CHAPTER 3. E Ola Mau ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi

THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

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I ka ʻōlelo nō ke ola; i ka ʻōlelo nō ka make. Our kūpuna (ancestors) remind us, "in language there is life; in language there is death." In a flourishing native society, commerce and governmental affairs are carried out in the ʻōlelo makuahine (mother tongue) of the land and numerous native speakers remain. The native language is alive and thriving; the ʻōlelo makuahine is a living language.

The identities of Indigenous peoples are inextricably linked to our languages. Embedded in our native languages are our worldviews and cultures. ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian language), for example, carries nuances and multiple layers of meaning that are uniquely Kanaka (Native Hawaiian) and that can only be fully understood and appreciated by speakers of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. As a Kanaka columnist writing in 1917 warns, "I ikeia no ke kanaka no kekahi lahui ma kana olelo. Ina e nalowale ana ka olelo makuahine o kekahi lahui, e nalo hia aku ana no ia lahui." Indeed, the language of a person reveals his nationality. Should the mother tongue of a nation be lost, so too will the people. Furthermore, the writer cautions, "I keia la, ua nalohia aku ko kakou kuokoa, a i ka pau ana o ka kakou olelo makuahine, o ka pau ana no ia o ka lahui Hawaii."[1] Inasmuch as the loss of sovereignty was a devastating blow to the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi, the writer laments that if the native tongue of Hawaiʻi goes extinct, so too will the Kanaka people.

The warning of this early twentieth-century columnist continues to resonate in the twenty-first century. ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi educator Noʻeau Warner also expresses grief over the loss of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi, adding, "One by one, the markers of Hawaiian identity as a people have been stripped away, starting with the land, sovereignty, language, literacies (knowledge), histories, and connection to our ancestry."[2]

Mother tongues tend to thrive in sovereign native nations. With the suppression of sovereignty, the introduction of a new language of commerce and government, and the decline of a native population, many Indigenous languages become endangered. Some even succumb to language death. The death of a language signals the demise of a people, their culture, and their identity. As Kanaka scholar and activist Haunani-Kay Trask asserts, "A dead land is preceded by a dying people. As an example, indigenous languages replaced by universal (read colonial) languages result in the creation of 'dead

languages.' But what is 'dead' or 'lost' is not the language but the people who once spoke it and transmitted their mother tongue to succeeding generations."[3]

The recently coined ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi word for colonization is kolonaio, meaning "crawling with worms."[4] One of the best ways to disempower a people is to burrow into their minds, infecting and incapacitating them at every level of consciousness, while simultaneously stripping them of their language—thereby erasing their historical memory and undermining their traditional knowledge systems. To add insult to injury, the colonizing power suppresses any meaningful use of the native language, yet perversely appropriates the native language and twists history for its benefit.

The state of Hawaiʻi has appropriated the motto of Kamehameha III, "ua mau ke ea o ka ʻāina i ka pono," and has suppressed the fact that Kamehameha III made this statement on Lā Hoʻihoʻi Ea (Sovereignty Restoration Day) to commemorate the Kingdom's restored independence after a five-month occupation by the British. A more appropriate translation is "The sovereignty of the land is perpetuated in righteousness." As evidenced by the plight of our ʻōlelo makuahine, neither the sovereignty of the land nor the life of the land have been perpetuated in righteousness since the naio (worms) began to kolo (crawl).

Outside of individual families, a few rural communities, and Kanaka churches that maintained their ability to speak ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, by the latter part of the twentieth century most Kanaka were no longer able to speak the ʻōlelo makuahine of our ancestors. Whereas other struggles discussed in this book started on the streets, the movement to revitalize ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi has clearly been waged in schools. Beginning at the University of Hawaiʻi, the movement grew through the education of thousands of second-language speakers of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, the creation of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi researchers and curriculum developers, and the support of kula kaiapuni (public and private pre-K–12 Hawaiian language immersion schools). This chapter discusses the near death of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi and some of the efforts to revive it.

