HE KULEANA HOʻOKAULIKE: BALANCING TOURISM AND CULTURAL PERPETUATION IN THE HILO LEI DAY COMMUNITY

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this MA thesis to the memory of Marie McDonald, who passed away in 2018. It was a privilege working with her daughter, Roen Hufford, for this thesis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the committee for their support in this endeavor, especially to Dr. Joseph Genz, my primary advisor, who I wish to thank for his advice and guidance, particularly related to the perpetuation of cultural knowledge through community documentation. I am greatly appreciative of the contributions of Dr. Kathy Kawelu to this project. I want to thank Dr. Kawelu and her family especially for their generosity, which made it possible for me to observe the Merrie Monarch Festival 2018. This was a truly an unforgettable experience that showcased lei. Thank you also to Dr. Peter Mills for supporting me when challenges arose. Mahalo nui to Kumu Hula Leilehua Yuen for representing the Hilo Lei Day community in this project. She is ever-generous with her time, friendship, and food. I am particularly grateful for her participation in this project. Mahalo also to her husband, Manu Josiah, who joined our interview spontaneously, and offered some valuable manaʻo (thoughts, ideas) on the lei and his family history. Mahalo also to the members of Hālau LeiManu (a hula school) and the volunteers at Hilo Lei Day.

A special acknowledgement to Noe Noe Kekauualua, who shared her friendship, traditional knowledge, and experiences as a cultural practitioner working in tourism. She is an enormous inspiration for the foundation of this project. I want to express my gratitude for Drs. Brook Hansen and Jack Rossen, who believed in the potential of my work for the Hilo community. I am appreciative of their willingness to work with me and for connecting me to Destination Hilo and Noe Noe Kekauualua. Thank you also to Dinnie Kysar, President of Destination Hilo, and the Aloha Ambassadors, for helping the project be grounded in the Hilo community. They allowed me to experience the “front lines” of tourism in Hilo.
This thesis would not have been possible without the participants who offered their time and mana’o generously. I am very grateful to Randy L. for teaching me the old style lei ‘awapuhi melemele (yellow ginger lei), and for his willingness to talk-story about his experiences while he worked. Mahalo ho‘i no ka lei puakenikeni no ko‘u lā hānau. I was humbled to talk-story with Roen Hufford, daughter of Marie McDonald, who offered insight on her experiences as a lei maker and how she engages in sharing Hawaiian culture. She generously shared her time and was quick to follow up with any questions I had. My friend and former student, Kāhili Hahn, took time out of her day to meet with me and share her lei making techniques.

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Finally, I want to extend my gratitude to the professors of the Heritage Management department. Thank you to Dr. Peter Mills for his determination to establish this program. Thank you to friends and family who supported me during this process. I am forever grateful for the friendship and unfailing encouragement from the members of the second Heritage Management
cohort. I wish them good luck in their endeavors, wherever their community kuleana (responsibility, duty) may bring them.
ABSTRACT

Tourism in Hilo offers opportunities and challenges for contemporary lei makers in Hilo, particularly those whose lives intersect with the annual Lei Day. In this MA thesis I explore how the Hilo-based Lei Day community engages in agency and cultural sharing as well as the changes in lei making that have occurred over their lifetimes. I use a suite of methods to develop a thematic understanding of tourism-based lei making, including a grounded theory analysis of interviews, participant observation at Hālau LeiManu, observation at the 2018 Merrie Monarch Festival, and an immersive experience akin to the Tongan practice of talanoa. I also illuminate the experiences of lei makers in tourism and how they were impacted by the 2018 Lower East Rift Zone eruption, endangerment of native species, the professionalization of lei making, and the desire to preserve tradition. I argue that contemporary lei makers whose lives intersect with the annual Lei Day in Hilo are balancing their community’s commitment to preserve traditional knowledge on their own terms while being attentive to the ambivalent and often fraught nature of sharing Hawaiian culture in the context of the tourism industry.
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<td>ABCFM</td>
<td>American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions</td>
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<td>BYUH</td>
<td>Brigham Young University-Hawai‘i</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPA</td>
<td>Hawai‘i Prepatory Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTA</td>
<td>Hawai‘i Tourism Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>MKVS</td>
<td>Maunakea Visitor Information Station</td>
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<td>OHA</td>
<td>Office of Hawaiian Affairs</td>
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<td>PCC</td>
<td>Polynesian Cultural Center</td>
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<td>ROD</td>
<td>Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death</td>
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<td>T</td>
<td>Theme</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Sub-Theme</td>
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<td>SSST</td>
<td>Sub-Sub-Sub-Theme</td>
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<td>UHH</td>
<td>University of Hawai‘i at Hilo</td>
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In this thesis, I purposely define individuals’ backgrounds because of the long history of appropriation and distortion of Kānaka Maoli heritage (Hall 2005). I use the term “Kānaka Maoli” (Appendix A glossary of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi [Hawaiian language] terms) to refer to the descendent community who can trace their genealogy to the indigenous population living on Hawaiʻi before Cook arrived in 1778. I chose this term because it is the traditional word that this community uses to identify itself (Hall 2005:407). “Kānaka Maoli” is a more appropriate moniker than “Hawaiian,” which is not part of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi and is dangerously ambiguous. “Hawaiian” is no longer reserved for the indigenous people of Hawaiʻi, but came to represent residents of the Territory and then State of Hawaiʻi (Hall 2005:404). The term “Native Hawaiian” has been used to clarify reference to the indigenous Kānaka Maoli community; however, Hall (2005:404) describes this phrase as having “colonial baggage” relating to blood quantum. Kānaka Maoli were required to use Western standards of blood quantum over their preferred traditional genealogies to legitimize their legal identities and guarantee access to their lands (Kauanui 2000:7).

The term “local” is also problematic. Hall (2005:406) associates it with the descendants of the plantation workers who eventually developed ʻōlelo paʻiʻai (Pidgin English). “Local” does not mean Kānaka Maoli, although prior to the Hawaiian Renaissance, it superceded “Hawaiian” or “Kānaka Maoli” (Hall 2005:406). In this thesis, I use it to identify the various descendent communities living in Hawaiʻi today.

Kamaʻāina is another phrase that needs clarification. Williams (2015:73) defines “kamaʻāina” literally as “to be a child born of the land.” However, much like the history of “Hawaiian,” the term “kamaʻāina” has been appropriated by tourism and used to refer to any
individual who happens to live in Hawai‘i. These kama‘aina are identified through their coveted rainbow Hawai‘i State drivers licenses (Williams 2015). This card is the key to purchasing from local businesses at a discounted price; it distinguishes permanent residents from tourists. This trivializes the right to live and even own a piece of Hawai‘i, which Williams (2015:74) argues “underscor[es] settler colonial constructs of belonging in the islands.” I use the contemporary understanding of “kama‘aina” for residents of Hawai‘i. This is also inline with the way that interlocutors use the term.

Hālau LeiManu is the official name of the hālau I worked with for this project. It is a combination of the names of its founders, Kumu Hula Leilehua Yuen and her husband Manu Josiah. I use the official spelling of the hālau’s name, even though conventional ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i does not use capital letters in the middle of a word.

As a final note, I cited electronic Kindle references using their specific location tags. For example, Yuen (2014:L695) refers to Yuen’s lei making dictionary that was published to Kindle. The tag L695 is the location of the quote in the electronic book.
...this is the real significance of the lei. It has universal appeal. It will survive any and all cultural change, for there will always be people who will enjoy and need its beauty to express regard for others and self (McDonald 1978:174).

The Hilo Lei Day community is the group of lei makers brought together by the annual event of Lei Day in Hilo. The majority of these lei makers are Kānaka Maoli, with a few exceptions. Kumu Hula Leilehua Yuen is the organizer of Hilo Lei Day. Yuen connects to her Kānaka Maoli heritage through her paternal kūpuna (grandparents) who mostly raised her. Yuen was a student of Kumu Hula Winona “Aunty Nona” Beamer who co-founded He Moʻolelo Kō Ka Lei (A Story About the Lei), the organization that “resumed the Hilo Lei Day Festival as the hōʻike (exhibition) of lei making” in 2005 (Yuen 2018b). The event-based Hilo Lei Day community includes the hosting organization He Moʻolelo Kō Ka Lei, the twelve members of Yuen’s Hālau LeiManu, and volunteers. The Lei Day community coordinates with Destination Hilo, a Hilo-based non profit organization that offers information to tourists arriving by cruise ship in the thousands. The celebration offers travelers an authentic, locally approved Hawaiian immersion experience where the space of Kalākaua Park has been reconfigured to offer shopping, food, entertainment, and interactive demonstration of lei traditions. This community is unified by their common desire to perpetuate and celebrate the beauty of the lei through music, story, hula, and the importance of place. While Lei Day is the annual hōʻike of He Moʻolele Kō Ka Lei, community events continue year round in the form of Yuen’s traditional lei making classes, caring for native plants (including tending the lauaʻe, a native plant, at Queen Liliʻuokalani Garden in Hilo), creating gardens that support these native species, holding cultural classes at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station, and outreach events designed to celebrate and perpetuate traditions associated with the lei.
A series of key moments describe the process of my becoming grounded in the Hilo Lei Day community. Part of this chapter is devoted to a personal narrative of these experiences. I am an outside researcher entering into this community and facilitating a community initiative advanced by a community organization (Lassiter 2005). When collected, these experiences form a metaphorical haku (braiding stems, flowers, and ferns into a lei) lei of relationships that are bound together with trust over time.

On an evening in 2013, I sat at the Plantation Inn in Lahaina watching a breathtakingly beautiful Maui sunset that bathed the ocean and mountains in orange light. I was drawn there by two decades of sickness and the passing of my father, experiences which instilled in me the values of care-taking and community. As I sat there in the calm, letting the gentle ‘ukulele melodies wash over me and forget my troubles, I heard for the first time Bruddah Iz’s rendition of “Hawai‘i 78.” The performer sang about the islands’ transitions from a sovereign kingdom to a tourist destination and recounted physical changes of the land. The song also posits how the king would respond if he could see the lāhui (the Hawaiian people or nation), today.

I recall the moment I became aware of tensions between Kānaka Maoli and tourists. This moment would lead me to the biggest step I have ever taken in my life: moving to an island in the Pacific that I had never set foot on before, far away from anyone I knew. That revelation in Lahaina also laid the foundation for my undergraduate honors thesis about the relationship between Kānaka Maoli and tourism. I spent time talking-story with some local community members, including talking with a Kānaka Maoli bus driver transporting tourists around Moloka‘i who shared his experience with the challenges tourism brings. He described how Moloka‘i was inundated with cruise ship passengers without proper infrastructure to support them. Hundreds of people were dropped off at the port to find insufficient transportation, no
public restrooms, and very limited food options. I began to realize the complexity of the issue and the potential for further exploration. I returned home with a renewed sense of purpose. My questions were racing through my head, so I spent the plane ride home outlining my undergraduate honors thesis.

Several months and applications later, I received a grant from the Honors College at the University of Arkansas to return to Maui, Molokaʻi, and Oʻahu to conduct my first fieldwork. I interviewed Kānaka Maoli working as cultural advisors at two different Maui hotels, and compared their experiences. These two individuals were generous with their time and manaʻo (thoughts), and we remain in contact today. One hotel had partnered with scholar George Kanahele, Kānaka Maoli activist and historian, to develop a more sustainable business model with a work ethic grounded in traditional Kānaka Maoli communities. An ethnically diverse staff engaged in aspects of Kānaka Maoli culture including hula, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, mele (songs, poems, chants), and traditional crafts taught by community mentors. The Kānaka Maoli interlocutor seemed quite content with this model, but it did raise questions about the deployment of Kānaka Maoli culture in tourism, especially regarding the extension of a version of Kānaka Maoli identity to non-Kānaka Maoli. Such questions are addressed in this thesis.

