

Making a nation and faking a state: illegal annexation and sovereignty miseducation in Hawai'i

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Abstract: As a result of the re-emergence of the 1897 Kū'ē protest petitions and more recent scholarship among academics, which counter the U.S. history of annexation and occupation, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa scholars have been addressing the discourse on De-occupation instead of pursuing a nation-within-a-nation arrangement of U.S. federal recognition.

This article describes the February 2016 'Aha Na'i Aupuni, a self-governance and constitution-writing meeting for and by Native Hawaiians, and includes the first-hand observations of one of the participating delegates. This Na'i Aupuni process is tied in with the recent protests against the Thirty Meter Telescope project on Mauna Kea on Hawai'i Island in early 2015. The momentum of the Mauna Kea protests has led to a renewed sense of responsibility to educate on the history of illegal annexation, and on the significance of land for Hawaiians and Hawaiian sovereignty in particular.

Keywords: indigenous, sovereignty, education, resistance, federal recognition, Hawai'i

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The question of self-governance after the rediscovery of the Kū'ē Petitions

In February 2016, a 20-day self-governance and constitution-writing meeting called the 'Aha Na'i Aupuni was held by a group of unelected delegates at the Royal Hawaiian Golf Club in Kailua on the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i. Both on the ground and in Facebook discussion forums, the reactions to the Na'i Aupuni process greatly differed, with many considering it to be fake self-governance. There were two general factions, one that was pushing federal recognition and one that was termed the "indepen-

dence caucus". Throughout the 'Aha Na'i Aupuni, delegates moved from one side to the other and convinced those undecided, to the dismay of those on the outside, who had been relying on a reasonable outcome. In the end, the new "constitution" was voted 88 in favour, 30 in opposition with 1 abstention. Strategic planning against the process of this fabricated self-governance entity includes re-educating the population on sovereignty matters and continued, prolonged U.S. occupation. In order to comprehend the recent De-occupation and re-education movements, it is important to review the history of

false representation of Hawaiian self-governance, due to misconceptions on the U.S. annexation of Hawai'i.

The Hawaiian archipelago was unified in 1810 under the rule of King Kamehameha I, as a sovereign monarchy that by 1843 had almost 100 consulates all over the world recognizing this status. In 1996, the Kū'ē Petitions against Hawai'i annexation to the USA were rediscovered and turned around the discourse on federal negotiations with the USA. 99 years earlier, in 1897, these 556 pages of signatures were gathered and presented to the U.S. Congress as proof that an overwhelming majority of

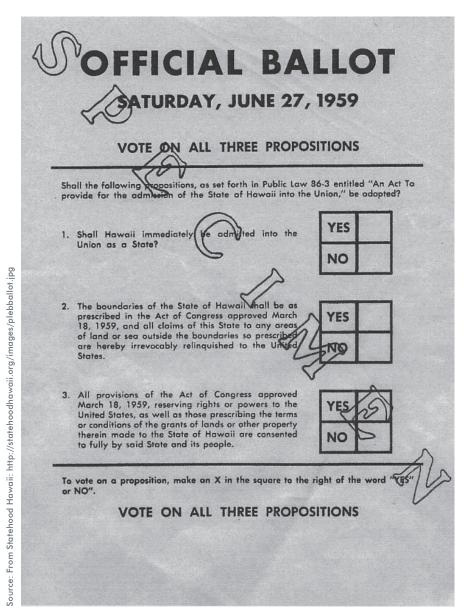


Figure 1: 1959 Statehood Ballot

Hawai'i's citizens, both Kānaka Maoli and others, opposed annexation and denied any formal bilateral Treaty of Annexation. Nowadays, aware of the illegitimacy of annexation, sovereignty activists have come to term the "State of Hawai'i" the "Fake State of Hawai'i" in an act of protest. The Kū'ē Petitions now showed that accepting federal recognition under U.S. occupation would be a lesser status than calling for the Deoccupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

What pressed many to nevertheless participate in the process of Na'i Aupuni, rather than to forfeit the chance to voice their opinions on the sovereignty debate, was the preface taken from the previous name roll and recognition process, the Kana'iolowalu Roll: "Native Hawaiians who choose not to be included on the official roll risk waiving their right, and the right of their

children and descendants to be legally and politically acknowledged as Native Hawaiians and to participate in a future convention to reorganize the Hawaiian nation ... and as a result may also be excluded from being granted rights of inclusion (citizenship), rights of participation (voting) and rights to potential benefits that may come with citizenship (e.g., land use rights, monetary payments, scholarship, etc.)." (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2013). Correspondingly, the Hawai'i statehood vote in 1959 had run along the same principle of a closed vote, between the choice of remaining a U.S. territory or becoming a U.S. state, no question on regaining sovereign status as the Kingdom of Hawai'i (Fig. 1). In contrast, the 1953 United Nations General Assembly advises that there is to be no electoral interference of a "foreign government" in the self-governing vote of a territory (UN GA, 1953). Would that not be the USA in itself? In protest to the vote, participation had been marginal, and statehood prevailed.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Na'i Aupuni