A Brief History of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi

In spite of a 2,000-year history of speaking the mother tongue of our kūpuna and a 114-year history of publishing more than 125,000 newspaper pages in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, within a century of foreign occupation ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi became an endangered language. As Paul Nahoa Lucas points out, "Given Hawaiians' rapid and successful transformation from an entirely oral culture to a literate culture, Hawaiʻi had the opportunity to become a bilingual nation comparable to some European countries."[5] In addition to the decimation of the native population by disease and the loss of inalienable rights to the land that Kanaka enjoyed prior to the mid-1800s, the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom

of Hawaiʻi in 1893 was one of the most devastating blows dealt to the Kanaka people. The loss of sovereignty was marked by a language shift from ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi to namu haole (English). Laws were created to limit the use of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in educational institutions. Act 57 of the 1896 Laws of the Republic of Hawaiʻi stated: "The English language shall be the medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools, provided that where it is desired that another language shall be taught in addition to the English language, such instruction may be authorized by the Department, either by its rules, the curriculum of the school, or by direct order in any particular instance. Any schools that shall not conform to the provisions of this Section shall not be recognized by the Department." Act 57 effectively banned ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi-medium education. Lucas explains, "although schools had the option not to participate, nonparticipating schools would not continue to be recognized and thus would not receive government funding. As a direct result of the 1896 law, the number of Hawaiian-medium schools dropped drastically from a high of 150 in 1880 to zero in 1902. Conversely, the number of English-medium schools rose significantly from 60 in 1880 to 203 in 1902."[6] In 1900, four years after the enactment of Act 57, when Hawaiʻi became a territory of the United States, "all schools, government operations and official transactions were thereafter conducted in English, despite the fact that most people, including non-Natives, still spoke Hawaiian at the turn of the century."[7] Those caught speaking ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in school, students and educators alike, were severely punished.[8]

THE EARLY DAYS OF ʻŌLELO HAWAIʻI AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI

During those dark years of the Territorial period, there remained some efforts to keep ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi alive in institutional spaces. Created in 1907 as a land-grant college under the auspices of the Morrill Act, the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa was originally known as the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts of the Territory of Hawaiʻi. During the first fourteen years of the institution, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi was not offered. According to Rubellite Johnson, "In early 1921, after the territorial legislature had expanded the College of Hawaii to become the University, the Board of Regents was asked in a legislative inquiry to declare its intentions with regards to Hawaiian. The board replied that 'it has been a part of the plan of the University of Hawaii to give instruction in the Hawaiian language. . . . The University should become the center for the study of Hawaiian and a strong effort made to preserve the language in its purity.'"[9] The first instructor of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi at Mānoa was Frederick W. Beckley, the last ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi interpreter in the Supreme Court of the monarchy. Between 1922 and 1926, Beckley taught elementary to advanced ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi courses and a Polynesian comparative study course. His courses focused on pronunciation, conjugation, proverbs, religious history, literature, law, land tenure, song composition, syntax, and arts and crafts.

Beckley was succeeded by noted Kanaka patriot John Henry Wise, who left govern-

ment service to join the professoriate. Professor Wise initially adopted the course descriptions of his predecessor. Shortly thereafter, he began incorporating the Hawaiian-English New Testament into his courses. In 1926, there was a breakthrough: ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi became a second language elective. Undergraduate students then had the option of choosing ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi to fulfill their elective requirements. This was a bold move, as very few schools offered ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in their curriculum at the time. Even students at the Kamehameha Schools, an institution for Kanaka, did not begin offering ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi courses until the 1930s.[10]

Rubellite Johnson writes, "What Beckley and Wise accomplished between 1922 and 1934 (when Wise retired and was succeeded by the Reverend Henry Judd) was to lay the foundation for what eventually became the University's degree program in the Hawaiian language, a curriculum unique in the academic world."[11]

Following Beckley and Wise, a series of professors and instructors continued to push for modest expansion in the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi curriculum. These included Henry Judd in the mid-1930s, Reverend Edward Kahale beginning in the mid-1940s, Samuel Elbert in the late 1940s, and Samuel A. Keala in the mid-1950s. From 1955 to 1968, under Elbert and Keala, the course offerings in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi doubled. To accommodate the expanding curriculum and student demand, more instructors were hired. By the later 1960s, Alberta Pualani Anthony, Rubellite Johnson, Dorothy M. Kahananui, and Zaneta Richards all joined the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi instructional faculty. This growth both contributed to and benefited from a larger cultural movement beyond the campus.

