

INTRODUCTION

Ethnography of Decolonization in Hawai'i

The term *decolonization* was applied, after the Second World War, to the achievement of independence and recognition of indigenous national governments by former colonial rulers. Decolonization, in this sense, was synonymous with formal national liberation and was understood as an achievement in the public domain of politics, often at the behest of the colonial power (Flint 1983, 390; Nkrumah 1970, 101–103).¹ But in the late twentieth century, decolonization took on different meanings. Rather than being understood as a formal event initiated at the center of colonial power, decolonization was perceived as a process internal to the colonized that promised “the fuller redemption and realization of a people” (Nkrumah 1970, 105).² In Hawai'i, at the turn of the twentieth century, this deeper meaning of decolonization was occurring at the intimate level of the body and soul and collectively at the level of community.

Canonical works on the trauma of colonialism (Nandy 1983; Fanon 1963, 1967; Memi 1965) thoroughly explored the wretchedness of being colonized but did not necessarily theorize the means of achieving decolonization or explore practices that might lead to healing. The stories told in *Potent Mana: Lessons in Power and Healing* move this conversation about the healing of the colonized forward by exploring the theories and practices of Native Hawaiians engaged in creating the real means to achieve decolonization.

Potent Mana explores Kanaka Maoli, or the Native Hawaiian, cultural, and political struggle against American neocolonialism in the late twentieth century. This book focuses on the broad array of efforts used by Native Hawaiians in the mid-1990s that stressed healing the wounds and transcending the shame of colonialism. For Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) being colonized was—is—a violent process that for over two centuries disrupted Hawaiian life and health.

Being colonized meant that the very possibility of Hawaiian existence—the possibility of specifically Kanaka Maoli ways of being and knowing—was deliberately erased. Being colonized meant foreign penetration deep into the psyches, souls, and cells of indigenous Hawaiians. It meant death and disease on both the structural level of community, as well as at the personal level of bodies and souls.

For Native Hawaiians decolonization depended upon recognition of the potency of ancestral knowledge as a guide for contemporary well-being. Hau-nani-Kay Trask, a poet and political scientist, described the centrality of ancestral knowledge for Hawaiians in the late twentieth century:

We face our past: *ka wā mamua*—the time before. The past holds our wisdom and our *kūpuna* (elders') knowledge. As our culture tells us, we are guided in the present on the path so well followed by our ancestors in the past. (Trask 1996, 912)

At its most fundamental, decolonization was about overcoming the shame of being colonized. It meant that the ways in which Hawaiians had internalized the degradation of colonialism had to be confronted and overcome. It required a process of remembering the traditions of ancestors and reinterpreting and rewriting histories that had only been told from a colonial point of view. Decolonization was about challenging Western interpretations of Hawaiian culture and history and reinterpreting from a Native point of view to meet the needs of indigenous Hawaiians in the twenty-first century.

Decolonization meant healing. One of the most important domains of decolonization practice involved the reemergence of healing methods and ways of perceiving health and disease that derived from ancestral knowledge. It meant a reinvigoration of specifically Hawaiian epistemologies for understanding the connection between humans, the environment, and the divine. It meant a return to specifically Hawaiian methods for achieving health that were outlawed and suppressed by colonial rule. It meant dreaming, imagining, and seeing before and beyond the times of Western rule. At the most profound level, decolonization was the recognition of the potent mana of Hawai'i.

POTENT MANA

Mana, according to Clifford Geertz, was a favorite term of anthropologists (*tabu* and *potlatch* were others) that seemed to provide a conceptual key to unlocking the mysteries of other cultures (Geertz 1983, 157). As a reified Polynesian term rendered intelligible to the West through scholarly debates, the meaning of mana generated a great deal of literature.

In the early twentieth century, Marcel Mauss explicated *mana* as a “magical force,” as “the talisman and source of wealth that is authority itself,” and as a sign of “social superiority” (Mauss 1990[1925], 38, 8, 75). In *The Gift* (1925), Mauss made the Polynesian concept of *mana* central to his argument about gift exchange and reciprocity.

To be first, the most handsome, the luckiest, the strongest, and wealthiest—this is what is sought after, and how it is obtained. Later, the chief gives proof of his *mana* by redistributing what he has just received to his vassals and relations. He sustains his rank among the chiefs by giving back bracelets for necklaces, hospitality for visits, etc. In this case riches are from every viewpoint as much a means of retaining prestige as something useful. Yet are we sure that it is any different in our own society, and that even with us riches are not above all a means of lord-ing it over our fellow men? (Mauss 1990[1925], 75)

Mauss’s glossing of *mana*, along with Durkheim’s (1965[1915]), was later challenged by anthropologist Raymond Firth. Firth (1940) argued that the term had become merely theoretical, a heuristic device for Western scholars seeking to understand the intricacies of “primitive religion.” Based upon ethnographic data from his study of the Tikopia in the southwestern Pacific, Firth doubted that the term as deployed by Mauss and other Western scholars bore much resemblance to the term’s use in “native phraseology” (Firth 1940, 487). According to Firth:

A Tikopian chief is regarded as having a peculiar responsibility towards his people. He is considered to be able through his relations with the ancestors and gods to control natural fertility, health and economic conditions. . . . Success or failure in these spheres are symptoms of his *mana*. (Firth 1940, 490)

As opposed to Mauss, who viewed *mana* as an expression of social superiority and high rank enacted through reciprocity and gift exchange, Firth understood *mana* as a sign of the successful rule of a chief who fulfilled “his duty to his people and *deserv[ed] their praise*” (1940, 497, emphasis added). *Mana*, among the Tikopia as mediated by Firth, was an expression of a core cosmological principle that acknowledged the profound imbrications and codependence between the human, natural, and divine worlds that produced a society marked by fecundity, health, and well-being (505).