Before I left Maui, I stood alone in a garden by the sea, silent and still in the morning sun. My racing thoughts were a foil to the serene setting. To calm them, I began to write myself a letter, and through the process began to understand what exactly was causing my insides to ache. So much had been lost to me that year: friends, family, and love. The beautiful thing about grief and loss is that they can be fertile soil for new beginnings, and they allow you to appreciate the beauty and brokenness of other people. My fieldwork was extremely humbling and filled me with purpose. I had learned the potential for my project to share the stories of people who had
won against impossible odds to protect precious cultural heritage. I was hopeful that the experiences of these individuals could help others develop more meaningful relationships between the Kānaka Maoli and the malihini (visitors, tourists). I realized in that moment that I had come to the edge of my world, and found what I was meant to do, that somehow I could use my abilities and voice to advocate for Kānaka Maoli. I realized that a sense of kuleana (responsibility) was pulling my heart in two places at once. Remembering my home was far beyond the horizon made me fearful, and yet I understood what this new calling meant. I promised myself in that moment of purpose that I would return to Hawai‘i, and even apply for graduate school, even though I had no idea how these things could come to pass. I had no idea that my story was just beginning.

The next two years I dedicated myself to preparing for my journey. I worked four jobs to save money, and applied to the Heritage Management program at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (UHH). I learned that my status as a non-Kānaka Maoli from the continental United States, with no local knowledge and little knowledge of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, might impact my acceptance and ability to relate to the local community in Hilo. I sought to remedy this, and so I dedicated a year prior to the start of the MA program to study ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. I was told that it was too late to enroll in an online course, but that I could check out the website ‘Ōlelo Online, which is hosted by British-born Kaliko Beamer-Trapp, a kumu (teacher) at Ka Haka ʻUla O Keʻelikolani (the Hawaiian language college at UHH).

Beamer-Trapp began mentoring me in 2016 after I expressed my desire to learn ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i before starting community research. We began video conferencing online three times a week to practice conversing; I would also send recordings of myself speaking and receive critiques on pronunciation. I learned from Beamer-Trapp that twenty years prior, Aunty Nona
Beamer had invited him to move to Hawai‘i and helped him become a part of the community. She shared her Kānaka Maoli heritage with Beamer-Trapp, and he became her hānai (adopted) son. I believe that Beamer-Trapp recognized that I was another haole (foreigner) “outsider” from St. Louis, MO who was as committed to the culture as he. In August of 2017, the night before starting the Heritage Management Program, Beamer-Trapp gifted me with a Kānaka Maoli name, Kapawaʻalihilani, so that I could introduce myself to the Kānaka Maoli community. Beamer-Trapp explained that “ka pawa” is the last moment of darkness before dawn, when there is blue light on the horizon and one can see the rays of the sun, though not the sun itself yet. “ʻAlihi lani” refers to the horizon, the edge of the sky where dawn breaks. Kaliko explained that he had chosen a traditional “kaʻi + memeʻa” (an article followed by a noun and optional modifiers) style for my name, like his own. The kaona (layered meanings or significance) in my name is associated with the metaphorical dawn of my new life on Hawaiʻi Island; I came from the East, like the dawn, and was now “breaking over the horizon.” When I received it, Beamer-Trapp explained that he wanted me to be able to introduce myself to the local community with my new name. He remembers when he arrived in Hawaiʻi and introduced himself as Simon to the first people he met. He said that they always called him Simon, even after he became Kaliko. Because of this, he wanted me to have my new name so that I could introduce myself to our students and the Heritage Management cohort as Kapawa. For me, this was very symbolic of a new start. I had a blank page to fill as I pleased, and I could make myself into whatever new person I chose. I experienced how a name can help one thrive. The sound of my name is always a reminder of my new beginning, and encourages me to be worthy of it.

With Beamer-Trapp’s support, I tested out of the Heritage Management department’s requirement to take first year ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi. He encouraged me to teach and share what I had
been given, and so I worked as his haumana kākoʻo (student teacher) for his two first year ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi classes, I observed second and fourth year classes, and I also served lunch at Ka ʻUmeke Kāʻeo, Pā Hoaka immersion school. Beamer-Trapp helped me find my place in Hilo and become grounded in the community, and introduced me to Yuen. It is my intention to use the manaʻo that was passed to me to help document and perpetuate a component of Kānaka Maoli lei making heritage. By collaborating with Yuen, a key member of the Hilo Lei Day community, I explore the significance of the lei within this community that engages in tourism and other methods of cultural sharing and perpetuation.

The concept of this MA thesis project developed out of relationships I have with Kānaka Maoli and non-Kānaka Maoli who work within tourism and represent Hilo and Hawaiʻi Island to the visitors who come from around the world. For ten days, I shadowed Aloha Ambassadors at Destination Hilo, a nonprofit organization that provides information to tourists who arrive in Hilo by plane or cruise ship. Destination Hilo hosts Hula Tuesdays, at which Hawaiian music is played, hula is performed, and cultural demonstrations are offered. I became friends with Noe Noe Kekaualua, a Kānaka Maoli who teaches lei making to tourists during Hula Tuesdays. Her insight is key for this thesis. In addition to her work at Destination Hilo, I observed her also at her second job, hosting tours of the island. Riding in the van with her, we spoke ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi together between her re-tellings of Hawaiian lore for the visitors’ benefit and she shared her experiences as a cultural practitioner working in tourism. Kekaualua had often questioned whether her work in tourism is pono (a state of goodness, being correct, proper, and appropriate). However, she has a strong sense of purpose, identifying as a force of balance within tourism. She believes that this calling is not for every Kānaka Maoli, and can be a heavy burden to bear; yet, she feels it is her kuleana to ensure that tourism on Hawaiʻi Island is done in a way that is
respective to Kānaka Maoli culture and environment. This goal cannot be accomplished by a single person alone, but Kekauualua does what she can to encourage positive relationships with visitors and with the places to which she brings them. For example, when she takes a group of visitors to Halema'uma'u, the volcanic crater of Kīlauea, she takes a moment to step apart from the group and offer an oli (a chant) to Pele, the Kānaka Maoli goddess of lava. Kekauualua invited me to join her in this solemn acknowledgement of Pele’s allowing people to appreciate her beauty. Another way Kekauualua sees herself as a force of balance in tourism is by sharing the traditional forms of the mo‘olelo that encourage a sense of place, as opposed to misleading stories that have been created to entertain guests. Rather than entertainment, cultural sharing is her goal. In cultural sharing, the Kānaka Maoli determines what content is appropriate for sharing under certain circumstances. By contrast, entertainment is the manipulation and presentation of select cultural elements for an audience’s pleasure. From my friendship with Kekauualua, I began to see how my project could meet the needs of this community.

The second Kānaka Maoli who informs this project is Kumu Hula Leilehua Yuen. Once, when Beamer-Trapp was unable to pick me up from Kona airport, he asked his friend Yuen to step in. Over the two-hour car ride, Yuen shared with me her desire to pass on Hawaiian heritage to the next generation. She spoke of organizing Hilo Lei Day and her authorship of a lei making dictionary. A few days later, she and I met in her lei plant garden, where I shared with her my ideas about interviewing her about her experiences with tourism and lei making for my thesis. However, a much more meaningful project unfolded. I suggested that the project could entail video recording (or other documentation) of her specialized lei making techniques that could help document her lei making knowledge. At the time, I did not know the significance of Lei Day, or that Yuen had received a grant from Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority (HTA) to do exactly
what I was suggesting. It was a moment of mutual excitement. She said she would be happy to collaborate with me and that there was much work to do. She also commented that keepers of cultural knowledge need youth to take that knowledge forward into the future. Meeting Yuen and Kekauualua, these two Kānaka Maoli women who work within tourism, was key to grounding this community project.

Keakauualua’s meaningful description of herself as a “force of balance” led me to explore the perpetuation of lei making within the Hilo Lei Day community. I conducted six interviews with five participants to assess how lei making has changed over their lifetimes and invited them to share their experiences sharing lei making within tourism. Each of these participants are well-versed in cultural sharing with tourists, and within the community itself. The community expressed a concern for the what they perceived to be the fragmentation of lei making traditions. The Hilo Lei Day community was interested in a project that would document these traditions in a culturally meaningful way in order to preserve them, noting various societal and environmental challenges. Interviews with participants revealed that Kānaka Maoli agency is enacted in tourism in a variety of ways (Imada 2012; Tamaira 2015; Williams 2015). I argue that contemporary lei makers whose lives intersect with the annual Lei Day in Hilo are balancing (Estrella 2013) their community’s commitment to preserve traditional knowledge on their own terms while being attentive to the ambivalent and often fraught nature of sharing Hawaiian culture in the context of the tourism industry.

In the following chapters I provide background information, introduce my methodological approaches, and present my findings to explore this idea of balance for the lei makers of Hilo. In Chapter Two, I first offer a discussion of how tourism has constructed Hawai‘i as a paradise, show how this notion has been refuted, and finally review agency and
alternative ways such as balance that Kānaka Maoli engage with and push against tourism. I
draw from Estrella’s (2013) understanding of balance as investing internally within the
community’s perpetuation of tradition with equal or greater energies than those invested
outwardly through tourism. In Chapter Three, I explore the important history of non-Kānaka
Maoli as advocates, show how documentation has previously led to perpetuation of indigenous
culture and language, and I explain the collaborative research design and methodology that I
employ. Chapter Four details the themes that emerge from grounded theory analysis applied to
interviews with community members. In the concluding chapter, I place the concepts of balance
and agency within a broader context of decolonizing heritage management. Overall, the
decisions of lei makers to engage in preservation and cultural sharing within tourism offers a
potential response to the sentiments of frustration expressed by the participants.
MOKUNA 2: NO KA MĀKAʻIKAʻI HAWAIʻI (CHAPTER 2: TOURISM IN HAWAIʻI)

A History of Colonialism and Tourism in Hawaiʻi

Colonialism in Hawaiʻi is a multifaceted process. Foreign ideas came to replace traditional Kānaka Maoli ideas, including religion, institutions, land management, and governance. In 1820s the Kānaka Maoli community, especially the aliʻi class, began to adopt Christian values and doctrine, which were being promoted by the missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) (Osorio 2002:12). These sumptuary laws criminalized Kānaka Maoli traditions, including hula (Osorio 2002:13). To make way for plantations, Kānaka Maoli were separated from their land so that foreign investors could capitalize on cash crops of sugar and pineapple (Osorio 2002:201). After the collapse of the plantation economy, tourism became the next iteration of this pattern of domination and assimilation. Selling Hawaiʻi as a destination was the next “cash crop.” Haunani Kay Trask (1999:24), a leader within Kānaka Maoli sovereignty movements, viewed tourism in Hawaiʻi as a false narrative created by annexationists who wanted to sell Hawaiʻi to the US and that tourism created an imaginary reality in which Hawaiʻi is a conflict-free zone full of happy people. She believed that tourism obscures how Hawaiʻi continues to be an occupied nation under the United States (Trask 1999:22).

Jones and Osgood (2015) discuss the cultural and economic impacts of the sugar industries in Hawaiʻi. They point out that before the emergence of tourism, foreign interest in Hawaiʻi began because of opportunities for development and investment. While some of the earliest resources to be exploited were sandalwood and then whales, sugar became the dominant export. American demand for sugar was intensified by the California gold rush (1848–1855), the American Civil War (1861–1865), and the contested Reciprocity Treaty of 1875. This treaty
allowed Hawaiian sugar to enter the US duty free, leading to an economic boom during 1876–1897. In return, Hawaiʻi relinquished control of the future site of Pearl Harbor to the United States. According to Jones and Osgood (2015:vii), “the economics of producing sugarcane in Hawaiʻi helped drive the Westernization of Hawaiʻi for much of the nearly two and a half centuries since Cook’s landing.” During the 1870s, immigrants were brought in as contract workers from China, Japan, the Philippines, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Okinawa, and Korea to work fertile Hawaiian soil suitable for sugar and pineapple. This workforce was brought in to supplement the waning Hawaiian population, which was ravaged by European diseases. With the decline of the Kānaka Maoli population came the dwindling of their political power.