THE HAWAIIAN RENAISSANCE

During the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s and onward, interest in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi increased dramatically. Several hundred students enrolled in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi at the university level. Many recognized that if the Kanaka people, our traditions, and our culture were to survive and thrive, we needed our language to live. A conscious resistance to cultural imperialism ensued; activists worked diligently to revive ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi as a living language. Central to the movement was the work of University of Hawaiʻi faculty who applied a multipronged approach to perpetuate and revitalize the language by preserving and recording the voices of native speakers, encouraging policymakers to repeal the law prohibiting the use of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi as a medium of education, establishing preschool through twelfth grade kaiapuni schools, and pushing for ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi to be recognized as an official language of Hawaiʻi. Activists armed themselves with the traditional knowledge systems of our kūpuna to shield against the rapid fire aimed at annihilating the Kanaka people, our traditions, and our culture.

In 1972, *Ka Leo Hawaiʻi*, a Hawaiian-language weekly talk show hosted by instructor Larry Kimura, launched on KCCN 1420. Hui Aloha ʻĀina Tuahine, the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi student organization of the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, along with ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi

faculty and staff, raced to preserve the voices of native speakers as a legacy for future generations of Kanaka. Native speakers throughout the islands were invited to speak about a variety of topics. Guests typically spoke about their experiences and memories of places in Hawai'i where they were born and raised. The original *Ka Leo Hawai'i* program ran until 1988, and during those seventeen years of programming, 674 shows were recorded. *Ka Leo Hawai'i* returned to the air in 1991 with Puakea Nogelmeier and Hau'oli Akaka serving as cohosts until 2000. Contemporary scholars continue to rely on this rich repository to glean insights about the worldviews of these 'ōlelo Hawai'i speakers and their oral traditions regarding Kanaka history, culture, traditions, and environment.

Along with the other 1970s movements related to land and culture, Kanaka organizers advocated for changes to the state's laws. In 1978, two important measures related to language and schooling were added to the state of Hawai'i's constitution. First, 'ōlelo Hawai'i was reestablished as an official language of Hawai'i. Second, an article that requires the state to "provide for a Hawaiian education program consisting of language, culture and history in the public schools" was included. In spite of the adoption of these measures, systemic oppression continued for 'ōlelo Hawai'i, as it was not granted full, equal status with English. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i was not required for "public acts and transactions," except if expressly required by law. Furthermore, the state failed to act on the mandate to initiate a publicly funded educational program in 'ōlelo Hawai'i. Disparity between 'ōlelo Hawai'i and English continued in governmental and educational systems. It was only through the persistent efforts of educators, students, and families that institutional spaces for 'ōlelo Hawai'i learning opened up.

The Birth of Kaiapuni Pre-K–12 Schools

In the early 1980s, less than fifty native speakers of 'ōlelo makuahine under the age of eighteen remained.[12] In 1983, 'ōlelo Hawai'i activists—many of whom began their careers as 'ōlelo Hawai'i faculty members at the University of Hawai'i—recognized the need to grow new generations of 'ōlelo Hawai'i–speaking children in order to ensure the survival of the language. Tired of waiting for state action, 'Īlei Beniamina, Hōkūlani Cleeland, Kauanoe Kamanā, Larry Kimura, No'eau Warner, Koki Williams, and William Wilson formed 'Aha Pūnana Leo Inc., a private, not-for-profit entity supporting kaiapuni education. In 1984, 'Aha Pūnana Leo opened the first kaiapuni preschool in Kekaha, Kaua'i. Pūnana Leo, or language nests, were modeled after Māori Kōhanga Reo in Aotearoa. Like birds feeding their young from mouth to mouth, teachers would feed the native language to youngsters so that they would be raised as native speakers.