The notion that *mana* was the result of a balance between land, humans, gods, and ancestors was omitted from some Western scholarly debate in the decades following Firth’s essay (see Elbert 1957, 268; Oliver 1989[1961], 72).³

Following Firth, Keesing argued that mana was “a quality of efficacy manifest in visible results” (Keesing 1984, 149). Western scholars misconstrued its meaning, Keesing argued, by translating it into the Western concept of power as quantifiable. Mana, in Keesing’s view, was not a quantifiable substance but a quality or “a *relationship*, always contextual and two-sided” (1984, 150, emphasis added). Valerio Valeri’s analysis of mana in “ancient Hawai‘i”⁴ further stressed relational reciprocity between humans and the divine as central to the meaning of the term. He posited that mana derived from mutual feelings of love and sympathy between humans and the divine constitutive of a relationship of reciprocity (Valeri 1985, 99). Recognizing the centrality of the concept of ‘ai⁵ to Hawaiian cosmology, Valeri hypothesized that “god is clearly treated as a commensal who eats with his worshippers and is fed by them as they are fed by him” (104). Mana was coproduced by humans and the divine: “for both man and god having mana *depends* on their relationship. It is their *relationship*, therefore, that truly causes their ownership of mana” (Valeri 1985, 104, emphasis added).

Following Valeri, Bradd Shore (1989) posited that the Polynesian concept of mana was based upon “the possibilities of exchange” between the world of humans and the world of the divine. Mana, Shore argued, was central to a Polynesian worldview (1989, 142), and throughout the Pacific the meaning of mana was “linked to generative potency, [and] to the sources [of] organic creation” (140). Shore imagined that pre-contact Polynesia was based upon an “economy of *mana*” in which humans sought to appropriate and harness the creative power of the gods “in the service of human needs: biological reproduction, fecundity of the land and sea, and the reproduction of the social forms that gave shape to human relations” (143). Mana, then, was a relationship, a “generative potency,” linked “to the two primary sources of human life: food and sex” (165).

However, the mana literature also reflected what Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006, 206) have characterized as an “epistemology of imperial expansion,” in which a privileged analyst makes “the rest of the world an object of observation.” Through this imperializing lens, mana was cast as an artifact of the past, and scholarly attention focused on the concept’s linguistic status and former relevance in pre-contact Polynesian society. As the object of Western scrutiny, the epistemology of mana was demoted to the status of primitive relic. Much less scholarly work concerned the meaning and currency of mana in late-twentieth-century Polynesian societies,⁶ and until recently the perspective of indigenous scholars on the significance of mana did not circulate in the Western political economy of academic knowledge. Late in the twentieth century, however, Hawaiian scholars writing from an epistemology of decolonization reinterpreted the meaning of mana and demonstrated its relevance in a neocolonial context.

Following Greg Dening’s (1980) work in *Islands and Beaches*, the historian Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa put the concepts and metaphors central to the worldview

of Hawaiians in the time before the arrival of Westerners at the core of her historical analysis (1992, 6). In *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, she explored the privatization and commodification of Hawaiian land that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century (see chapter 1) as a pivotal, catastrophic moment for Native Hawaiian culture and health, and as an economic and cultural victory for the West (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992, 8, 11). In particular, she analyzed the clusters of meaning around the Hawaiian conception of ‘āina (land), and she demonstrated that decentering European metaphors created the possibility for different interpretations of contemporary Hawaiian life.

According to Kame‘eleihiwa, the concept of mālama ‘āina signified the social imperative for humans to serve one another and to care for the land (1992, 32) in the time before the arrival of Westerners.⁷

In practical terms, the [common people] fed and clothed the [ruling chiefs], who provided the organization required to produce enough food to sustain an ever-increasing population. Should a [commoner] fail to cultivate or [care for] his portion of [land], that was grounds for dismissal. By the same token, should a [ruling chief] fail in proper direction of the [common people], he too would be dismissed—for his own failure to *mālama*. . . . Hence, to *Mālama ‘Āina* was by extension to care for [the common people] and the [ruling chiefs], for in the Hawaiian metaphor, these three components [land, ruling chiefs, and common people] are mystically one and the same. (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992, 31)

As a central sociocultural metaphor, mālama ‘āina describes the intimate relationship between humans and the environment and marks a critical distinction between the worldview of Hawaiians and those who came to colonize the islands (Patterson 2000, 230). While Kame‘eleihiwa was most concerned with the concept of pono, which she defined as the (social) harmony that derives from the reciprocal relationship between elder siblings and younger siblings to love, protect, and feed (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992, 25), her exegesis of mālama ‘āina is nevertheless relevant to the meaning of mana I explore here as a relationship productive of a healthy society. In a Western frame, these clusters of meanings might be grasped as an ethos, and as a set of principles or protocols to guide social relations (Patterson 2000, 230).