Gonzalez and Williams (2017:671) observe how the aliʻi were conscious of the intents of the imperialists to assimilate their kingdom. King David Laʻamea Kalākaua (reigned 1874–1891) sought to assert Hawaiʻi’s sovereignty through attaining international recognition and displaying ʻIolani Palace as the pinnacle of modernity (Gonzalez and Williams 2017:671). Even though ʻIolani Palace was rebuilt in this image and outfitted with electricity, one of Kalākaua’s greatest legacies is his advocacy for revitalizing tradition. He is known as the Merrie Monarch for his patronage of the arts, particularly hula.

Osorio (2002:194) describes how the authority of the monarchy was compromised by the Bayonet Constitution in 1887. The Hawaiian League was a party of mostly haole businessmen and lawyers who sought “Constitutional, Representative government” (Osorio 2002:235). Many members were the children or grandchildren of ABCFM missionaries, such as Lorrin A. Thurston, who wrote the new constitution (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:315). The Hawaiian League was backed by the Honolulu Rifles, a militia comprised of haole businessmen and planters (Osorio
Together, they forced Kalākaua to sign the 1887 Bayonet Constitution (Osorio 2002:240). The aliʻi feared their own assassinations. They were,

held hostage at gunpoint by the very people that his kingdom had hosted, the King signed the document that made him a prisoner in his own home... The Bayonet Constitution profoundly shifted and racialized power in the Kingdom, reducing the King to a figurehead, disenfranchising many Native Hawaiians, and opening up suffrage to white foreign settlers. It also accelerated Hawaiʻi’s military occupation, ceding the sheltered harbor at Puʻuloa (what would later be named Pearl Harbor) in exchange for favorable trade terms for the sugar planter oligarchy (Gonzalez and Williams 2017:671).

The Bayonet Constitution reduced the king’s executive powers, appointed members of the militia to lofty government positions, and allowed foreigners—American or European males who owned property—to vote in the Hawaiian Kingdom (Osorio 2002:240). The soaring plantation economy, which had entangled the interests on foreign investors with Hawaiʻi, was severely jeopardized when the 1890 McKinley Tariff dramatically increased taxes on foreign goods (Jones and Osgood 2015:39). Many of these planters and businessmen called for overthrow of Hawaiʻi to the US, which would eliminate tariffs (Jones and Osgood 2015:39).

After the passing of Kalākaua, his successor and sister, Queen Liliʻuokalani attempted to respond to Kānaka Maoli petitions to restore the previous legal constitution and the authority of the monarchy. She drafted a new constitution that stripped foreigners of the right to vote (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:315). In response, Thurston amassed weapons and the US Marines and staged a coup in 1893 (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:315). Sanford B. Dole was declared President of the Provisional Government of Hawaiʻi (Jones and Osgood 2015:39). To avoid bloodshed, the Queen refused to arrest Thurston and instead:

she took exactly the same action that Kauikeaouli had fifty years previously: she ceded the kingdom under protest to the greater military strength of the United States, believing America would recognize the injustice done and restore the kingdom (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:316).
Under severe duress, the Queen was forced to concede her authority under protest to avoid violence, but entrusted the then President Cleveland to restore her to her position. Cleveland rejected the Provisional Government’s 1893 treaty proposing the incorporation of Hawai‘i to the US, but the Provisional Government refused to cede power back to the monarchy and shortly thereafter formed the Republic of Hawai‘i on July 4, 1894 (Silva 2004:136). Cleveland launched an investigation which found that activating the US military in Honolulu was classified as an act of war (United States Congress 1898; Silva 2004:134). Hui Aloha ‘Āina, a patriotic Kānaka Maoli civil rights organization formed by Joseph Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu, petitioned Special Commissioner James H. Blount, head of the investigation. The organization requested support from the United States to restore their lawful sovereign (Silva 2004:136). Blount noted in his report that while some Kānaka Maoli had been compelled by sugar planters to sign petitions calling for the overthrow, the coup was not supported by the majority of Hawaiian citizens (Blount 1894; Silva 2004:170). In response, Cleveland ordered the resignation of US Minister John L. Stevens, who commanded the US soldiers on the USS Boston to aid in the illegal overthrow (Silva 2004:134). Meanwhile, the Queen was accused of treason by the new Republic of Hawai‘i for:

- her steadfast refusal to recognize the provisional government’s authority...
- In 1895, Queen Liliʻuokalani was put under house arrest in the palace for a fabricated role in fomenting an armed rebellion, turning her home into a prison. Ironically, she was put on trial in her own throne room for having knowledge of treason against the Republic that itself had overthrown her (Gonzales and Williams 2017:672).

ʻIolani, the royal palace, became a prison for its Queen (Gonzales and Williams 2017:672). Despite a failed insurrection of monarchal loyalists, support of the Kānaka Maoli through the Kūʻē Petitions, and the negotiation of the terms of the Queen’s reinstatement, ultimately, Cleveland lost the election to Republican McKinley, who was not interested in restoring the
Queen (Silva 2004:145). Instead, US interests in Hawai‘i’s resources, land base, and strategic military position took precedent, and Hawai‘i was incorporated as a US territory on July 4, 1898 under the Newlands Resolution (Silva 2004:160). The grief and outrage of the Kānaka Maoli was so intense that, “nervous officials of the United States thought it necessary to surround the palace with troops” during the flag raising ceremony (Silva 2004:161). Since the forcible intervention of the US military during the overthrow, Hawai‘i has been an illegally occupied nation. In the territorial period (1898–1959), which lasted more than 60 years, Hawai‘i’s indigenous constitutional monarchy was reduced to an entity with no voting rights or formal representation in US government (Silva 2004:160).

Kānaka Maoli continued to lose their rights and access to land. The Māhele (1848) displaced Hawaiians from ancestral lands that had formerly been held in usufruct and worked communally; for the first time, foreigners could own Hawaiian land (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:299). Furthermore, most Kānaka Maoli did not understand how private land could be used for capitalistic purposes (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:11). As a result, many Kānaka Maoli did not claim their homes and taro fields from the Land Commission (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:11). Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole, the last prince of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the first royal to serve as a delegate to Congress, worked to establish the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), which established the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (Department of Hawaiian Home Lands 2013). Qualifications for heirship as defined by the HHCA were revised several times. Initially, there was no blood quantum required; however, the next version required 1/32, then full-blood (Kauanui 2000:v). Finally, Kānaka Maoli could only claim heirship to their land by proving 50% blood quantum status (Kauanui 2000:26). Thus, colonial policies had alienated the native people
from their land. This equation continues to displace Kānaka Maoli as the generations intermarr

y with other ethnicities. Kauanui (2000:19) notes,

Indigenous cultural definitions of who is Hawaiian take genealogy into account over

blood quanta percentages. Hawaiian genealogies make room for flux in identity and

identification, naming distinctive connections when appropriate and, of course,

advantageous. Where blood quantum is always about the individualization of particular

bodies, genealogy...enlarges the collective and social.

Colonialism in and of itself did not alienate Kānaka Maoli from their land, but rather the very

real and material policies that were enacted disinherited them.

Tourism is a colonial mechanism that has been used to assimilate Hawaiʻi, a sovereign

nation, into a financial and political asset of the US. Through images, advertising campaigns, and

mainstream culture, tourism has created a false narrative of the US’s paternalistic sponsorship of

what it deemed to be a “lesser nation.” It has characterized Kānaka Maoli as less valuable,

content, natives who are grateful for the intervention of higher powers. While framing Hawaiʻi as

a magical place, tourism has conveniently obscured the ongoing resistance of the lāhui, the

citizens of the nation of Hawaiʻi, into an illusion of welcome, hospitality, and consent. Tourism

has thrown open the doors for appropriation of Hawaiian ancestral land, resources, and customs.

For example, in the name of leisure, the Keauhou Beach Hotel was built directly over a heiau

(place of worship) and adjacent to another heiau complex named Hāpaialiʻi in Kona, on Hawaiʻi

Island (Ryan 2008). This area, which is held sacred by Kānaka Maoli, was desecrated to provide

tourists a five-star place of relaxation and wonder. One reviewer on Yelp.com describes the

place, “Like a page out of paradise. I came here for my honeymoon and we got a room

overlooking the south side where the ruins are...It was picture perfect” (Yelp 2012). Another

guest describes the heiau complex as “some large, sacred cultural stone structures that are fun to

explore” (Yelp 2012). Kamehameha Schools has since demolished the hotel in order to make
way for an educational center (Ryan 2008). The heiau have been reconstructed and are maintained by cultural practitioners (Ryan 2008). Constructing the tourist experience often comes at the price of Kānaka Maoli sacred or private spaces. Gonzalez and Williams (2017:670) consider ‘Iolani Palace as the ultimate example of irony, where, “a violent history of imperialism was played out with premeditation, and where it was subsequently smoothed over by narratives of hospitality.” Today, Kānaka Maoli can only visit the former seat of the Hawaiian Kingdom as tourists.

Tourism comprises the largest economic staple in Hawai‘i, next to US military defense (Imada 2008:3). This is significant because both entities work to maintain colonial domination in Hawai‘i. Tourism and the military “have developed in close concert in Hawai‘i and are mutually dependent, capitalizing on a neocolonial state, expropriated land base, and subordinated local populace. Mili-tourism also produces and benefits from institutionalized entertainment” (Imada 2008:330). During World War II, an economy of mili-tourism was produced. Imada describes military sponsored films in which soldiers attended lū‘au. These films positioned Kānaka Maoli in the role of gracious hosts and “natural performers” (Imada 2008:330). This narrative works to naturalize the presence of the military in Hawai‘i.

Similar to the way that militarism has typecast Kānaka Maoli, the tourism industry has constructed an imaginary version of Hawai‘i that obscures the realities of colonialism by reducing kānaka and Hawai‘i to marketable objects of conquest. Colonialism and tourism restructured Hawai‘i in the foreign imagination as a place for the foreigner rather than for Kānaka Maoli. Wood (1999:68) suggests that early travel writers visited Hawai‘i because “what could be visited could be known and described. What could be described, it was implied, could be owned.” Pratt (1992:18) poses that these accounts produce “other parts of the world for the
imagination of Europeans.” Such narratives were invitations for future explorers. A fictional Hawai‘i was developed by authors who imagined the place to be “paradise” on earth and entertained their audiences by drawing sweeping racial generalizations about Kānaka Maoli. For example, in Mark Twain’s (1923:8–11) lectures, he characterized Kānaka Maoli as simple-minded natives with backwards tendencies who are incapable of achievement:

The Kanaker is ready for you. He is a born trader and will swindle you if he can. He will lie straight through, from the first word to the last...A Kanaka will eat anything he can bite—a live fish, scales and all...With all these excellent and hospitable ways these Kanakers have some cruel instincts. They will put a live chicken in the fire just to see it hop about. In the olden times they used to be cruel to themselves. They used to tear their hair and burn their flesh, shave their heads, knock out an eye or a couple of front teeth, when a great person or a king died...if their grief was so sore...they would go out and scalp their neighbor, or burn his house down...Now, you see what kind of voters you will have if you take those islands away from these people as we are pretty sure to do someday. They will do everything the wrong end first.

Alongside Twain’s (1975[1866]) praises of Kānaka Maoli as selfless and welcoming are his assertions that their lecherous nature has not been assuaged by the virtuous examples of the haole. Similarly, Jack London attempted to demonstrate how the “rhetoric of blood” was scientifically grounded (Wood 1999:89). In Jack London’s (2017[1909]:108) House of Pride, London describes to American audiences how a small fraction of Kānaka Maoli blood was a stain that could not be washed out by generations of good breeding:

One eighth and one sixteenth Hawaiian were they, which meant that seven eighths and fifteen sixteenths white blood informed that skin, yet failed to obliterte the modicum of golden tawny brown of Polynesia.