The goal of Na'i Aupuni was to elect 40 delegates of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) ancestry, throughout the Hawaiian archipelago and those resident on the U.S. continent, to write a constitutional paper for self-governance. It was the most recent of several failed attempts of what critics claimed are mainly a push for tribal recognition by the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) in the name of "nation-building". On December 12, 2015, the Na'i Aupuni election was terminated due to a legal case that challenged the discriminatory ethnic exclusion of the election (Na'i Aupuni, 2015). Instead, the election commission circumvented the process without counting the votes, and invited all 154 current nominees to participate in the proceedings (Na'i Aupuni 2016). These were unvetted and unelected nominees, who in some cases had stood for nomination solely to disrupt the process.

The fabricated self-determination being promised by Na'i Aupuni, under the auspices of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), was only open to those willing to work within the U.S. domestic system of law. OHA is a government agency tasked with Kanaka Maoli matters, such as specific programs for the betterment of Native Hawaiian health and education. However, the premeditated and funded nation-building process by OHA is an extension of the failed attempts of "native rolls" collecting names, such as Kana'iolowalu mentioned above (Act 195). Act 195 is clear in stating a move towards federal recognition, generally seen to be a lesser status of nation-within-a-nation than a sovereign nation-state in itself: "The purpose of this Act is to recognize Native Hawaiians as the only indigenous, aboriginal, maoli population of Hawai'i. It is also the State's desire to support the continuing development of a reorganized Native Hawaiian governing entity and, ultimately, the federal recognition of Native Hawaiians." (State of Hawai'i, 2011). In a seeming rebellion of the OHA and thus U.S. executive involvement, the OHA CEO Kamana'opono Crabbe had in May 2014 raised the following questions in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry: "First, does

the Hawaiian Kingdom, as a sovereign independent State, continue to exist as a subject of international law? (...) if the Hawaiian Kingdom continues to exist and the sole-executive agreements are binding on the United States, have the members of the Native Hawaiian Roll Commission, Trustees and staff of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs incurred criminal liability under international law?". Crabbe's questions were meant to expose the process and those promoting it as simultaneously counter to both independence goals and U.S. domestic laws. The letter was shortly thereafter rescinded by a follow-up letter sent by the other OHA Trustees, although another individual trustee confirmed his support (Hussey, 2014). The letter and questions were left unanswered by Kerry.

Critical participants of the 'Aha Na'i Aupuni, who pulled out of the proceedings before elections/meetings or in the end voted against the "constitution" and the "Gated 88" – a reference to the gated golf course - noted particular preassembled ideas for the "constitution" that explicitly excluded national independence. During the meetings there were vocal protests with arrests at the golf course. Among the protestors were known cultural leaders like Walter Ritte, who had eliminated himself from nomination and was physically removed from the golf course, when attempting to be a non-participant observer of the proceedings in the first week. The leader of the Nation of Hawai'i with its sovereign land tract in nearby Waimanalo, Bumpy Kanahele, had participated and withdrawn from the 'Aha Na'i Aupuni earlier than midway through it. One of the professors, who continued working within the 'Aha towards independence, was Williamson Chang from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Richardson School of Law, drafting working papers for a provisional Government.

Throughout the 'Aha Na'i Aupuni meetings, emails were being leaked from the participant list serve and smartphone videos uploaded into Facebook discussion forums for the benefit of those being denied observation. One of the participants of the 'Aha's "independence caucus" and subsequent "international committee", journalist Ka'iulani Milham, later exposed the opaque and rushed drafting of the "constitution" in a series for the "Hawaii Independent": "If developing the best product possible was really the goal of the convention and, at the planned ending of the pro-



Figure 2: Mauna a Wākea mural at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Campus Center by Haley Kailiehu

cess, that product had clearly not been agreed upon, wouldn't the logical move be to extend the process and continue working? Originally, the 'Aha was meant to last for eight weeks, not four. And that was with only 40 different viewpoints to incorporate." (Milham, 2016).