Kame‘eleihiwa’s history closes with the observation that pre-haole⁸ Hawaiian metaphors and meanings attached to mālama ‘āina “still survive” (1992, 317). Haunani Trask, whose work explores contemporary Hawai‘i, further asserted the relevance of pre-haole metaphors to the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty (Trask 1993, 117). In the preface to her book of poetry, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen*, Trask wrote:

My people have lived in the Hawaiian Islands since the time of Papa—Earth Mother—and Wākea—Sky Father. Like many other native people, we believed that the cosmos was a unity of familial relations. Our culture depended on a careful relationship with the land, our ancestor, who nurtured us in body and spirit. (Trask 1994, xiv)

But Trask does not leave us to imagine that mana is a remnant of the ancient past. She expressed the centrality of mana to the practices and aspirations of a people engaged in decolonizing.

Part of the beauty of Hawaiian decolonization is the re-assertion of *mana* in the sovereignty movement as a defining element of cultural and political leadership. Both the people and their leaders understand the link between *mana* and *pono*, the traditional Hawaiian value of balance between people, land, and the cosmos.

In this decolonizing context, *mana* as an attribute of leadership is at once a tremendous challenge to the colonial system which defines political leadership in terms of democratic liberalism . . . as well as a tremendous challenge to aspiring Hawaiian leaders who want to achieve sovereignty. (Trask 1993, 117)

Trask's interpretation of the political and cultural significance of mana as a challenge to neocolonialism illuminates the profound, enduring connection between contemporary Native Hawaiians and ka po'e kahiko (the people of old, the ancestors of Native Hawaiians). Reclaiming mana as ontology is crucial for decolonization and is an exigency for the survival of indigenous Hawaiians. This book is called *Potent Mana* because the meaning of mana—historically and in the present—holds relevant lessons for others who struggle with the shame and injustices of colonialism. The title is meant to suggest that meanings and metaphors that were effaced in the process of colonization can be recovered, and, that once reclaimed, can illuminate the path toward decolonization.

HEALTH, CULTURE, AND POWER

The healing methods and epistemologies of the body derived from the knowledge of elders posited a relationship between health, culture, and political power. By developing healing methods that exceeded scientific ways of knowing, evolving solutions to the health crisis affecting indigenous Hawaiians challenged Western ideas about the origins of disease in individual, temporal, organic bodies.

The healing practices and epistemologies of late-twentieth-century Native Hawaiians invigorated and applied methods and ways of understanding illness from the ancestral past. Healers, health activists, and those who had been healed challenged biomedical and scientific wisdom on the meaning of health, as well as social scientific and epidemiological understandings of disease. By expanding the meaning of health to include the impact of politics, economics, and culture on the bodies of the colonized, health and political power were decisively linked.

At a 1994 conference on Native Hawaiian health, I was introduced to the Kanaka Maoli analysis of health and disease that combined ancestral knowledge with social epidemiological insights challenging biomedical and scientific understanding and insisting that health, culture, and power were inseparable. Speakers at the conference argued that health must be a central concern of the sovereignty movement, and that improving the health of Native Hawaiians meant dealing with the questions of poverty, homelessness, and inadequate schools. In a speech at the conference, Ku'umealoha Gomes, a public health scholar, said that health depended upon "no more homeless Kānaka Maoli." She referred to the work of Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire (1989) to illuminate the connection between health and political empowerment, and she challenged "classical western liberalism" and the "western medical tradition," arguing that they failed to recognize the crucial role of poverty in the production of disease. Gomes and other speakers repeatedly underscored the exigency of access to the land for the health of Native Hawaiians. Pointing to the neocolonial uses of land in Hawai'i, Gomes's remarks drew enthusiastic applause when she compared access to golf courses with the difficulty of procuring poi, a Hawaiian staple dish made from mashed, fermented taro root. "Now it's hard to get poi and easy to play golf," she said, "but we can't eat golf balls" (field notes).

Debates about the meaning of history, culture, power, and health were not confined to scholars. In a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork in Wai'anae, Hawai'i, I participated in community-wide conversations that occurred in public places. In a shopping mall, a beauty salon, a health clinic, and a beach encampment, and in programs, group therapy sessions, and conversations at a mental health and substance abuse treatment center, Wai'anae Hawaiians were engaged in lively debates about these issues. They deliberated about the importance of historical reinterpretation from indigenous points of view and considered the relevance of indigenous Hawaiian culture to contemporary struggles for health. They agreed that an imposed disconnection between Kanaka Maoli and 'āina was a certain route to disease, and they debated the priority of the demand for sovereignty and independence from the United States. Most importantly they engaged in collective processes of imagining alternative futures based on lessons from Hawaiian culture and history that countered neocolonial realities of military and tourist control of the land.

I learned profound lessons about the relationship between colonialism and well-being from Hawaiians who were marginalized by the political-economic realities of neocolonialism. One of my first lessons occurred at an encampment of homeless Hawaiians on the beach at Mākua. After spending the morning talking-story⁹ with two encampment leaders, David Rosa and Leandra Wai, Wai suggested that we go—fully clothed—into the ocean. As we floated in the calm, clear waters, Rosa and Wai told stories about swimming with a school of dolphins and about the tremendous healing energy of the sea. Rosa pointed to a shallow pool of water formed by the rocks and told me that when women had premenstrual syndrome they would go and sit in the pool in order to feel better. He said that people with disabilities came to live at Mākua and were healed, physically and emotionally. When reporters come to Mākua, Rosa said, they end up telling the beach people their troubles. “We tell them to go into the sea to ho‘ohakahaka [to make an open space], and wash out the shit and stress of western living.” David described the settlement on Mākua Beach as outside of Western time and Western space (field notes).