The same educators helped fight for legislation that finally struck down the ninety-year-old law banning 'ōlelo Hawai'i as a medium of publicly funded education. After

years of protest, in 1986 the state legislature affirmed that "special projects using the Hawaiian language" could be approved by the state's board of education.[13] This change was intended to support the unique needs of students from the Niʻihau community whose first language was ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi.[14] The fact that Pūnana Leo preschools began two years earlier is an example of civil disobedience. In fact, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi instruction, in and of itself, is "both a cultural and political assertion; *cultural* because it seeks to preserve the core of a way of being and living that is uniquely Native, and *political* because this attempt at preservation takes place in a system where the dominant group has employed legal and social means to deny the use and inheritance of the Native language by Natives themselves."[15]

ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi activism has paid off, especially in the area of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi-medium education. In 1987, the board of education approved Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian Immersion Program), kindergarten to first grade, as a one-year pilot project. In 1992, permanent status was granted to Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawaiʻi as a K–12 public school program.[16] In 1999, the lead classes of Ānuenue in Pālolo, Oʻahu, and Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu in Hilo, Hawaiʻi, graduated. As ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi educators William Wilson and Kauanoe Kamanā assert, "Having established Hawaiian-medium programs from pre-school through graduate school, Hawaiʻi has the most developed movement in indigenous language–medium education in the United States."[17]

Revitalization of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi at the University of Hawaiʻi

Faculty members at the University of Hawaiʻi continued to stand at the forefront of efforts to revitalize the language. ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi educator and activist Laiana Wong echoes this sentiment by stating, "Although the Hawaiian movement involved participants from many segments of the wider community, its epicenter can be traced to the efforts of several Hawaiian language professors at the University of Hawaiʻi who provided the initial tremors that eventually rippled outward affecting the entire community."[18] The University of Hawaiʻi also served as a stage for highly contested Kanaka issues related to language, traditions, culture, and politics to be publicly debated and exposed.[19]

In 1979, a year after the Hawaiʻi state constitution was changed to declare an official language of Hawaiʻi, a provisional bachelor of arts degree in Hawaiian was approved at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. For the first time, students were able to earn a four-year degree in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. In 1986, eighteen Kanaka scholars representing all ten University of Hawaiʻi campuses met to provide guidance to the University of Hawaiʻi system on matters related to the study of Hawaiian language, culture, and history. This guiding document, "Kaʻū: University of Hawaiʻi Hawaiian Studies Task Force Report," was the impetus that catapulted Kanaka education forward at the University of Hawaiʻi. That document laid out a vision that set the stage for a generation

of efforts: end-to-end integration of Kanaka and Hawaiian studies into the academy, with undergraduate and graduate curricula, a research center, services for Hawaiian students, tuition waivers, and a new Center for Hawaiian Studies. However, financial and administrative support for 'ōlelo Hawai'i was intermittent, and Kanaka programs were constantly vying with other programs for fiscal support.

Faculty, students, and community supporters went to great lengths to fight for space for 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Kekai Perry discusses one campaign in chapter 12, this volume). Perhaps no campus event better exemplifies this point than the Bachman Hall protest of 1995 when more than three hundred supporters stormed into the lobby of the university system's central administration offices, including the office of the president, to demonstrate against a proposal to reduce the Hawaiian language program's budget by 60 percent.[20] 'Ōlelo Hawai'i proponents warned that cuts to the program would not only impact 320 university students per semester but would also threaten to cause the extinction of the 'ōlelo makuahine of Hawai'i.

Laiana Wong implored, "If the English language department were shut down, the language would not die. Hawaiian isn't spoken anywhere else, it can't be learned in any other place." No'eau Warner contended, "Immersion will die without teachers," stressing that six of the seven kaiapuni teachers hired the year before were graduates of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Hawaiian program. Proponents further reminded university officials that the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa sits on Hawaiian Trust Lands and that the university realized a 500 percent increase in Hawaiian enrollment between 1985 and 1995. 'Ōlelo Hawai'i protesters argued cuts to the program were a form of institutional racism.