At the time of London’s writing, inter-racial marriage was illegal in the US; thus his audience would have found such themes quite scandalous (Wood 1999:108). However, London used Euroamerican pseudo-scientific notions of blood and race to explain what he believed to be the sinful habits of Kānaka Maoli elites, who married their siblings or married outside their race
(Wood 1999:89). He justified the sinking socio-economic status of Kānaka Maoli while attributing any of their successes to the shrewdness of their foreign spouses. Such characterizations justified the colonial process in Hawai‘i to American and European audiences (Wood 1999:90). They also exemplify the US’s interest in demonstrating its innocence of exploiting Kānaka Maoli and the resources of their land. The cause was justified by these racial discourses that assured Americans that they were intervening in a society which could not manage its own affairs. These travelers’s accounts supported US presence in Hawai‘i and encouraged investments in sugar and tourism.

Shipping services between Hawai‘i and the US greatly increased following the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875, which allowed duty free Hawaiian sugar to be sent to the US (Mak 2015:14; Thrum 1881). Matson Navigation Company and the Oceanic Steamship Company offered the chance for international visitors to travel in comfort (Mak 2015:48; Thrum 1888). The maturation of the shipping companies bolstered the emerging tourism industry.

Mak (2015) argues that the process of framing Hawai‘i as a tourist destination was a multi-ethnic co-creation. In 1888, King Kalākaua called for the monthly publication of *Paradise of the Pacific*, which touted the health benefits of travel to Hawai‘i (Mak 2015:18). Thus, it was not only foreign whites who were selling tourism, but also Kānaka Maoli themselves who were engaging with and promoting tourism. Thurston, former first minister of the interior of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and a leader of the illegal overthrow of the following year, called for the creation of the Hawaiian Bureau of Information (HBI), which would advertise tourism on a larger scale. The administrators of the HBI abandoned the organization after the overthrow in order to devote their time to annexation efforts. Thurston also led the Hawai‘i Promotion Committee (today’s Hawai‘i’s Visitor and Convention Bureau) in 1903, and lobbied for the
establishment of Hawai‘i National Park (Mak 2015:22). He worked to package Hawai‘i into a desirable destination and investment opportunity. The ultimate goal was to lure settlers that could prepare Hawai‘i for assimilation and annexation into the US. *Paradise of the Pacific* (1902:16) features a report by the Merchant’s Association of O‘ahu, which praises tourism because “besides being a business that properly directed cannot fail to result in bringing us ultimately an increased and permanent population of the most desirable character.” This refers to the migration of Westerners to Hawai‘i and shows how tourism was used to market Hawai‘i to select groups who could settle the islands. Such “desirable” people could be used to influence voting in a way beneficial to foreign investors (Mak 2015:24). In addition, the presence of American settlers in Hawai‘i would rationalize annexation as the logical conclusion of “manifest destiny” (Gonzalez and Williams 2017:668). After the McKinley Tariff of 1890, Hawai‘i lost its edge in the sugar market and tourism became a logical alternative investment. Because the price of sugar was so volatile, tourism was a practical way to diversify business. In addition, it attracted whites to Hawai‘i. In 1903, the Hawai‘i Promotion Committee received funding from the Territorial Government to market tourism on much a larger scale, and to glamorize Honolulu in particular for the benefit of residents and tourists alike (Mak 2015:22). Mak (2015) chronicles how the coming of age of trans-Pacific shipping fed the growth of Hawai‘i tourism. During the 1920s, Hawai‘i burgeoned as an international recreational destination; the Matson Navigation Company responded by creating a fleet of trans-pacific passenger ships, and by the 1930s, Matson owned both the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian luxury hotels in Waikīkī. Hawai‘i became a port for tourists traveling to both Hawai‘i and destinations beyond Hawai‘i. For example, the Oceanic Steamship Company docked monthly in
Hawai‘i on its way to New Zealand, Australia, and San Francisco (Mak 2015:10). There were also several steamship companies that offered transport to neighboring islands (Mak 2015:17).

The arrival of these ships was celebrated with a festive event known as “Boat Days,” during which the lei became an anticipated welcome gift (Mak 2015:13). Mak (2015:54) provides a German translation from the Hamburg-Amerika Line in 1932, which praised the lei:

In Hawai‘i, people get a wonderful necklace made of flowers, which they have to wear for the entire day. The natives, of course, do not wear them aside from the occasional cute Kanaka girl singing and hugging. They are of course pretty and continue to do their act until all the money is spent.

Receiving a lei came to be the quintessential experience of “Boat Days” (Hodges 1986:xxxix). Similarly, “Hawai‘i Calls,” a beloved radio program, became the classic soundtrack to the “Hawai‘i experience” (Diamond 2008:25). The show was broadcast by the Hawai‘i Tourism Bureau from the Royal Hawaiian and Moana Hotels (Diamond 2008:25). The show would run for forty years. During World War II, lei makers who had formerly sold lei to tourists arriving during “Boat Days” were commissioned instead by the military to make camouflage (Hodges 1986:xxxv). Tourism in Hawai‘i boomed following World War II, Statehood in 1959, and the replacement of steamships with air travel (Mak 2015:2). For better or for worse, tourism was established in Hawai‘i.

It is unsurprising that there are ongoing problems with tourism because it was not created to benefit the indigenous community, but rather serve foreign interests. Indigenous communities, including Kānaka Maoli have long felt the negative effects of tourism, which Thaman (1993:107) describes as a colonial legacy. In Hawai‘i, Kānaka Maoli permission to access and abuse precious resources has been taken for granted. In addition, Kānaka Maoli have been subject to harmful racialized discourse, which belittles their political will (London 1990; Twain 1923). Finally, Kānaka Maoli have been assigned the role of hosts of uninvited guests in their own
homeland (Imada 2008:341). Their image has been appropriated and used to market the islands as a paradise inhabited by docile natives (Desmond 1999:4). Some are loathe to play into tourism as they understand it to be exploitation of their own culture for the benefit of the visitor (Trask 1999). However, broader anthropological discourse has demonstrated that tourism is not just a concern for indigenous people in Hawai‘i.

The anthropology of tourism has moved through several discussions regarding the way tourism portrays indigenous populations. Adams (2006) claims tourism essentializes local populations and their customs. The success of a destination can depend on its ability to project an alluring image of itself. Adams (2006) draws comparisons between modern danger zone tourism and colonized spaces. According to Adams (2006:57), “Then, as today, adventurers harvested new experiences in what they considered exotic outposts, and marketed these novel tales back to the homeland.” Thus, entire cultures and their histories are whittled down to the most intriguing concepts that come to represent the destination. Cohen (1988) discusses how such practices have resulted in the commodification of cultures, wherein practices that were previously performed for local benefit are exploited by being removed from the original cultural context, repackaged, and then marketed for the benefit of tourists. Conversely, Bruner (1991:239) rejects the idea that “native objects” are frozen in time, but he points out that hosting populations must still construct a reality that meets tourists’ expectations. Babb (2011:xiii) describes one way this plays out in tourist spaces. She points out how “unsettling” narratives, such as colonial history or prehistory, are removed for the comfort of tourists. Crick (1995:210–211) makes the comparison that anthropologists exoticize the “other” as much as tourism, and because of this, they are perpetuating the legacy of colonialism. Trask (1999:7) is highly critical of tourism, likening it to a “parasitic mechanism of colonialism.” She enumerates the ways by which Kānaka Maoli have
been exploited through what she refers to as the “cultural prostitution,” “cheapening of culture,” and the dismissive portrayal of Kānaka Maoli as “happy natives” through the romanticism of Hollywood and tourist advertising (Trask 1999:23). While Trask raised compelling concerns, she focused on the victimization of indigenous communities rather than their agency as self-aware participants in the tourist industry. Kānaka Maoli have indeed raised pointed objections to tourism and many have opposed or look down upon those who choose to work within “the beast.” There is no denying that the image and traditions of Kānaka Maoli have been used, sometimes against them, to make Hawaiʻi one of the most popular destinations. While framing Hawaiʻi as a magical place, tourism has conveniently obscured the ongoing resistance of the lāhui into an illusion of welcome, hospitality, and consent.

Constructing “Paradise”

In this section, I show how Hawaiʻi was physically and metaphorically reconstructed to give the illusion of a paradise for the benefit of tourism. A number of the discussions I highlight in this section are from the 1990s, when the scholarship of individuals like Haunani Kay Trask focused on tourism and its shortcomings. I provide Waikīkī as a case study. This era of critical examination of tourism is essential to understand the roots of indigenous agency, a discussion which matures through the 2000s and 2010s. The flow of this section is thematic, including Lei Day and a semiotic reading of lei imagery. Tourism appropriates the images of Kānaka Maoli and Hawaiʻi to construct a paradisical image that lures travelers. Long before flights are booked and itineraries set, an imagined “Hawaiʻi” is created in the mind of the visitor. States Diamond, Hawaiʻi is “America’s new frontier of the imagination” (2008:24). The image of a Hawaiian “paradise” with “hula girls” is reproduced on postcards, advertisements, and even on laundry
fragrances. Tourism both feeds on and perpetuates the narrative that Hawai‘i is a whimsical wonderland. In the 1910s, the natural features of Hawai‘i were promoted, including volcanos, white sand beaches, and hidden waterfalls (Desmond 1999:6). In the 1920s and 1930s, Hawaiian culture was portrayed through hula performances hosted at hotels.

Hotels, lūʻau (a Hawaiian feast named for taro tops which are traditionally served; previously, these feasts were known as pā‘ina or ‘aha‘aina), and other tourist spaces attempt to physically construct this fantasy of “paradise.” Imada (2008:330) argues that the “tourist lūʻau [has] become an iconic and mediated form of commodified hospitality and leisure.” During World War II, military-produced lūʻau assigned Kānaka Maoli as hosts to the soldiers (Imada 2008:341). They manufactured hospitality that “transformed colonial possession into benign and mutually agreeable encounters,” typecasting Kānaka Maoli as entertainers and scripting the behaviors between the two groups (Imada 2008:332). Tourist lūʻau frame Hawaiian culture as an exotic spectacle. The long-running Kodak Hula Show in Waikīkī was established by Kodak Hawai‘i to promote taking photographs of hula (Mak 2015:57). Since most shows were after dark, the daytime Kodak Hula Show allowed tourists to capture vibrant colors of dancers and their brightly colored lei (Mak 2015:57). Buck (1993:1) considers how tourism re-constructs Hawai‘i in a way that “mystifies the past and obscures the history of Western domination.” By removing key controversial elements that would make tourists uncomfortable, such as the ongoing struggle of Kānaka Maoli for sovereignty, history as relayed through the lens of tourism is retold in a way that masks colonialism.

This notion of editing history is played out in Waikīkī, which today is widely understood as the tourist Mecca of the Pacific. The lyrics of Harry Owen’s (1935) “Hawai‘i Calls” (Kanoa-Martin 2018) romanticize Waikīkī:
Hawai‘i calls
With a melody of love, dear,
Across the sea as evening falls;

The surf tonight is booming on the sand
At Waikīkī tonight
And how I wish that you were strolling hand
In hand with me tonight

While “Hawai‘i Calls” paints a carefree image of Waikīkī, Trask’s (1994:60) poem “Waikīkī” describes the same location from a Kānaka Maoli perspective:

all those 5 gallon
toilets flushing
away tourist waste
into our waters

Waikīkī home
of aliʻi
sewer center
of Hawai‘i

8 billion dollar
beach secret
rendezvous for pimps
Hong Kong hoodlums
Japanese capitalists
haole punkers

Trask’s (1994) poem exemplifies how a sense of place can be re-made. Concrete and construction are used to repackage cultural landscapes into five star resorts with tiki bars.

Waikīkī was once a thriving Kānaka Maoli homeland. The spouting waters for which Waikīkī is named used to feed the loʻi (taro fields) and lokoiʻa (fish ponds) of a self-sustaining Kānaka Maoli community (Feeser and Chan 2006:1).