In “Mākua: To Heal the Nation,” a video documentary about the encampment, Wai described the settlement at Mākua as a “sanctuary, a place where many come to heal. . . . A common reason for coming down here [is that] life had shattered one way or another.” At Mākua, she said, “We are healing our past of torment and destruction.” Another encampment resident called Mākua “a healing place.” He said that

people that come here, they have all these problems but they don't know why it starts working out [when they get here]. . . . A lot of them used to be drug addicts. . . . Now they can get high off this place, the ocean, the mountains . . .

No matter how violent or angry they might be out living in the concrete jungle when they come out here there is a more relaxed feeling . . . the true person starts coming out.

Where do we go if we make a mistake . . . ? Unless something is set up like this for us to come to, a city of refuge type thing. . . . What [is happening at the beach] now is [the] practicing of sovereignty. [We] are not waiting for it, [we] are doing it now. (Nā Maka o ka 'Āina 1996)

In the early 1990s, a movement that defined American rule in Hawai'i as illegitimate and that demanded sovereignty was gaining ground. The goal of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement in the 1990s was the return of Hawaiian land and the recuperation of a Hawaiian nation. The movement was comprised of various cultural and political organizations, parties, and practices. As part of a larger movement for cultural revitalization, the focus on sovereignty,

which included the most militant and politicized people and organizations, involved smaller (but growing) portions of Hawaiians. The movement for cultural revitalization was more widespread and diffuse and was clearly centered on the Hawaiian body. Feeding the body poi (mashed taro root), lau kalo (stewed taro leaf), and 'opihi (limpet) in an effort to improve Hawaiian health via a return to traditional foods; adorning the body with tattoos in the form of Polynesian symbols; wearing kihei (cape) and malo (loincloth) at protests and other Hawaiian cultural events; moving the body in the hula kahiko (traditional hula) in wa'a (canoes) and in ku'i a lua (traditional martial arts)—all of these were common expressions of Hawaiian cultural pride in the late twentieth century. The revitalization of Hawaiian culture was further evident in the resurgence of the Hawaiian language, the institution of schools in which Hawaiian was the sole language of instruction, and the keen popular interest in Hawaiian history, particularly in regard to the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. An interest in health, healing, and the meaning of disease cut across these domains of the sovereignty and revitalization movements. The demand for health was connected to politics and power, to a return to culturally specific ways of eating, dressing, and performing, and to disputes over access to the land and water.

The health status of Kanaka Maoli was perceived as a barometer indicating the negative impact that colonization and American statehood had on indigenous bodies and souls. In the late twentieth century, Native Hawaiians were experiencing higher morbidity and mortality rates than other ethnic groups in the Islands and in the United States. Trask argued that the fact that Hawaiian women suffer from the highest rates of breast cancer in the United States was directly “traceable to Americanization of our country, including theft of lands where we once grew healthful Native foods,” and to enforced participation in a supermarket system of food distribution. She argued that the “high infant mortality, low life expectancy, [and] high adolescent suicide rates” among Native Hawaiians directly resulted from “colonialism and the subsequent loss of control over our islands and our lives” (Trask 1996, 911). Significantly, the struggle for health was also a bellwether of political and cultural movement, since achieving health was viewed as an impossibility under contemporary neocolonial conditions.

LESSONS ON POWER AND HEALING

The story of the oppression and colonization of Hawaiians is not widely known in the United States. A vital cultural revitalization and decolonization movement received little attention from the U.S. mainstream media and remained inaccessible to Native Americans, African Americans, and others waging similar struggles in the United States. *Potent Mana* was written because lessons from Hawai'i are relevant and crucial to similar struggles of other oppressed communities in

the United States, and around the world. The lessons I explore here began as academic questions that were rethought and reformulated as I learned from Hawaiians. Questions that emerged from the field were transformed into notes and interviews, into a dissertation, and eventually into the substance of this ethnography. Many of my “informants” were intellectual mentors with whom I learned to understand the many themes that cluster around decolonization, as theory and as practice. This ethnography extends those face-to-face lessons into a wider sphere.

I follow Whitaker (1996, 1) in arguing that ethnography “should be approached contingently, as a form of learning, rather than absolutely, as a form of representation,” and that the goal of ethnography is to further communication “between the parties” involved (Whitaker 1996, 7). The parties that *Potent Mana* involves include Native Hawaiians, Native Americans, African Americans, and other oppressed groups. Anthropologists and other scholars who are allied with the struggles for justice are also interested parties, as are any readers who want to learn about colonialism, neocolonialism, and decolonization.

Potent Mana distills important lessons I learned in Wai‘anae, Hawai‘i, in the late 1990s. There are other perspectives on the colonization of Hawai‘i and on the struggle for decolonization. But for me, the practices, theories, interpretations, and dreams of Native Hawaiians comprise a story that needs to be told. Clearly, the 1990s decolonization movement was not a simple, unified expression of cultural or racial pride. It was a complex mass movement fraught with internal critiques, debates about strategy and meaning, and divisions both shallow and deep. But the focus here is on how a specific group of Hawaiians in a specific time and place approached the problem of decolonization. Critiquing these lessons is another project, for another scholar, or another time. Although there are certainly other ways of exploring social movements, I offer the wisdom and clarity of those who struggled for decolonization in Wai‘anae as a critique of colonialism, the imposition of Western culture, and the effect of these on health.

