawaiians and the United States Army must work together to resolve these environmental issues and put aside their political pride and differences. Much like with Kaho'olawe, the land is in pain but nobody is truly listening — instead they are too busy arguing.

When regarding the case of Kaho'olawe, the military ultimately made the right decision. For once in their embroiled history, the United States had a chance to give back to the Hawaiian people what was rightfully theirs — and it did. Now with PTA, the prevailing hope is that the Army will come to understand the situation and make the necessary adjustments in order to prevent a similar outcome. Whether in the form of shared land management responsibilities between the Army and native Hawaiian organizations or even the contracting of an external party to manage the installation's environmental aspects, such an agreement must be reached.

While some in the native Hawaiian community would undoubtedly prefer a more resolute policy, compromise is the best option. It may not be the most appealing plan but it does present the most foreseeable immediate upside as shared land management or even outsourced land management are far more likely to be agreed upon by the military in a timely manner than anything a prolonged legal dispute aimed at complete lease abolishment would ultimately accomplish. After all the PTA lease agreement, which dates back to 1964, does not expire until 2029 and, not for lack of effort, has yet to be renewed in light of the criticism the military has faced due to its lack of adequate management at the site.

The lack of an expedient resolution to the ongoing dispute has reawaken a long felt sentiment in the native Hawaiian community. For too long now, native Hawaiians have felt like

strangers in their own land; as if “[they] could play a part, but [they] could not write the play.”<sup>75</sup> This has caused many to draw on core values of Hawaiian culture — chief among them, the *aloha* spirit. The notion of constant positivity surely extends itself to aspects of culture and politics, as it preaches tolerance and promotes compassion. Throughout the years of pain and suffering Hawai’i has faced, the prevailing means by which to reach desired social and political change has remained nonviolent civil disobedient acts such as those carried out by the Protect Kaho’olawe ‘Ohana. Without the use of violence, the *Aloha ‘Āina* movement has managed to continue to make “pathways for the proper use of Hawai’i’s natural resources, her people, her land, her waters, and all that comes willingly from the ‘*āina*.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, there is assuredly hope that the future management of military occupied Hawaiian lands will be much ameliorated — having learned from the past — if an agreement can ultimately be reached between native Hawaiians and the United States military.

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<sup>75</sup> Noyes, Martha H. *Then There Were None*. Honolulu: Bess Press, 2003. Print. page 81.

<sup>76</sup> Kaho’olawe documentary (2011)

## Hawaiian Terms and Definitions

- *Aloha 'Āina*: love the land
- *hula*: dance
- *mo'olelo*: story
- *'āina*: land
- *mana*: spiritual power
- *heiaus*: temples
- *Kāne*: chief god, in addition also god of forests and all their resources including trees, medicinal plants and leaves, etc.
- *Hina*: goddess of the moon
- *Lono*: god of agriculture and peace
- *Haumea*: goddess of birth
- *Kanaloa*: god of the ocean
- *Kū*: god of war
- *aloha*: love
- *kapa*: cloth
- *ali'i nui*: high chief
- *kānaka*: commoner
- *iliahi*: sandalwood
- *kahuna*: priests
- *kūpuna*: elder or ancestor
- *ko'a*: fishing shrine
- *opihī*: sea snails
- *na'au*: guts
- *malama*: care for

## Timeline of Hawai'i

- **150 BC:** believed to be the arrival of the first Hawaiians from Polynesia
- **January 18, 1778:** Captain James Cook discovers the Hawaiian Islands aboard the HMS *Resolution* and *Discovery*
- **February 1779:** Captain Cook and his men return to Hawai'i after searching for Northwest Passage and he is ultimately killed at Kealahou Bay
- **1810:** The Hawaiian Islands are finally unified under the rule of Kamehameha I
- **1819:** Kamehameha I dies, his son Liholiho (Kamehameha II) would succeed him
- **1824:** Kamehameha II dies on diplomatic visit to London, Kamehameha III (Kamehameha III) assumes the throne
- **1830:** Under the rule of Kamehameha III, Kaho'olawe becomes penal colony
- **1839:** Bill of Rights of the Hawaiian Islands is introduced by Kamehameha III
- **1840:** The first Constitution of Hawai'i is drafted by Kamehameha III
- **1845:** Kamehameha III creates the Land Commission
- **1848:** The Great Mahele is enacted by Kamehameha III
- **1850:** The Land Commission deems workers eligible to be awarded land titles, non-Hawaiians also allowed to purchase land
- **1854:** Kamehameha III dies
- **1858:** First ranch lease on the island of Kaho'olawe
- **1876:** King Kalakaua signs the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States regarding trade tariffs and the leasing of Pearl Harbor
- **1887:** The Hawaiian League forces King Kalakaua to sign the Bayonet Constitution, all but strips him of his political power
- **1891:** King Kalakaua dies, his sister Queen Lili'uokalani assumes the throne
- **1893:** Queen Lili'uokalani signs new revised constitution restoring power to Hawaiian monarchy
- **January 17, 1898:** The Committee of Safety successfully overthrows Queen Lili'uokalani and replaces her with a Provisional Government

- **1918:** The Territorial Board of Agriculture declare Kaho'olawe a Forest Reserve
- **December 7, 1941:** The attacks on Pearl Harbor, Kaho'olawe by U.S. Navy seized days later
- **1953:** President Eisenhower transfers the title of Kaho'olawe to U.S. Navy
- **1956:** Bradshaw Army Airfield is built at Pōhakuloa Training Area
- **1959:** Hawai'i becomes the 50th state
- **August 17, 1964:** Pōhakuloa Training Area is leased by U.S. Army from State of Hawai'i
- **1965:** Operation Sailor Hat takes place on Kaho'olawe
- **January 4, 1976:** The "Kaho'olawe Nine" land on the contested island
- **March 1977:** George Helm and Kimo Mitchell are lost at sea
- **1980:** Consent decree requires U.S. Navy to help in certain restoration efforts
- **October 22, 1990:** President Bush discontinues use of Kaho'olawe as weapons range
- **1993:** Agreed upon by U.S. government that Kaho'olawe will be returned to Hawai'i, \$400 given to fund cleanup efforts
- **1994:** The U.S. Navy officially returns Kaho'olawe to the State of Hawai'i
- **1999:** Cleanup efforts on Kaho'olawe finally begin, revegetation efforts commence
- **2003:** Kaho'olawe unexploded ordinance cleanup finally completed (only three quarters is actually finished)
- **2006:** U.S. Army reveals traces of depleted uranium found at Pōhakuloa Training Area
- **2014:** \$29 million training battlefield proposed by U.S. Representative Colleen Hanabusa, Ching (et al) v. Aila (et al) lawsuit regarding state land management
- **2015:** Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission receives state funding (\$2 million) for first time
- **2016:** KIRC funds expected to dry up
- **2029:** Pōhakuloa Training Area original lease agreement set to expire



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