In the meantime, a declaration was written denouncing the 'Aha and signed by independence advocates on the outside of the gated convention, among others, professors Jon Osorio, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, and Kaleikoa Ka'eo from the University of Hawai'i: "The 'Aha 2016 stems from a top down approach in which all of the terms: the use of Hawaiian trust monies; participation; timeline; representation; the convention, and outcomes have been determined by a small number of people, including former Governor Abercrombie; the State legislature; the Governorappointed Kana'iolowalu commissioners; the OHA Board of Trustees; the OHA-selected Na'i Aupuni Board; and approximately 150 self-appointed 'aha participants. Each of these parties is complicit in driving an agenda that has divided our people more than ever." (Hawaii Independent, 2016).

Mauna Kea and contemporary indigenous resistance

The reason so many Hawaiians were watching and protesting the Na'i Aupuni proceedings was tied to the dynamic and on-going "We Are Mauna Kea" movement that sprung up in early April 2015 (Caron, 2015). Among those arrested protesting at the Aha Na'i Aupuni were also main actors of the Mauna Kea movement. Mauna Kea on Hawai'i Island is the tal-

lest mountain on earth measured from the seabed to the highest point of its summit. The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), the project which initiated this renewed consciousness to guard the ancestral land, is to be 18 stories high, to have a construction footprint of 8 acres, and to sit on 5 acres of land (KAHEA, 2015). Building laws on the island do not even allow for any structure of this height. Construction for the first of currently 13 telescopes began in the late 1960s and this was the only one actually agreed upon, but over the decades a dozen were to follow with inadequate permits. Environmental impacts of the project are seen in the destruction of the habitat of endangered flora and fauna, only to be found on Mauna Kea, and in the potential contamination of the main aquifer of Hawai'i Island beneath the summit of Mauna Kea. The protests against the telescopes on Mauna Kea go back several decades, however, the involvement of the younger generation and of students, as well as the use of social media, helped gain a different level of awareness on the conflict.

In October of 2013, a mural for Mauna Kea was painted at the Campus Center of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, calling out the university's claim to be a "Hawaiian place of learning" while they bulldoze the most sacred sites (Fig. 2). The university newspaper "Ka Leo", who hosted the mural event, painted over this protest. After pressure from the Native Hawaiian student group "HauMĀNA", Ka Leo apologized for the censorship. On October 7, 2014 the ground-breaking ceremony for the TMT was disrup-

ted and ultimately stopped by Mauna Kea activists. "We are Protectors, not Protestors" is a common slogan for this movement, as the emphasis lies on protecting the sacred land rather than protesting the construction project as is in this location. On April 2, 2015, the so-called protectors, now more numerous, blocked the access road to the construction site. 31 were arrested in the peaceful protests, and thousands began showing their support for Mauna Kea. Social media and the speed in which it spread around the world showed a great solidarity movement with the hashtags #WeAreMaunaKea, #protectmaunakea, #aoleTMT, and #TMTshutdown. Another standoff on June 24, 2015, with approximately 700 protectors including children, resulted in more targeted arrests and the Hawai'i Governor David Ige proclaimed "emergency rules" for trespassing on the summit road. The emergency rules were only directed towards protectors, and cultural practitioners were restricted from their customary visits, while astronomers and stargazing tour participants were officially permitted to travel on the road. The emergency rules were deemed unconstitutional and thrown out after protectors had been arrested nonetheless, as once in the case of a group of seven women and one man arrested during prayer (Kelleher, 2015). Currently, thanks to a Hawai'i Supreme Court ruling in favour of the protectors, a lawsuit has won against the TMT for the time-being. The Supreme Court ruled that the TMT did not follow the appropriate building permit, the Conservation District Use Permit (CDUP), and was to renew its permit application process, which has stalled the project indefinitely.

The arguments against the TMT project and the Na'i Aupuni process stem from the complex sociopolitical factors to keep in mind when discussing Kanaka Maoli sovereignty in Hawai'i. In the historical context of U.S. American imperialism, Hawai'i was an independent nation-state overthrown and occupied by the USA. The demographics of the State of Hawai'i that depict the population as multiethnic with a non-white majority gloss over the marginalization and assimilation of the indigenous people of the land. However, the demographics of the citizens of the independent Kingdom of Hawai'i until 1893 were multiethnic

as well. In 1993, the Apology Resolution was signed by U.S. President Bill Clinton admitting to the overthrow on its 100th anniversary. Revealingly, its phrasing delegitimizes the argument of a multiethnic nation-state and only "apologizes" to the indigenous population: "Whereas, the indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States, either through their monarchy or through a plebiscite or referendum" (U.S. Congress, 1993).