There are, perhaps, particular aspects of who I am that allow me to explore the decolonization movement in Hawai‘i with tremendous empathy and respect. It is not only my doctoral training in sociocultural anthropology at Princeton University that prepared me to write *Potent Mana*—I have been learning lessons all of my life. I am African American, the great-granddaughter of slaves. I worked as a community organizer in Central Harlem, New York City, with poor women and children. I have a master’s degree in religious studies from Union Theological Seminary, where I studied black liberation theology under the direction of James Cone and Delores Williams. I spent the equivalent of three years as a postdoctoral fellow pursuing training in public health. My theological background and my work as a community organizer prepared me to grasp the spirituality of Hawaiians and to understand how spirituality and political struggle are inextricably linked. My ancestry, my experience as an organizer, and my schol-

arly training have shaped the deep hermeneutic of suspicion with which I approach official histories and orthodox knowledge production and have led me to understand the conditional nature of any epistemology. These biographical facts are not incidental to the ultimately anthropological analysis presented here.

From my perspective, the health crisis of indigenous Hawaiians is mirrored by crises affecting the bodies and souls of Native Americans, African Americans, and others in the United States. The many lessons that can be learned from an analysis of how Native Hawaiians in the late twentieth century struggled to achieve well-being are urgently relevant. One of my goals for this book is to insert the lessons I learned about health, culture, and power into U.S. debates on health disparities. As articulated by mainstream media and many scholarly journals, the issue of health disparities is reduced to problems of access and education, and to solutions that do not challenge the fundamental relationship between social, political, and economic injustice and the unequal distribution of disease. Native Hawaiians add the significant dimension of culture to critiques of biomedical and Western scientific constructions of disease that privilege politics and economics. The insight that the suppression of indigenous knowledge and other forms of colonialism create and sustain disease is mostly neglected by otherwise committed scholars using race, class, or gender as key analytics in the analysis of health inequality. Lessons on healing and power from Hawai'i illuminate the contradictions inherent in scientific and biomedical epistemologies, and the dangers of commodifying land, water, and health. My hope is that *Potent Mana* will contribute to a scholarly literature and encourage more community organizing that recognizes the important relationship between indigenous knowledge, power, and health.

THE HAWAI'I LITERATURE

Anthropologists once conceived of Hawaiians as a people without culture (Kroeber 1921, 129–37), and historians imagined that there was little resistance to American colonial intrusions (Ralston 1984, 21–40; Silva 2004). The anthropology of Hawai'i and other Pacific Island places has been centrally concerned with questions of authenticity and tradition (Linnekin 1983a; Keesing 1989), and the history of Hawai'i has been conceived of as a narrative arc moving inexorably toward incorporation by the West. But as the scholar NoeNoe Silva (2004, 2, 16) has argued, Hawaiian resistance to foreign intrusion, which began with the first landing of Europeans, was evident throughout the nineteenth century, and it continues today. Through a careful exegesis of the Hawaiian language press from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Silva brought to light the history of Native Hawaiian written resistance to American conquest. From the moment of the first encounter with British and American foreigners, the struggle

for Hawaiian political and cultural integrity has not ceased. The form of struggle changed with historical circumstances, since the violent structural and cultural realities of being colonized meant that resistance was often expressed indirectly. Clearly, however, the resurgence in political and cultural activism that was evident in Hawai'i in the late twentieth century was in a historical tradition of resistance.

When I first studied the anthropological literature on Hawai'i, I found little that answered my questions about neocolonial Hawaiian life. It seemed as though, for anthropologists and historians, Hawai'i and Hawaiians were frozen in some "ancient" past or had been incorporated into the logic of Western modernity. Research on the historical anthropology of Hawai'i was rich and detailed. Western scholars (see Barrère 1975; Davenport 1969; Linnekin 1983b, 1985, 1987, 1990; Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1994; Valeri 1985) wrote about ancient kingship and ritual, the impact of religious transformations on nineteenth-century Hawaiian culture, the cultural and economic effects of the relationship between Western traders and Hawaiian royalty, and the role of women in mid-nineteenth-century Hawaiian land transformations. The twentieth century was sparsely covered, and work such as Linnekin's (1985) *The Children of the Land* explored a Hawaiian community in terms of its relationship to tradition and not in terms of the relationship of tradition to twentieth-century struggles for political and cultural integrity. Alan Howard's 1974 ethnography of a Hawaiian community, *Ain't No Big Thing*, while providing a cogent analysis of Hawaiian life after statehood, was concerned primarily with the question of "Americanization," and not with Hawaiian resistance to colonial and neocolonial impositions.

The historical literature on Hawai'i (Daws 1968; Day 1960, Fuchs 1961; Kent 1993[1983]; Kuykendall 1965, 1967; Okihiro 1991; Takaki 1983) also failed to provide answers. This literature was preoccupied with the experience of Asian immigrants and plantation history in Hawai'i to the extent that the existence of Hawaiian communities in the twentieth century was simply effaced. It seemed to me that the scholarly literature on Hawai'i worked to reinforce the notion that there were no more "real" Hawaiians—that they had simply withered away.