In their unpacking of the history of colonialism and development—of which tourism is a part—Feeser and Chan (2006) reveal the controversial transformation of Waikīkī from ancient origins to modern day tourism. In Waikīkī, the present is layered upon the past, sometimes
physically through the re-writing of place beneath sheets of concrete, so that it becomes distant and forgotten. By reconnecting to place in Waikīkī, Feeser and Chan describe the resistance of Kānaka Maoli of the past to the hyper-development of the new luxury tourist area. In order to re-construct this place into a tourist destination, Waikīkī’s waters were drained and ancestral land was seized from Kānaka Maoli. Though the natural springs were paved over and buried under layers of concrete, the waters still emerge. Luxury hotels and traffic have come to define Waikīkī today. Desmond (1999:13) refers to the end product of Waikīkī as a “tourist ‘ghetto,’” a rectangular strip of highly developed land geographically bound by the ocean on one side, the Ala Wai Canal (built to channel away the water from the swamps and rice paddies upon which Waikīkī was constructed) on the other.”

The image of Kānaka Maoli is deployed to market Waikīkī as a destination. The use of Hawaiian culture and visual arts make up Hawaiʻi’s unique “brand” of tourism. For example, the Hawaiian Visitors Bureau created the “Keep It Hawaiian” campaign, which shows concern for the loss of “Hawaiianess” that separates this place from any other tropical destination (Desmond 1999:15). Without the key element of Kānaka Maoli, Hawaiʻi might be considered by some as just another island paradise. Wood (1999:92) notes that the Waikīkī Master Plan, which was actualized in 1992, called for a re-development that would highlight Kānaka Maoli culture. Spencer Lieneweber’s (1995) theory of echo tourism describes the way that connection to a culture has been lost and then reclaimed. This theory suggests that Kānaka Maoli have been displaced from their traditional spaces, such as Waikīkī, for the sake of tourism. Yet, to bolster tourism, “fetishized echos” of cultural and historical “authenticity” are returned to the space (Wood 1999:92). While Kānaka Maoli communities were disenfranchized and removed from their land, echoes of their culture are appropriated in “Hawaiian” themed Waikīkī tourism. This
is similar to Rosaldo’s (1989) theory of imperialist nostalgia, in which he poses that people from conquering nations long for the cultures that their country and way of life helped destroy. Thus, tourists seek out experiences with these cultures. Both of these notions are played out in Waikīkī, where “tourism fetishizes echoes of a supposed authenticity now available mostly to those with the ability to pay” (Wood 1999:92). Thus, echoes of Kānaka Maoli culture and themes were strategically placed in Waikīkī to bring back its former glory days as a tourist destination.

In the early 1990s, Waikīkī was struggling financially (Meyer 1996:1). Unignorable worsening issues included overcrowding, erosion of the beaches, pollution of the Ala Wai Canal, no open spaces, no convention center, lack of clear boundaries between residential and tourist spaces, exodus of residents in the face of rising prices, loss of connection to Kānaka Maoli heritage, and poor pedestrian environment with little access to green spaces, characterized by blank walls, and claustrophobic streets (Meyer 1996:4). The solution, as Kanahele (1994) suggests in his proposal for redeveloping Waikīkī, was establishing what he described as a Hawaiian sense of place (Meyer 1996:5). Kanahele believed that both residents and guests could benefit from Waikīkī becoming a more livable community of aloha. Kanahele, driven by severe financial down turn in Waikīkī tourism in the 1990s, developed The Waikīkī Master Plan (1994) to rejuvenate Waikīkī’s connection to Kānaka Maoli themes (Meyer 1996:4). Kanahele’s strategy for restoring “Hawaiianess” to Waikīkī promotes Hawaiian dance, Hawaiian patterned wall paper, Hawaiian music, and Hawaiian legends; however, actual Kānaka Maoli are not required to implement these goals (Meyer 1996:4). Hall (2005:404) describes how, “Hawaiians could be exploited in their own lands without really even being visible to the wealthy traveler.” Kanahele’s (1994) plan would recreate the city as a glorified Hawaiian theme park for tourists with updated street signs, creation of historic trails, and even neighborhoods designed to give
tourists an exotic “cultural” experience in the hyper-developed tourist “ghetto” of Waikīkī (Wood 1999:92). Wood (1999:92) disagreed with Kanahele (1994), countering that in this dynamic, “hotels in Waikīkī would aspire to represent themselves as ‘heroes’ in this echo narrative,” by positioning themselves as the recoverers of “lost” ancient Kānaka Maoli culture. Wood (1999:92) continues, “such a restoration, like the echo tourism it supports, strangely flourishes without the consent, opinion, or even presence of most of the hundreds of thousands of living Native Hawaiians.” Besides echo tourism “de-humanizing” Kānaka Maoli culture, it also erodes Kānaka Maoli claims to familial relationships to the land (Wood 1999:92). Another problem Wood (1999:92) observed is that Kānaka Maoli did not identify with the version of “Hawaiianess” these hotels claimed to restore. It is a manufactured second hand interpretation of what Kānaka Maoli culture used to be in Waikīkī. Kanahele (1986:19) believed that tourism and Hawaiian culture could thrive together through the establishment of a Hawaiian sense of place, and that problematic elements of tourism could be countered through the addition of traditional Hawaiian values such as aloha, intelligence, generosity, graciousness, and humility. However, the application of his plans in Waikīkī only legitimized the appropriation of these select indigenous values into tourism. While his attempts to establish a Hawaiian sense of place are laudable, the fatal flaw was disenfranchising actual Kānaka Maoli from their heritage in favor of a watered down interpretation of “Hawaiianess.”

Ellis (2017) and Caneen (2014) describe similar issues of identity and authenticity thirty miles away from Waikīkī at the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC). Founded by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1963, this incredibly successful non-profit program was created to provide employment opportunities for students at Brigham Young University-Hawaiʻi (BYUH) to pay for their education (Ellis 2017:9). Today the park is massive, featuring seven
presumably “traditional” Pacific village communities representing Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Marquesas, and Tahiti (Ellis 2017:9). These “islands,” which are separated by an artificial lagoon, feature students acting as village inhabitants who perform demonstrations and interact with guests.

Ellis (2017) and Caneen (2014) identify problematic elements of the PCC model. As the, “most visited and most successful commercial tourism attraction in Hawai‘i which is, in turn, the most visited tourism destination in the Pacific region,” the most self-evident concern is that the PCC is financially motivated to appropriate Pacific cultures (Caneen 2014:112). Its primary goal is not cultural authenticity, but rather to fund students’ education, which requires entertainment that pleases tourists. Second, “traditions” that are presented as authentic and specific to each island are in fact generically Polynesian-themed. For example, Ellis (2017:9) describes tattoos, poi, and fire making. In addition, Ellis (2017:16) critiques the ambiguously “timeless” presentation of these Pacific cultures. Ellis (2017:17) also notes that it is common practice for student performers to play the roles of any number of indigenous identities as needed. This resonates with Desmond (1999:xx), who accuses tourism of creating a false dichotomy with brown and white bodies. In this paradigm, white bodies are interpreted as tourists and any brown body is read as Kānaka Maoli—even if they are Filipino, Asian, or hapa-haole. Another concern is the popular Samoan fire knife dance attraction, which despite being presented as an authentic aspect of traditional Samoan culture is actually a creation of Hollywood and the PCC (Caneen 2014:112). While it would be easy to dismiss this performance as an inauthentic superficial invention to entertain tourists, the fire knife dance has actually become a valued part of contemporary Samoan culture. As Caneen (2014:113) observes, “authenticity, then for these indigenous people consists not in the faithful representation of historic practices, but in the ethnic
identity of those who create, own, and control it. It is authentically Samoan because authentic Samoans say it is” (Caneen 2014:113). Finally, despite the many flaws of the PCC, the students report overwhelmingly positive experiences that helped them feel connected to their heritage (Caneen 2014:114). The success of the PCC is that tourists and the student performers understand the negotiated reality is presented as a “staged interpretation of traditional Polynesian culture as a commodity to visitors who understand completely the produced nature of their experience. They recognize the result, not as authentic but as a representation of the authentic.” The PCC is one of many contexts in Hawai‘i where tourism intersects with culture. Other examples include the Merrie Monarch Festival and the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture.

Desmond (1999:15) explores how tourist sites have been re-constructed to meet the expectations of tourists who, she argues, look for signs and symbols that assure them they are in the right place. For example, brightly colored aloha print shirts identifying hotel staff, tiki bars serving fruity drinks in coconuts, polished koa furniture, Hawaiian themed-art or quilts hanging on the walls, verdant golf courses with ocean views, gardens overflowing with exotic blooms and fragrances, and perhaps a coconut bra or two. Desmond (1999:xiii) argues that bodies are among most powerful of these signs:

Public display of bodies and their materiality (how bodies look, what they do, where they do it, who watches, and under what conditions) are profoundly important in structuring identity categories and notions of subjectivity…When commodified, these displays form the basis of hugely profitable tourism industries.

Internationally, a single icon, or destination image, has come to represent Hawai‘i: the lei-bedecked hula girl (Desmond 1999:5). This image has come to represent (and in some cases replace) actual hula dancers. This resonates with Trask’s observation that Hawai‘i is characterized as female. Trask describes how “Hawai‘i—the word, the vision, the sound in the mind—is the fragrance and feel of soft kindness. Above all, Hawai‘i is ‘she,’ the Western image
of the Native ‘female’ in her magical allure” (Trask 1999:22). Desmond (1999:8) notes that the hula girl, or “little brown gal,” is the perfect embodiment of a “civilized native.” This icon is essential to constructing the sensual, non-threatening image of Hawai‘i. The hula girl welcomes strangers to come play in her island home. Desmond (1999:xiv) describes how “bodies function as the material signs for categories of social difference, including divisions of gender, race, cultural identity, and species.” Live encounters with the hula girl, often through lūʻau, are the long-awaited climax of the Hawaiian vacation (Desmond 1999:17). Despite the presence of many different ethnic groups in Hawai‘i, any Filipino, Portuguese, Japanese, or other racial categories are perceived as “Hawaiian” as long as they have the qualifying features of darker toned skin and hair (Desmond 1999:7). Desmond (1999:xx) explains how “performers become signs of what the audience members believe them to be…performers become signs of Hawaiian ‘natives’ whether or not they themselves have any Native Hawaiian ancestry.” Wrapped in ti leaf pāʻū (traditional skirt) and crowned with lei poʻo (lei worn on the head; Appendix F), they are a packaged experience to be consumed, representative of all “Hawaiians.” Furthermore, Desmond (1999:8) notes how the ideal “hula girl” is actually hapa haole (a combination of Hawaiian and Caucasian). The features of the “hula girl” appear Caucasian or European with a medium skin tone and long flowing hair (Desmond 1999:8). This “soft primitivism” is the moderation of civilized savagery, an alluring, nonthreatening encounter with “paradisical exoticism” (Desmond 1999:4). This fantasized body is the incarnation of the colonial imagination.

The industry of tourism is based on collections of signs and symbols that are designed to “entice the outsider to place himself or herself into this symbol-defined place” (Buck 1993:179). Hapa haole music is laden with these markers, telling the tourist what to imagine and expect when he or she arrives in Hawai‘i. These songs usually include English lyrics with occasional
use of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, or nonsense syllables that seemed to sound like ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Desmond 1999:61). Similarly, hapa haole music emerged from the application of this colonial fantasy to Hawaiian culture. Through playful, catchy melodies, hapa haole music perpetuates these understandings of Kānaka Maoli as naive and harmonious people in their “natural” state (Desmond 1999:61). Hapa haole music rivaled other popular genres consumed on the US mainland during the 1920s and 1930s (Desmond 1999:67). Hawai‘i Calls, which introduced these songs to the continental audience, often featured lei-themed songs like “I’ll Weave a Lei of Stars for You” (1948), “Blue Lei” (1940), “For You a Lei” (1929), “My Yellow Ginger Lei” (1948), “Leis for Sale” (1934), and “A Maile Lei for Your Hair” (1963) (Kanoa-Martin 2018). The movie, Waikīkī Wedding (1937) featured the song “Blue Lei,” which associates lei with romance:

I shall always remember
The moment when I kissed you
And the smile upon your lips
So heavenly sweet

When your blue eyes looked into mine
It was then the sun began to shine
That day in May
You wore a blue, blue lei (Kanoa-Martin 2018).