Due to the long held misconception of the legality of annexation, there are now two main discourses of the factions in the Hawaiian sovereignty movements, with the one side - the Hawaiian Kingdom "monarchists" - disputing the use of the term "indigenous" for Kānaka Maoli. The De-occupation proponents argue on an international law basis that the Hawaiian Kingdom remains an internationally-recognized nation-state under prolonged occupation, whereas the Decolonization advocates argue within the frame of domestic U.S. laws and are in part for the status of federal recognition. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua contends that these concepts and movements need not be exclusive to another, as she asserts that Kanaka Maoli are in fact "indigenous", but to Hawai'i, not to the USA (Goodyear-Ka'opua, 2011). She argues for conceptualizing decolonial responses for sovereignty from outside the occupier's framework instead of from within, and advocates for collective action and decision-making for land rights and nationhood from an indigenous perspective, effectively bridging the two main discourses.

Aloha 'Āina

The concept of aloha 'aina, the Hawaiian "love of the land", which also translates to "patriot", is fundamental to this indigenous perspective. To understand aloha 'aina, a rough "translation" of both 'aina and aloha into the English language and concepts is needed here, despite the shortcomings in the connotations conveyed. For the context of the term "aloha 'aina", aloha would be translated as "love". The everyday use of the term "Aloha" is not merely "hello" and "goodbye", as it holds a more vital life-giving essence for Hawaiians. The understanding of 'aina as simply "land"

requires a more in-depth description to highlight the profound meaning of the land to Kānaka Maoli epistemology. The etymology of 'āina indicates the root as the word 'ai and shows the value of the land in nurturing and sustaining life: "Āina also conveys the sense of arable land. It is essentially a term coined by an agricultural people, deriving as it does from the noun or verb 'ai, meaning food or to eat, with the substantive na added, so that it may be rendered either "that which feeds" or "the feeder". 'Āina thus has connotations in relation to people as conveying the sense of "feeder", birthplace, and homeland" (Ho'omanawanui, 2008: 124).

Mauna Kea protector Ku'uipo Freitas, among those arrested at least twice on the mountain, explains her understanding of the term: "Aloha 'āina is not only a phrase I say, but also a way of living; of conducting oneself. It doesn't only mean love for the land. It has kaona [meaning] to it that most people don't realize. When we say 'āina, we don't just mean land. It means all things in relation to the land that we live on and survive on. It is the love we have for our language, culture, resources, ali'i [chiefs], chants, stories, legends, people and more. It is the encompassment of everything to do with our culture and history as a people of Hawai'i. You must show aloha 'āina through your actions, not just your words." (Hermes, 2016). In a quote by James Kaulia, President of the Hawaiian Patriotic League "Hui Aloha 'Āina'', which collected 21,000 of the Kū'ē Petitions' signatures, the term aloha 'āina is translated as "patriot" from the meaning of "love of the land": "Do not be afraid, be steadfast in aloha for your land and be united in thought. Protest forever the annexation of Hawai'i until the very last aloha 'āina [lives]." (Silva, 2004: 146-147).

Miseducation and E(A)ducation

As a result Noenoe Silva's rediscovery of the Kū'ē Petitions in 1996, the sovereignty advocates are now promoting the De-occupation discourse over the Decolonization one. Fully-aware that the greater public is still misinformed on the illegitimacy of U.S. annexation, due to the Department of Education upholding much of the standard U.S. curriculum in the "Fake State of Hawai'i", many of the advocates are taking it upon themselves to re-educate or "EAducate" on Hawaiian history and sovereignty. Mauna Kea



Figure 3: Stone ahu at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Bachman Hall

activists came up with the slogan "EAducate" and Ku'uipo Freitas explains the wordplay on "EA" and "education": "There are many meanings to the word ea. These include sovereignty, life, air, breath, to rise and to swell up. All of these meanings are goals for Hawai'i Aloha 'Āina, to raise awareness and knowledge that the history we thought we knew was in fact all lies. We are in a time of great change, and so I believe the meaning of this slogan "EAducate" is to educate in the Hawaiian way; to see things the same way our kūpuna [elders, ancestors] saw things. It's an amazing time to be witnessing this." (Hermes, 2016). Hawai'i Aloha 'Āina is "a free Hawaiian educational series that aims to overcome the indoctrination, denationalization and Americanization of our people that has been occurring ever since the illegal overthrow of our queen Lili'uokalani on January 17, 1893," she explains (ibid.). Even Honolulu's McKinley High School - renamed after William McKinley, the U.S. President that had unilaterally declared the territory's annexation – also features a statue of McKinley holding a depiction of the non-existent annexation treaty. A travelling art project to protest this statue is the "No Treaty of Annexation" installation that depicts the repeated slogan on signs, while the reverse side depicts names of the Kū'ē petitioners (Fig. 4).