However, recent work by Native Hawaiian scholars challenged the (neo)colonial and nonindigenous perspective of the literature and changed the terrain of Hawaiian studies. Scholars such as Haunani-Kay Trask (1987, 1991, 1993) and Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa (1992) produced critical work that was politically committed to the goal of sovereignty and deeply grounded in the culture of Hawai'i. Their work first informed me about the contemporary movement for Native Hawaiian sovereignty, about the condition of late-twentieth-century Hawaiians, and about the history of colonialism. In the path blazed by Trask and Kame'eleihiwa, a cohort of younger Native scholars—including Kauanui (1999, 2002), Meyer (1998a, 1998b, 2001), Osorio (2002), Silva (2004), and Tengan

(2005, 2008)—is producing highly significant work that redefines the history and anthropology of Hawai'i (Tengan 2005, 249).

METHODOLOGY

The burgeoning challenge in Hawai'i to American neocolonialism drew me to the Islands for field research. From the vantage point of a graduate student at an East Coast university, I imagined that I would study the relationship between nationalism and healing, political power and health. My original field proposal argued that clinics where suffering Hawaiian bodies were treated were likely places for the instantiation of nationalist ideology. Following the academic fashion of the time, I was influenced by such scholars as Anderson (1991), Chatterjee (1986, 1993), and Fox (1990), and I planned to observe the recruitment of marginalized Hawaiians into a larger nation-making process under the direction of an indigenous intelligentsia elite. During my preliminary research trip to Hawai'i in the summer of 1994, I met with Hawaiians living in Honolulu who were committed to the revitalization of Hawaiian culture and the restoration of Hawaiian sovereignty. And then I spent a few days on the Wai'anae Coast, where Kanaka Maoli community leaders and their allies articulated theories that connected health to colonial and neocolonial oppression and were actively engaged in creating practices toward the goal of decolonization.

I arranged for my primary field site to be a Native Hawaiian substance abuse treatment center on the leeward side of the island of O'ahu, in the community of Wai'anae. Once in the field, there were many scholarly assumptions that I abandoned. Learning from Wai'anae Hawaiians meant cutting through scholarly categories that had defined the project as an academic exercise. As I learned from Wai'anae Hawaiians about their present, their past, and their dreams for the future, I realized that the concept of nationalism did not adequately describe the cultural revitalization movement, the demand for sovereignty, or the daily practices meant to heal the wounds of colonialism. As I learned about the centrality of the notion of *decolonization*, I began to understand its multiple dimensions. Decolonization was an epistemological standpoint, a way to critique the West. Decolonization was a set of practices meant to heal the physical and psychic wounds of colonialism. And, most importantly, decolonization was an aspiration, a goal that defined demands for cultural integrity and community well-being.

Wai'anae is a working-class community on the western edge of the island of O'ahu. With a population of 38,000 in 1994 (DBEDT 1995, xx), a significant proportion of whom were Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, Wai'anae was a center of Native Hawaiian cultural and political struggle. In the lexicon of Wai'anae movement leaders, decolonization was a process that occurred primarily in the bodies

and souls and the cells and psyches of Hawaiians, rather than externally in the public space of politics. Decolonization was seen as a process that required remembering and recreating the ways of Hawaiians in the times of *ka po'e kahiko* before they had been inundated with English, Christianity, and the morality of land and water as private property. In Wai'anae, decolonizing meant rejecting the shame and self-loathing endemic to colonized people; it meant transforming that shame through powerful processes of dreaming, of remembering, of pulling from the past that which was libratory, redemptive, and exemplary of viable Hawaiian ways of being and knowing. In the mid-1990s Wai'anae Hawaiians were relearning Hawaiian—as a language, a worldview, and a way of healing.

In fifteen months of fieldwork, I spent my days volunteering for a Native Hawaiian-run drug treatment program called Ho'ō Mōhala. Because of many Native Hawaiians' suspicions about outsiders, and especially of the role of researchers in the community, I began working primarily with Ho'ō Mōhala's administrative program, writing grant proposals and reports and compiling data. Initially I was not permitted to involve myself in the day-to-day workings of the clinical program, but working in the administrative program allowed me to meet people in the larger Wai'anae community and to become acquainted with other programs and activities that were similarly committed to decolonization and Hawaiian cultural revitalization. The period of time I spent working primarily with the administrative program also allowed me to build relationships with counseling staff and clients. Eventually Ho'ō Mōhala's board of directors granted permission for me to have access to some aspects of the clinical program, and I began working as a volunteer with counselors, clients, and their families. I was permitted to accompany the intake assessment counselor on recruitment trips to O'ahu prisons, to interview clients and their families, and to participate in group sessions and in outdoor activities. Some clinical activities remained off limits, including participation in a Native Hawaiian men's group and observation of ho'oponopono (therapy sessions) led by counselors for clients and their families.

I conducted informal, open-ended interviews with administrators, counselors, clients, and family members at Ho'ō Mōhala, with administrators and counselors at other programs, and with other community members and leaders in Wai'anae involved in other decolonization efforts. The open-ended format of my interviews helped me gain insight into the various interpretations of what was occurring at Ho'ō Mōhala, in Wai'anae, and in the sovereignty movement, and allowed me to elicit people's memories and dreams. I learned important lessons about how closely tied dreaming and remembering are to any process of decolonization, since reliance on official, Western sources of knowledge defeats the purpose of displacing neocolonial reality.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1, “Ka Po‘e Kahiko: The People of Old,” tells the story of American colonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with a focus on the ways in which American (mis)interpretations of Hawaiian bodies and Hawaiian ways of being and knowing contributed to an enduring sense of shame among the colonized. Native Hawaiian historian Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio (2002) argued that late-twentieth-century Hawaiians were “still a beleaguered race,” and that the problem was not just “poverty and homelessness” but also “a lingering sense that our ‘failure’ is the result of our own inadequacy as a people.” Osorio posited that the sense of failure was the result not only of political oppression but also stemmed from

an insidious discourse that portrays . . . Western conceptions of government, economics, education and ideals as the only proper and “realistic” models for contemporary societies. This discourse, this language, was woven into the cloak of the colonizers in Hawai‘i. To reject that colonization necessarily entails rejecting the discourse as well. (Osorio 2002, 259).