The image and culture of Kānaka Maoli are appropriated to market Hawai‘i as a tourism destination. Tropes of aloha, sex, romance, and happy welcoming natives have been disseminated in hapa haole music, nostalgic advertisements, postcards, art, and even in staged lū‘au. The lei-bedecked hula girls, which embody all of these tropes, have come to represent the entire history and culture of Kānaka Maoli in tourist spaces (Desmond 1999:8). Hollywood appropriated select pieces of Hawaiian culture, such as the lei, and combined them with Western colonial imagination to produce fantastical film encounters with Pacific people. Disembodied
fragments of Kānaka Maoli culture legitimize visitors’ experience and give Hawai‘i its unique flavor as a destination. Places like Waikīkī were physically reconstructed to meet tourist expectations, serving foreign interests over indigenous ones. Layers of concrete re-write the sense of place and expunge any traces of the Kānaka Maoli who worked the fish ponds and lo‘i of Waikīkī (Feese and Chan 2006:5). The sum of these is the imagined Hawai‘i that lives in the mind and yearning of the traveler before they ever leave home.

The Lei in Hawai‘i Tourism

Before considering how the lei has been used to characterize Hawai‘i as a paradise, it is necessary to understand the lei’s cultural context. The lei is a custom found across many Oceanic cultures. McDonald (1978:1) notes how the shared character between Hawaiian and other Pacific Island lei suggest that there must be a common origin, or significant communication between ancient cultures. Lei can take a variety of forms, being made from feathers, metals, blossoms, leaves, seeds, nuts, shells, bone, teeth, wood, hair, feathers, or even words which are woven together to create an adornment of beauty and meaning (McDonald 1978:2). Children can be referred to as “ku‘u lei makamae” (my precious lei) (Yuen 2018b). This symbolic creation is often given to another person in an expression of aloha (sentiment) or special occasion (Strathern et al. 2017:137–138). They are used to celebrate achievements, change, beauty, and honor those who have passed; when graduating, students may be adorned with so many lei that their necks disappear beneath the flowers (McDonald 1978:1). Lei are noted throughout Hawaiian history as offerings to various akua (god, goddess, divine) and royalty (Yuen 2018b). Each June, they are draped on the statue of King Kamehameha; each Lei Day they are draped on the statue of King Kalākaua to honor the mōʻī (sovereign, ruler) who reinstated many cultural practices (Yuen
Williams (2015:77) describes the lei as a “symbol of honor” and an “integral part of local culture...As such, it is common to see both representatives of tour companies and Hawai’i residents at airport baggage claim areas ready with lei in hand, to greet newly arrived visitors, loved ones, and returning residents.” Lei may be purchased at markets, stores, or painstakingly prepared by friends or family from the garden. Each flower and weaving style has significance, and many lei are accompanied by specific vocabulary or mele (Yuen 2018b). The lei is an important part of Kānaka Maoli history that has been intertwined with tourism.

Puna-born Hawaiian statesman Iosepa Kaho’olului Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu delivered a speech a little more than a year after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. It was given on July 3, 1894, the day before the Provisional Government would declare the Republic of Hawai’i with Sanford Dole as president.

No kākou ka Hale e like me kā nā Kamehameha i kūkulu ai. Ua kīpau ‘ia a’e kākou e ka po’e i aea hele mai, a komo i loko o ko kākou hale; a ke ‘ōlelo mai nei iā kākou, e komo aku a e noho i loko o ka hale kaulei a lākou i mana‘o ai e kūkulu iho a ‘onou aku iā kākou a pau e komo aku. ‘O ka‘u ho‘i e ‘ōlelo aku nei iā ‘ōukou e o‘u mau hoa makaʻāinana, mai noho kākou a ʻae iki.

The house of government belongs to us, as the Kamehamehas built it. We have been ousted by trespassers who entered our house and who are telling us to go and live in a lei stand that they think to build and force us all into. I am telling you, my fellow citizens, we should not agree in the least (Silva 2004:137).

Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu uses the lei stand as a prescient metaphor of how Kānaka Maoli would be forced into the touristic economy. The exponential growth of tourism over the succeeding fifty years after Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu’s speech created an ever increasing demand for lei (Gonzalez 2015:171). Thus, a cohort of professional lei makers arose to meet these demands. By the 1930s, two hundred lei makers were reported by the Hawai‘i Tourist Bureau in Honolulu (Gonzalez 2015:168). By 1935, that number had doubled to four hundred lei makers (Gonzalez 2015:171). In the 1950s, one lei seller recalls making more than a thousand lei in a single night during the
1950s for the Kaiser Hawaiian Village lūʻau (Gonzales 2015:172). As demand for lei grew with the ease of travel, the business became a family affair. Williams (2015:75) describes entire families involved in the tasks of lei making, and friends who attracted tourists to lei stand by playing live music. She observes how “lei sellers were folded into the construction of the jet age airport; another move that signified changes to the way Hawaiian culture would be consumed with the arrival of statehood” (Williams 2015:75). In order to meet the demand for tourist lūʻau, lei makers worked long and grueling hours (Gonzalez 2015:171). Competition was intense, and timing was everything. Lei sellers reported how they would race to push their product in front of a buyer before another lei seller could make the sale (Gonzalez 2015:169). According to Gonzalez (2015:72), in order to move product lei sellers would sometimes give away lei for as little as ten for a dollar, or even for free. Gonzalez (2015:169) explains this undervaluation of wares:

The jostling and eager crowd of lei sellers that greeted steamer passengers in the 1930s saw tourists as a source of income, and the lei they bestowed en masse were less about Native Hawaiian generosity and expressions of aloha, and more about competition and survival. The generosity of the gift the tourists were experiencing—and the ridiculously low price of the lei—which lent itself to the charm (and affordability) of a tropical holiday, should be understood as stemming instead from desperation and determination.

In addition, bargaining prices for souvenirs is a traditional part of the tourist experience (Gonzalez 2015:169). Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu foresaw the irony of how Kānaka Maoli would be forced to peddle their culture.

Trask (1999), in her essay Lovely Hula Hands, exposed what she saw as the underbelly of the hospitality industry. Trask expressed her extreme frustration with the problematic experiences of Kānaka Maoli working in tourism in the 1990s. She accused hotels of “partnering” with local high schools to “funnel” Kānaka Maoli students into positions as tour
guides or kitchen workers in the hospitality industry (Trask 1999:143). She emphasized that the majority of decent paying jobs at the time were affiliated with tourism. Trask believed this forced Kānaka Maoli into compromising positions where they must participate in the tourist economy that degraded their culture. Thus, Trask (1999:143) observed that Kānaka Maoli were settling for the lowest paid positions at hotels, but were all but barred from moving up to become managers. Trask believed that Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu’s predictions were realized. Although Kānaka Maoli hotel managers were perhaps scarce during the time Trask made her observations, this is no longer the case. Kānaka Maoli have made significant gains in representation in the most senior positions in hospitality industry For example, Eliot Mills is the vice president of Disney’s Aulani Resort, and Danna Holck serves as Vice President and General Manager of Turtle Bay Resort in O‘ahu (ETurbo News 2011; Miyasaki 2018). While Trask’s assertions may not all hold water in contemporary tourism, it cannot be denied that the historical use of lei imagery to market tourism has been detrimental to Kānaka Maoli and their role in Hawai‘i hospitality.

In this section, I offer a semiotic reading to show how the lei has been hijacked from its cultural context and instead associated with leisure, travel, and trivialization of Oceanic people in general and Kānaka Maoli in particular. The lei is one of many cultural elements that has been deployed in the construction of what Trask (1999:143) refers to as a “fictional Hawai‘i.” The “hula girl” is never separated from her lei, draped around her neck. This lei is almost always plump and full of flowers. Over time, an imagined Hawai‘i has been constructed through the use of lei imagery. Similarly, Lyons (2005) analyzes how Oceania has featured in Western imagination over the past two centuries. He argues that these Western conceptions of the “Oceanian other” change over time in respect to political relevance. Although the relationship between the US and Hawai‘i was imagined to be intimate, it is inescapably bound together with
historical and political context (Lyons 2005:1). Brochures advertising Hawaiian vacations often feature smiling women adorned with bright flowered lei. The Hawai‘i and South Seas Curio Company, with convenient Waikīkī branches, printed “Hawaiian Belles,” a series of hand-colored lithographic postcards featuring “America’s new exotic darling…the hula girl” (Torre 2019). “Hawaiian Belles” were printed throughout the Territorial Period, from the late 1890s through Statehood in 1959 (Torre 2019). Hollywood is notorious for peddling in the public mind the notion of Hawai‘i, and indeed, the Pacific in general, as a “paradise” through the trope of the lei. Some of the most memorable of these films are Jungle Princess (1936), Gidget Goes Hawaiian (1961), Blue Hawaii (1961), Waikiki Wedding (1937), and Mutiny on the Bounty (1962; other films include, Mutiny on the Bounty 1935 and The Bounty 1984) with their lei bedecked island sirens. These films offer edenic, often cliché, depictions of Pacific Islanders as simple Natives living happy lives in exotic locales. This concept is featured in tourist settings as well as mainstream Hollywood films and the visual arts. Mutiny on the Bounty (1962) is one of the most well-known examples.

In 1776, William Bligh served as Sailing Master for Captain James Cook on his final journey through the Pacific. Bligh later became commander of the Bounty in 1787. The mission of HMS Bounty, of the British Royal Navy, was to bring breadfruit to the West Indies. It was interrupted by a famous mutiny in 1789 led by Christian Fletcher, who set Bligh and his supporters adrift. Both parties sailed to a series of Pacific islands, encountering violence or welcome from the inhabitants. Inspired by this story, Mutiny on the Bounty (1962) uses lei to construct stereotypical representations of Pacific culture. These racial and gendered narratives are used to contrast the archetypes of general exoticism and the “noble savage.” Dilworth (1996:3) discusses how the “noble savage” trope, which praises the romantic, edenic qualities of
the Native, has been applied to indigenous peoples in North America. The idea of the “noble savage” was long attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau, the humanist philosopher who supposedly suggested that mankind in its natural, savage state was peaceful. However, Ellingson (2001) contests the assumption that the trope of the “noble savage” can be attributed to Rousseau. Instead, he contends that John Crawford, a British anthropologist with racially motivated political ambitions, falsely cited Rousseau to validate his own propaganda. Dilworth (1999:3) describes the “noble savage” trope as an extension of the colonial imagination, as it juxtaposes the indigenous “other” with the “civilized.” She considers how Western art has circulated sensationalized notions of the Native as primitive, peaceful, and simple beings (Dilworth 1999:3). This trope is invoked in Mutiny on the Bounty (1962) to characterize the Tahitian people.

Kahn (2011) explores how Hollywood has feminized Tahiti, representing the positive and beautiful aspects of a society with unrestrained sexuality. Tourism also deploys synthetic combinations of images to create a mythical Tahiti that inspires longing and desire in the hearts of travelers. The “myth” of Tahiti includes white sand, bright sun, and beautiful women. However, this dreamy fantasy requires “ever more premeditated and mediated—and government-orchestrated—manipulations” in order to be maintained (Kahn 2011:97). For example, Kahn (2011:100) describes how the government mandates that all service-industry employees must dress in the local Tahitian style of clothing and wear lei po‘o every Friday for the benefit of tourists. Similarly, Hollywood used stylized lei—layers of bright flowered lei that barely conceal the topless women—to reinforce these representations. Tahitians are depicted as leisurely, peaceful folk, who are dripping with flower lei on any given day. In Mutiny on the Bounty (1962), a feast is held in honor of the Bounty’s arrival in which endless rows of lei
bedecked women dance for their pleasure, accompanied by drumbeats. The sailors are overwhelmed by the frenzy. This picture-perfect greeting can be perceived as nothing but hospitable, gracious, and consensual, as topless, slender, smiling women in large, luxurious flower crowns catch the eyes of the Bounty’s crew. This is an example of how the island is characterized as female, ripe and ready to be plucked (Kahn 2011:80). The lei is used to suggest edenic innocence and construct Tahiti as a place without consequences—a sexual playground (Kahn 2011:117).