After several hours of negotiation, acting president Joyce Tsunoda pledged, "You will get it. I don't know where we have the money now, but the first available dollar will go to Hawaiian language."[21]

In spite of the progress made in advancing 'ōlelo Hawai'i, the Hawaiian language program has yet to garner the complete and unconditional backing of the university. The level of support for the language is contingent upon the ever-changing administration. Within the past decade, several high-ranking administrators who have been staunch supporters of Kanaka serving programs at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa have been either terminated or reassigned duties.

Conclusion

'Ōlelo Hawai'i is a spring of life for the Kanaka people;[22] our identity, culture, and worldview pour forth from our native language. Centers for Hawaiian language within the university system, shaped by intense debate within the Kanaka community as a whole, are sources of these springs of life. To revitalize 'ōlelo Hawai'i as a living lan-

guage, teachers, students, and families have established various niches for the language to thrive in schools and in the community at large: adult education classes, children's books, conversational groups, immersion camps, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi clubs, language competitions, language showcases, mele (song) institutes, newsletters, newspaper columns, newspaper digitization and translation projects, radio programs, scholarly publications (e.g., theses, dissertations, journal articles, books written in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi), sports teams, and theater productions have all contributed to breathing life back into a language that was once on the brink of extinction. Through school-based efforts, new generations of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi speakers from preschool to graduate school are working to ensure that ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is no longer in danger of becoming a dead language. If ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is to thrive, we must employ sustained, systematic approaches that ensure our ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is spoken intergenerationally in our homes, schools, workplaces, mass media, sites of worship, and in all aspects of our communities. We must resist the kolonaio by speaking our ʻōlelo makuahine. E Ola Mau ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi!

Notes

1. "Olelo Hawaii."
2. Warner, "The Movement to Revitalize Hawaiian Language and Culture," 133.
3. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 81.
4. The term "kolonaio" was developed through discussion between Kaleikoa Kaʻeo and Hone Harawira, and later with feedback from Noʻeau Warner and Laiana Wong.
5. Lucas, "E Ola Mau Kākou i ka ʻŌlelo Makuahine," 2.
6. Lucas, "E Ola Mau Kākou i ka ʻŌlelo Makuahine," 9.
7. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 188.
8. Kawaiʻaeʻa, Housman, and Alencastre, "Pūʻā i Ka ʻŌlelo, Ola Ka ʻOhana"; Lucas, "E Ola Mau Kākou i ka ʻŌlelo Makuahine"; Warner, "*Kuleana*."
9. Johnson, "The Hawaiian Language and Hawaiian Studies," 138.
10. Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, *Nānā i Ke Kumu*, vol. 2, 62.
11. Johnson, "The Hawaiian Language and Hawaiian Studies," 138.
12. Kawaiʻaeʻa, Housman, and Alencastre, "Pūʻā i Ka ʻŌlelo, Ola Ka ʻOhana," 183.
13. Hawaiʻi Revised Statutes, section 298-2.
14. Lucas, "E Ola Mau Kākou i ka ʻŌlelo Makuahine," 24–25.
15. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 52–53.
16. Kawaiʻaeʻa, Housman, and Alencastre, "Pūʻā i Ka ʻŌlelo, Ola Ka ʻOhana," 228 and 230.
17. Wilson and Kamanā, "ʻMai Loko Mai o ka ʻIʻini," 147.
18. Wong, "He Hāwaʻe Kai Nui a Kau Ma Kula," 31.
19. NeSmith, "Tūtū's Hawaiian and the Emergence of a Neo-Hawaiian Language," 69.
20. Fernandes, "UH Tries to Cut 14 Classes."
21. "Protesters Besiege Bachman Hall."
22. Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 3.

A NATION RISING

Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty

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