Chapter 1 explores the history of colonial intrusion and the “insidious discourses” that justified the theft of land and resources in Hawai‘i since the eighteenth century. British and American colonizers deployed a variety of practical and discursive methods that worked to invalidate Hawaiian life and knowledge. The imposition of the English language, as well such ideologies and practices as land alienation, cash economies, and forms of Christianity, along with the introduction of deadly diseases and the massive death of Hawaiians, occurred against a Euro/American interpretive framework that conceived of Hawaiians as sinful, diseased, pathological, and disgraced. From the Calvinist theology of New England missionaries to ideologies that equated ownership of private property with moral righteousness, the experience of being colonized rendered Hawaiians undeveloped, benighted, and destined to wither away on both discursive and structural levels. Western theories of liberty and democracy that did not extend humanity to Natives and other non-Europeans and scientific ideas that elided the relationship between social structure, political power, and health blamed Hawaiians for their state.

In Hawai‘i, the efficacy of Western methods of healing physical, psychological, and social distress was contradicted by the massive deaths that occurred after the first contact with Europeans and Americans. Epidemic diseases that Hawaiian bodies were unprepared for decimated indigenous communities. The disease of Hawaiians has continued up to the present neocolonial moment, despite

triumphalist rhetoric about the superiority of Western healing methods. At the turn of the twentieth century, Native Hawaiians demonstrated poorer health and greater susceptibility to chronic and infectious diseases, and still Western science and medicine failed to ensure their physical and social health.

Chapter 2, "Wai'anae: A Space of Resistance," explores the community that was the site of my field research in the mid-1990s. Wai'anae had the largest concentration of Native Hawaiians in the Islands at the end of the twentieth century. As a place remote from Hawai'i's metropolitan centers in the nineteenth century, Wai'anae became known as an outpost of Hawaiian culture and tradition, and of resistance to colonizing and missionizing. In the late twentieth century, although Wai'anae could no longer be considered remote, the tradition of resistance continued. Chapter 2 considers the narrative history of Wai'anae as a place of resistance to the incursions of the West, and the ways in which this history of resistance took on new meaning in the second half of the twentieth century. Wai'anae became a crossroads, a place of intersection, between traditions and modernity, and precisely because of this intersection, it became a fertile ground for resistance and the development of decolonizing processes.

Chapter 3, "Mana: What the Data Hide," explores the existential condition of Native Hawaiians in the late twentieth century and the meaning of the health and social statistical data that purport to describe it. Hawaiians were represented in statistical data as poor, diseased, pathological, and criminal. Following Zuberi (2001), I argue that the collection of vital and social statistics forms the basis of Western explanatory models that see the origin of disease and dysfunction in the raced bodies of the oppressed. In the late twentieth century, data showed that Hawaiians controlled little wealth, owned few businesses, were employed predominantly in unskilled service jobs, had the highest rate of unemployment, and had the lowest incomes in the state. Native Hawaiians had shorter life spans and higher rates of chronic and infectious diseases, in addition to higher rates of suicide, infant death, and teenage pregnancies, than other ethnic groups in the Islands. They occupied a third of all prison cells in the state. Fewer than half of Hawaiian teens graduated from high school, and they had high rates of robbery, vandalism, drug abuse, gambling, and running away. Hawaiians comprised only 5 percent of the student body at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa, and only 2 percent of those who succeeded to graduation.

According to the logic of the West, the meaning of this disease, deviance, and criminality was completely self-evident and indicated a problem essentially rooted within Hawaiians themselves. But for Native Hawaiians in the late twentieth century, reinterpreting the Hawaiian history of colonialism also meant challenging neocolonial explanatory models that rendered them diseased, dysfunctional, and criminal in the first place. Rather than accept Western notions of pathology and deviance, the Hawaiians I worked with interpreted a sick body/mind/soul as a symptom of colonization, implicating both Western culture

and Western rule. An exigency of such reinterpretation involved re/membering and re/creating specifically Hawaiian practices that allowed for the possibilities of decolonization.

Chapter 4, “The Stench of Mauna Ala, Colonialism, and Mental Health,” begins with the story of a mid-twentieth-century Hawaiian woman who “became crazed with the pain of being unable to be Hawaiian in her Hawaiian land.” Her story anchors a discussion of how the mental health care system in much of the twentieth century served colonial interests. The establishment of a modern, rationalized mental health system occurred in the years following annexation by the United States. The Territorial Hospital for the Insane was under the leadership of an Australian psychologist, who was inspired by Francis Galton’s (1892) theories of hereditary genius and the imperfectability of non-Europeans. Colonial psychology located the source of mental illness and social deviance in the racialized bodies of both indigenous Hawaiians and imported Asian plantation labor and sought their rehabilitation. The mental health apparatus represented Native Hawaiians and other non-*haole* (non-white) people as self-consciously mentally inferior, unable to cope with a higher grade of civilization, and seeking refuge in self-destruction. This chapter also describes the successful civil rights suit brought against the Hawai‘i Department of Health in 1976. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare found the state of Hawai‘i in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for failing to provide adequate services to non-whites. Chapter 4 ends with a discussion of the first attempts to establish Native Hawaiian-run clinics and specifically Native Hawaiian healing methodologies.