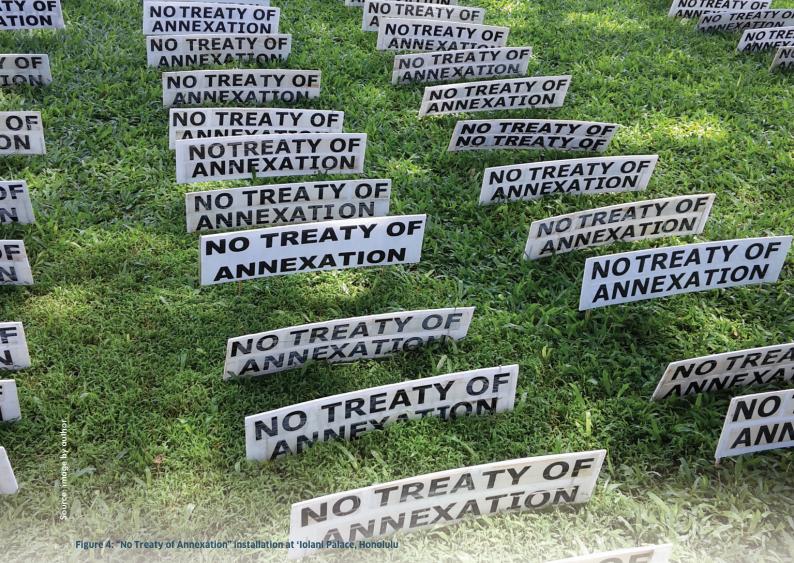
Two recent examples further illustrate this resurgence of aloha 'āina and re-education on two distinct levels of the state apparatus: the public university and the U.S. federal election process. As a manner of "reclaiming" a particular parcel of land, during the highpoint of the Mauna Kea protests in April 2015, the University of Hawai'i at Manoa students, faculty, and community members, had erected a stone ahu (altar) on the Lawn of Bachman Hall at the entrance of the university campus. Rocks had been passed down from person to person from the Hawaiian Studies Center on Dole Street to the lawn located at the intersection of University Avenue and Dole St. (Fig. 3). The approval of this form of Hawaiian resistance on the lawn of the flagship campus signifies both a greater acceptance and education of Hawaiian traditions within the university, a move perhaps unthought-of only two decades ago. In another attempt of participatory civil politics within the U.S. system and running with the momentum of the Mauna Kea protectors, a few of James Kaulia's descendants had begun collecting signatures to reactivate the existing political party Aloha 'Āina Party, named after the Hawaiian Patriotic League or Hui Aloha 'Āina. 707 signatures were required to establish the new party to be on the state ballot for the upcoming 2016 U.S. elections ('Aloha 'Āina Party, 2015). However, of the over 1000 collected, the signatures accepted as valid were barely off this target. Fortunately, parallel to this and in response to the exclusivity of the 'Aha Na'i Aupini, an independent movement with a series of its own meetings was launched on the

various islands as the 'Aha Aloha 'Āina in February as well ('Aha Aloha 'Āina, 2016). Community participants of this 'Aha Aloha 'Āina corresponded in part with the vocal critics of the 'Aha Na'i Aupini and remained skeptical about the ability to "change the system" from within.

The Hawaiian Patriotic League and Kaulia's aloha 'āina quote against annexation confirm that the resistance against U.S. occupation and the opposition to corporate interests on Mauna Kea cannot be separated, and that the concept of aloha aina is the essential narrative that advances both protests. Aloha 'āina is indispensable in the calls for independence, food sovereignty, and in regaining the stewardship to the occupied lands. Another statement by Goodyear-Ka'ōpua illustrates the value of and interrelation to the land: "The actions and words of activists (...) remind us that Hawaiian social movement is at its best when, rather than demanding that the land be given back to Hawaiians, it is getting Hawaiians back on the land." (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2011: 155-156).

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All translations from Pukui & Elbert's Hawaiian Dictionary, also online at: http://wehewehe.org/

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