It is unsurprising that such narratives are entertained in Hollywood, when travelers to Hawai‘i have long been told the same story with different characters. The idea of “paradise” is constructed through images and art. The sailors’ more-than-friendly reception by the Tahitians is reminiscent of the artwork of Eugene Savage. The Matson Lines company, which brought tourists in unprecedented numbers from California to Honolulu, printed a series of Hawaiian themed art on the dinner menus for their luxury liners. Savage’s paintings were featured from the 1940s to the 1980s, at which time the menus became standardized (Honolulu Museum of Art 2019). One of Savage’s (1938) images in particular, entitled “A God Appears,” was used onboard the S.S. Lurline (Honolulu Musuem of Art 2019). It depicts the arrival of Captain Cook in the Hawaiian Islands, with paramount chief Kalaniʻōpuʻu offering Cook a blue lei in welcome. This image was inspired by the European assumption that Kānaka Maoli believed Cook to be the incarnation of Lono and greeted him as a “god.” Sahlins (1985) was the greatest supporter of this claim. Later, Obeyesekere (1992) denounced Sahlins, maintaining that the Europeans had invented the notion of Cook greeted as a god as a cover for their violence. In this image, a lei is used to sanitize history and gloss over the more difficult realities. This piece imagines the meeting of these two leaders as one of mutual understanding and equality; it is an occasion
deserving of celebration and gaiety, as evidenced by the Kānaka Maoli offering enough food for a feast and sitting in boats together with Cook’s men. There is no reference to the fact that this moment ultimately led to a violent skirmish and death of Cook, or that this encounter is a harbinger of irreversible impact upon Kānaka Maoli culture. Fantasies like this one are popular in colonial history, and by extension, tourist spaces. This image is factually inaccurate and uses the lei to represent Kānaka Maoli allowing friendly relations and legitimizing the visitors to their island. In this way, the lei has been appropriated in tourist imagery and disenfranchised from its original cultural context. It has come to signify indigenous exoticism. The lei is also recognized as a symbol of gaiety in tourism. When used in this vintage artistic context, the lei invokes a sense of nostalgia for “old Hawai‘i.” Rosaldo (1989) describes how nostalgic artwork can lend innocence to racial narratives. Similar themes are present in Savage’s murals, such as in “Aloha…The Universal Word.” In “Hawai‘i’s Decisive Hour,” Kānaka Maoli are pictured with large colorful lei and equally exaggerated expressions. They are depicted with a childish gaiety that clashes with the annexation of the islands. In the background, the American flag is raised over ʻIolani Palace, while Queen Liliʻuokalani watches on. The ongoing resistance of Kānaka Maoli, petitions, Hui Aloha ʻĀina’s organized boycott of the event, and the US military surrounding ʻIolani Palace to put down political demonstrations are all completely ignored (Silva 2004:161). Gonzalez and Williams (2017:672) observe how this military action “counter[s] the impression that colonialism was consensual.” The gravity of this moment is concealed by a false, forced illusion of patriotism and excitement.

_Glossy Veneers: May Day is Lei Day in Hawaiʻi_

May Day is Lei Day in Hawaiʻi
Garlands of flowers ev’ry where
All of the colors in the rainbow
Maidens with blossoms in their hair
Flowers that mean we should be happy
Throwing aside our load of care, Oh!
May Day is Lei Day in Hawai‘i
Lei Day is happy day out there.

Land of green mountains, gardens and fountains
Beaches of white shining sand
Where each one I see has a smile just for me
And has ready a welcoming hand (Yuen 2018b).

A reading of the song “May Day is Lei Day” reveals its problematic nature. Lei Day is the combination of the tropes of Kānaka Maoli as welcoming, gracious hosts with the construction of Hawai‘i as a “paradise” destination. While the song carefully skirts around any racial identifiers, it evokes Hawaiian stereotypes: exotic, feminine images and happiness (Trask 1999:23). While the jingle originates from a certain era when such tropes were common, how does the Lei Day Community reconcile with the history of the holiday? Is it problematic to have Kānaka Maoli singing such a jingle today? The imagery of the song suggests that a beautiful veneer can conceal tension. The lyrics describe tossing one’s cares away in favor of a lei, as if a mere flower is enough to compensate for over a hundred years of colonial domination, military occupation, and racial division designed to place Kānaka Maoli on the bottom rungs of society. Nonetheless, the song is played each year at Hilo Lei Day.

Lei Day began in 1928 in Honolulu when Don Blanding, a haole poet and reporter for the Honolulu Star Bulletin, proposed a spring holiday, comparable to the European and American May Day (which traditionally involves flowers, crowning of a May Queen, and dancing around a May pole) (Gonzalez 2015:165). It would be a Hawaiian version of the May Day holiday that would celebrate living in paradise (Gonzalez 2015:166). Grace Tower Warren suggested that Lei Day be observed on May 1, and coined the holiday’s slogan “May Day is Lei
Day in Hawaiʻi” (Yuen 2018b). Governor Wallace R. Farrington issued a 1929 proclamation that May 1 be officially recognized as Lei Day (State of Hawaiʻi House of Representatives 2001).

Lei Day quickly grew in popularity. While Blanding, business owners, and tourism officials saw the commercial potential of the holiday, according to Yuen (2016b), Kānaka Maoli like Princess Helen Kawananākoa recognized the chance to reassert their suppressed mother culture. Said the princess to Blanding (Yuen 2016b):

Indeed, I do approve of the idea. I think it is a beautiful thought and you may count on me for anything you want to help it along. And I know that you will have the loyal support of all the Hawaiians on Oʻahu. They have been discussing it among themselves and are unanimously in favor of it...The nicest part about Lei Day is that it brings kamaʻāinas together again.

With the opening of the glamorous Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927, Lei Day strategically offered a holiday attraction for visitors (Mak 2015:38). This day was celebrated with the giving and receiving of lei and decorating the town. The Department of Parks and Recreation sponsored contests to see who could create the most beautiful lei (Yuen 2016b). There were hula performances, booths for making traditional arts such as kapa (traditional bark cloth) and kāhili (feather standard, symbol of royalty). A queen was chosen from a court of princesses who represented each of the eight islands (Yuen 2016b). The Honolulu Lei Day festival was documented by the military during the 1940s (PeriscopeFilm.com 2015). Today, the Honolulu celebration continues with gusto. One of the most anticipated events was the annual performance of the Brothers Cazimero at the Waikīkī Shell.

The same year, the town of Hilo decided to hold their own Lei Day holiday on 1 May 1928 (Yuen 2018b). The celebration was held in front of the bank by Kalākaua Park, featuring competition for lei of all varieties, and displays of lei hulu manu (lei made from feathers of birds). The festival was attended by five thousand people; even local schools and organizations
entered the contests. In 1940, a photograph of the crowd shows how the park is packed with spectators (Yuen 2018b). One of the hālau hula (hula schools) performing that year could be seen sitting on the steps of the Federal Building waiting for their turn (Yuen 2018b). Since its foundation on Hawai‘i Island, Lei Day has been held at the site of the original Hilo town square, which is now known as Kalākaua Park (Yuen 2018b; (Figure 1). This site was declared a park by King Kalākaua, the Merrie Monarch, in 1877 (Yuen 2018b). Hilo Lei Day pays homage to Kalākaua who reinstated open practice of the hula at his coronation, and who was a patron of many traditional Hawaiian arts (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992:314). The festival begins with an opening ceremony which includes adorning the statue of Kalākaua with lei and making hoʻokupu (offering) to Hiʻiakaikapuaʻenaʻena, the goddess of lei making (Yuen 2018b). This occasion showcases demonstrations by lei makers in various styles of traditional Hawaiian lei as well as hula performances. Lei Day has opportunities for members of the community to learn these arts.

The Hilo Lei Day event “plays” with time. The past is made present through elements of Hawaiian lifestyle and crafts. A similar phenomenon is described by Bruner (1993:140). He recognizes that the New Salem Historic Site in Illinois is a reconstruction of a village where Abraham Lincoln lived during the 1830s. Rather than physically re-creating the former site in Kalākaua Park, the Hilo Lei Day community collaborates to construct an experience that evokes moments of its own history. Nostalgic music from decades past is performed, often associated with lei (“May Day is Lei Day in Hawai‘i”), the city of Hilo (“Hilo, My Hometown”), or the celebration of the local lifestyle (Yuen 2018b). Famous figures including Queen Liliʻuokalani and Sarah Lyman, a missionary from New England who built the nearby Lyman House with her husband David, reappear to interact with guests and share their stories. Past Lei Day queens are honored. Bright holokū (loose dress with a train, fashioned after the missionaries) and muʻumuʻu
(a shorter gown of similar style with shortened sleeves) are only eclipsed by the equally colorful and fragrant variety of lei draped over the shoulders, or adorning hands, feet, and heads. The festive atmosphere gives no acknowledgement to its contested past.

Gonzalez (2015) offers a critical discussion of the origins of Lei Day. She argues that the holiday was intentionally created to conceal darker, uncomfortable racial and political realities (Gonzalez 2015:166). Lei Day creates an imagined holiday space where everyone is on his or her best behavior, representing the blended communities, that is, multicultural plantation workers, Americans, and Kānaka Maoli, of living and smiling in Hawai‘i (Gonzalez 2015:168). Lei Day presented a conflict-free version of the lei that resonated more with the American settlers in Hawai‘i than with Kānaka Maoli tradition.

Gonzalez (2015:167) is critical of Lei Day creator Blanding’s motivations for establishing the holiday, which she believes to gloss over the underlying tensions in the community at the time. For example, Rohrer (2010:63) notes how the controversial 1931 Massie
affair exacerbated racial tensions and achieved national infamy. In addition, Rohrer (2010:63) describes the struggle for unionization among the plantation workers and how the haole bosses were trying to maintain their favorable position. While the European tradition of May Day is traditionally affiliated with the International Workers of the World, the darker tones of the festival were whitewashed in the new and improved Lei Day (Gonzalez 2015:167). Sugar labor unrest occurred from 1898–1929 (Jones and Osgood 2015:iix). Rather than associate with the ongoing violence and plantation worker strikes during the 1920s and 1930s, Blanding emphasized a frivolous spring holiday theme. Gonzalez (2015:166) notes how replacing May Day with Lei Day “further distance[d] lei making and selling from labor.” Gonzalez further questions Blanding’s motives. She contends that Blanding appropriated the custom of welcoming tourists with lei because it made them long to return to Hawai‘i, and was thus a shrewd marketing plan (Gonzalez 2015:168). While Blanding himself was charmed by the beautiful impression of colorful holiday garb draped in lei, the O‘ahu lei sellers were aware of Blanding’s efforts to repackage Hawaiian culture into consumable commodities for foreigners. They understood that the holiday was not for them, but to dazzle and delight the haole. Diamond (2008:75) argues that a festival including different cultural groups of Hawai‘i calls for the organizer to be “an expert in mediating and avoiding conflicts between various groups of participants, and the group must be molded according to a unifying template.” By creating a holiday atmosphere of celebration, it is hoped that groups will be able to concentrate on the factors that unite them.