Chapter 5, “Ka Leo: Remembering Hawaiian,” is a discussion of the processes of relearning and recreating specifically Hawaiian ways of knowing and being that occurred in Wai‘anae in the late twentieth century. It explores the ways in which Wai‘anae Hawaiians learned and relearned the Hawaiian language and found the courage to transcend the shame of being colonized. A ubiquitous discourse in Wai‘anae concerned the need to heal and recover from colonialism. Physical and mental disease, shame, and family dysfunction were viewed not as symptoms of organic illness and social inadequacy but as signs of being colonized and the unhealthiness of Western living. Feelings of shame about being Hawaiian were thought to ramify in families and across generations and were supported by mainstream discourses that portrayed Hawaiian neighborhoods as crime-infested areas filled with single mothers on welfare. But in Wai‘anae, Hawaiians attempted to deal with these existential and discursive issues by treating shame as a source of disease, and by translating and reinterpreting traditions that had been driven underground and almost forgotten into a basis for healing and recovery.

Chapter 6, “Dreaming Change,” is a discussion of a specific effort to heal the bodies and souls of Native Hawaiians at a drug treatment center in Wai‘anae.

This chapter centers on the life and work of Meipala Silva and traces her political and cultural awakening as a Native Hawaiian woman. Her work to create healing spaces for troubled Hawaiians, many of whom were remanded to drug treatment centers by the courts in lieu of incarceration, is explored as an example of decolonizing practices.

In the Conclusion, “‘Ropes of Resistance’¹⁰ and Alternative Futures,” I place Native Hawaiian efforts to decolonize in the larger political economic framework of globalization and neoliberalism. By the turn of the twentieth century, haoles (whites) had become the single largest ethnic group in the Islands, largely as a result of their in-migration. Development pressures meant a severe decline in affordable housing and the concomitant rise in homelessness for Hawaiians and other people of low wealth in the Islands. Neoliberalism poses a new set of challenges to efforts of resistance and decolonization by Wai‘anae Hawaiians. The Conclusion argues that Hawaiian decolonization is made even more crucial and relevant in a global era of neoliberalism. Following Trask (1994) and Ho‘omanawanui (2004), I argue that the dreaming and planning practices of decolonization become the “ropes of resistance” for “unborn generations,” who will continue to celebrate Hawaiian ways of being and knowing even against great odds.

A NOTE ON TERMS, THE USE OF HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE, AND FORMATTING

For clarity I use the terms “Hawaiian,” “Native Hawaiian,” “indigenous Hawaiian” and “Kanaka Maoli” interchangeably. In Hawai‘i, where the population is considerably racially mixed, any easy distinctions are problematic. The vexed question of who is Hawaiian and who is not, and how Hawaiian-ness is measured, is a debate that raged within the Islands. “Blood quantum,” or percentage of Hawaiian “blood,” is used to limit certain entitlements such as entrance to a school funded by endowments left by Hawaiian elites or access to Hawaiian homelands. But blood quantum was not an issue for most of the Hawaiians with whom I worked. The majority were ethnically mixed (i.e., Hawaiian-Chinese-Portuguese, Hawaiian-Haole, etc.), although culturally they strongly identified as Native Hawaiian.

A glossary that appears at the end of this book defines key Hawaiian terms, with their English translations. I use italics to distinguish the voices of my collaborators and informants (in English) derived from taped and transcribed interviews and from field notes.

I use the phrase “in the time of ka po‘e kahiko,” following the nineteenth-century historian Samuel Kamakau, to refer to what is mistakenly referred to as “ancient Hawai‘i.” I object to the connotation implicit in the term “ancient

Hawai‘i” because it obscures the reality of the intense connection that late-twentieth-century Hawaiians felt with the past, and it obscures the short duration of two centuries marking the time since the coming of Europeans and Americans. The notion that before 1778 Hawaiians were living in ancient times reflects what Briggs (1996, 449) called discourses of modernization that posit a decisive gulf between “tradition” and modernity and serve to support the hegemony of Western historical narratives. “In the times of ka po‘e kahiko” is a poetic phrase that recognizes the endurance of ancestral ties and distinguishes the present neo-colonial era from what Stannard (1989, 70) refers to as “pre-haole-Hawai‘i.”

Potent Mana is an ethnography of decolonization in Hawai‘i. It is not as much a story of what was as it is a story of what may be possible. Now, in the twenty-first century, Native Hawaiians still struggle with the lasting effects of colonialism and the continuing injustice of neocolonialism. This ethnography focuses on Native Hawaiian *aspirations* for decolonization in a specific time and place (Wai‘anae in the mid-to-late 1990s), and since struggles against oppression are rarely linear, we do not yet know what the ultimate results of these aspirations will be. What we can be sure of is that during the 1990s there was a great deal of thinking and acting by Wai‘anae Hawaiians about what it might mean to be decolonized. This book explores those dreams and activities.

My hope is that *Potent Mana* will do two things—first, that it will demonstrate that through memory, practices of healing, and struggles for land, water, and cultural integrity the voices of ka po‘e kahiko reverberate through time; and, second, that the voices of the Native Hawaiians whose daily practices and scholarly work inspired and taught me will reverberate across space and influence the struggles of others.