The construction of “paradise” is predicated on the need to construct Hawai‘i as a place of racial harmony. Rohrer (2010) explains how this notion of Hawai‘i as a racial “paradise” crept into mainstream media, politics—particularly those surrounding the issue of statehood—and
eventually tourism. The argument for statehood politicized the concept of racial unity (Rohrer 2010:7). Supporters of this movement cited the “welcoming nature of the host culture,...the lack of a racial majority, and the high rate of intermarriage” (Rohrer 2010:64). Rohrer (2010:66) also notes how this concept of “racial harmony” is used to displace Kānaka Maoli from their ancestral lands by asserting that every ethnic group deserves a fair claim. Rohrer (2010:66) traces this idea to its logical end: “…not only is Hawai‘i for you, but you can become Hawai‘i itself.” This idea of a local “paradise” fueled by aloha has been assimilated into tourism. Racial harmony is an important factor in the Hawaiian brand, as seen in the imagery of the light-skinned hula girl which represents the civilized savage—the “ideal” combination of white and brown (Desmond 1999:xxii). Pierce (2004) believed that this idea was touted in Lei Day, a holiday that nurtured the narrative of racial harmony and discouraged public discussion of inequality. The song, “Hilo, My Home Town,” composed by Betty Lou Yuen won a 1930s contest for the best songs about Hilo and is now sung on the hour at the Hilo Lei Day Festival (Kanoa-Martin 2018). Its lyrics demonstrate how the idea of racial harmony was broadcast as Hawai‘i’s signature specialty (Kanoa-Martin 2018):

Come along, join the throng
Visit my Aloha Land
Take a train, or a plane
Travel anyway you can
See the smiling faces
Of the many races
You’ll be smiling too
You will want to linger
Learn to do the hula
Make some whoopie too

The lyrics urge the listener to travel to Hawai‘i for the unique experience of melding with Hawai‘i’s many races. It suggests that anyone can blend right in with the multi-racial crowd without any tension or awkwardness. This song perpetuates the trope of happiness and utopia,
depicting Hawai‘i as a place where every race and ethnicity is content. It gives the impression that each member of the diverse population is smiling every day. The line “Visit my Aloha Land” resonates with the assumption refuted by Rohrer (2010:66) that Hawai‘i belongs to everyone, and everyone can claim their piece of paradise (Kanoa-Martin 2018). The song encourages the visitor to “learn to do the hula,” belittling the skill and years of practice needed, making it seem as if anyone is qualified to pick up the dance in an afternoon (Kanoa-Martin 2018). Finally, the line “Make some whoopie too” touts Hawai‘i as a sexual playground where foreigners can have romantic encounters with tawny skinned women, with no strings attached.

Contesting “Paradise”

In this section, I focus on scholarship, particularly by indigenous researchers, that refutes the notion that Hawai‘i is the paradise depicted in tourism imagery. The idea that paradise is found in Hawai‘i and broader Oceania is pervasive, yet contested by the indigenous people who call such islands home. Hawai‘i’s dramatic natural features and highly diverse population living together on small islands certainly seem to support the idea of utopia. However, Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists reject this notion and describe the experience of healing after being marginalized in their own homeland (Charisma 2019:3). There are varying anthropological opinions about the participation of Kānaka Maoli in tourism. Gonzalez (2015:178) interprets the participation of lei makers in tourism as a means of survival in a capitalist economy. She even regards it as a positive way for Kānaka Maoli to shape the tourism industry. Thaman (1993:109) however, saw this as over dependence on colonial powers, which prevented Pacific people from breaking free from the harmful cycle of imperialism and dependency. Similarly, Taum (2010:35) feels that Hawai‘i relies too much financially on tourism and foreign expectations at the cost of
Kānaka Maoli culture, which he argues should be the essence of tourism. Trask (1999:24) believed that tourism prostitutes Hawaiian culture, and Kānaka Maoli should not be complicit. According to Williams (2015:186), contemporary tourism offers unprecedented opportunities for Kānaka Maoli artists to engage with tourism by incorporating indigenous meaning into the experience. For example, Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists have hosted exhibitions at the Bishop Museum—where both tourists and Kānaka Maoli are sure to view their work. Projects like these show how Kānaka Maoli can reclaim tourist spaces as forums for expression of their pain and healing. Anthropologists, Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists, and even Hollywood productions have responded to the paradise myth that is used to market Hawai‘i in tourism.

In Adrienne Pao’s (2017) “Cover-Ups” series, she explores the juxtaposition of tourism iconography with local life in Hawai‘i. In every image in this collection, Pao’s nude figure is “covered up” by a collection of items. One of Pao’s (2017) images in this collection is the “Lei Stand Protest / Kapua Lehua Kapa (Lei Flower Covering). In this image (Figure 2), the artist is lying on the ground in front of a lei seller’s stand at the Honolulu Airport. The accompanying statement with this image reads: “When I cover my body with leis at the Honolulu airport, I appreciate the feel and scent of the flowers, while also wondering about the widespread use of the lei around the world to conjure paradise” (Pao 2017). The choice of lei flowers is also significant. Pao (2017) chose to use purple dendrobium orchids. Because the demand for lei has surpassed the ability of local sources to supply enough flowers, cheaper, larger dendrobium orchids are imported from Thailand.

Upon first glance, Lei Stand Protest / Kapua Leihua Kapa (Lei Flower Covering) could almost be a post card (Pao 2017). Initially, the viewer wants to ignore Pao’s (2017) prone form, or linger instead on the colorful blossoms nearly covering her. Then the questions start. Why is
this beautiful woman on the ground? Is she sleeping or dead? Will she wake and catch the viewer staring? As Pao (2017) lies prone on the ground, she says she ponders how the lei is used internationally to invoke “paradise;” it seems the artist’s nude form is buried beneath the mountain of lei. As a Hawaiian, perhaps Pao wonders at what cost the lei has been used in this way it was never intended. The price is the near invisibility of Kānaka Maoli. Pao’s (2017) work aligns with critiques made by Hollywood about the paradise myth.

Figure 2. Lei Stand Protest/Kapua Leihua Kapa (Courtesy of Adrienne Pao 2019)
Williams (2015) shows how disillusioned American pop-culture has begun to question the Hawaiian paradise narrative. To illustrate this point, Williams provides an analysis of the movie *The Descendants* (2011), an Oscar and Golden Globe awarded film. George Clooney’s character, Matt King, is a wealthy haole lawyer and descendent of a white banker and a Hawaiian princess. He must determine to whom he will sell the land which he has inherited from these ancestors. Williams (2015:170) provides a poignant quote from King that sums up life in Hawaiʻi’s dystopia:

> My friends on the mainland think just because I live in Hawaii, I live in paradise. Like a permanent vacation. We’re all just out here sipping Mai Tais, shaking our hips, and catching waves. Are they insane? Do they think we’re immune to life? How can they possibly think our families are less screwed up? Our cancers less fatal? Our heartaches less painful? Hell, I haven’t been on a surfboard in fifteen years. For the last 23 days I’ve been living in a paradise of IVs and urine bags and tracheal tubes. Paradise? Paradise can go fuck itself.

The movie shows the gritty day-to-day struggles of life in “paradise:” houselessness, marginality, sickness, loss, depression, and family drama. The shiny facade of “paradise” that was created to market Hawaiʻi as America’s vacation destination obscures the reality that Hawaiʻi’s people have their own everyday problems, the same as any other community in the world. Perhaps the average American citizen cannot be faulted for letting their imagination wander when the polished projected image of Hawaiian utopia is all they have been presented with. The idea of Hawaiʻi as a “paradise” was inherited from advertising campaigns like Matson’s, which strove to gild the islands as the ultimate exotic getaway. Generations of children grew up listening to Hawaiʻi Calls and watching “Gidget Goes Hawaiian.” Perhaps they never thought to question the authenticity of Hawaiian “paradise.” However, Williams (2015:172) notes how tourism is becoming less kitschy and more interested in “an authentic Hawaiʻi that directly draws from Maoli knowledge rather than mainland-based corporate imaginaries.” Hollywood too has
responded to this disillusionment. *The Descendants* (2011) juxtaposes the paradisical fantasy of Hawai‘i with harsh realities of living in Hawai‘i in the twenty-first century, revealing silenced histories of the inherited benefits of colonial descendants, dispossession of indigenous land, subjugation of Kānaka Maoli, state sponsored destruction of Kānaka Maoli culture, and Kānaka Maoli’s dwindling population. A positive outcome of removing the “paradise” blinders and this quest for authenticity is that Kānaka Maoli have more opportunities to participate in Hawai‘i tourism in meaningful ways rather than merely as the objects of romantic fantasy. However, Williams (2015:172) suggests that Kānaka Maoli are still “mined” for their traditional knowledge in the interest of tourism. Williams (2015:173) also notes that while Kānaka Maoli are engaging with tourism in ways that are no longer simply “top-down,” that there is no guarantee that the industry officials are culturally sensitive. Kānaka Maoli operate within the imperfect capitalist machine of tourism to offer a counter narrative to “paradise.”

Hansen (2009) explains why the assumption that Hawai‘i is a racial paradise is difficult to debunk. She cites certain elements that enforce the paradise trope. The US census shows that Hawai‘i is indeed the most diverse state. It has the greatest racial minority population totaling 75%. Thus, Hawai‘i’s variety lends itself to the “aloha spirit,” or the idea that Hawai‘i is a magical place where very different people can all get along and be friendly and welcoming towards visitors. However, are there underlying racial and ethnic tensions dividing Kānaka Maoli and whites? Osorio describes Hawai‘i’s history as one of “accomodati[ng]... waves of foreigners” (Hansen 2009:2). Following the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, Osorio observes how Kānaka Maoli have been marginalized; they are less likely to own land, less likely to be educated, and more likely to be incarcerated. Rather than racism, Osorio believes that these issues are actually caused by socio-economic issues. While Osorio supports the idea that Kānaka
Maoli could create their own separate region or nation, others like Kenneth Conklin, retired professor, believes that any such government sanctioned preference for Kānaka Maoli would be reverse discrimination. Instead, Conklin emphasizes the idea of racial unity and equality in the state. Conklin was previously in favor of sovereignty when he first relocated to Hawai‘i. After living in Hawai‘i for some time, he observed,

There was no historical or legal or moral basis for supporting race-based political sovereignty for ethnic Hawaiians. So then I began getting concerned about it because I see a great injustice here...I believe that everyone should be treated equally by the government, which means that I oppose racial entitlement programs—of which we have many, many here in Hawai‘i...I’m saying, here in Hawai‘i, let’s tear down this wall of apartheid that we’ve been building for all these years and for goodness sake, let’s not set up a new one (Hansen 2009:4).

Taken at face value, the tension between Kānaka Maoli and whites living in Hawai‘i may indeed seem like racism. However, the issue may be that these groups have different approaches to solving the same problems. Conklin calls for equal treatment to all by the government, but historically it has given more consideration to the wealthy. While Hawai‘i is neither a racial paradise nor a hotbed for racism, it is home to a highly diverse population with divergent visions for Hawai‘i’s future.

With such a heterogenous population, tourists tend to make certain assumptions about the inhabitants of Hawai‘i. Hall (2005:408) argues that the sheer global scale of tourism in Hawai‘i has led to serious “cultural distortions” including modification of the hula for entertainment, and conflating “Hawaiian” appearance with general tawny, half-white complexion. Kānaka Maoli are a footnote in Western history classes, which means that “tourism and entertainment have been the vectors of information exchange between the islands and the continent” (Hall 2005:405). Hall (2005:412) describes how this leads to gross misperceptions of Kānaka Maoli as exotic, friendly natives, grateful for the protection of the US, while silencing the tragic Kānaka Maoli histories of
foreign disease, disinheri tance of their lands, and the forced removal of their monarchy. Hall (2005:8) exposes the harmful consequences of the kitschification of Kānaka Maoli culture and its “overexposure in the tourist market.” One example of this is the heavy-handed use of “aloha” to brand t-shirts, shoes, visors, and even toenail clippers transforms average products into kitsch. The highly visible nature of kitsch in Hawai‘i tourism causes hefty political ramifications. Hall (2005:409) contends that kitsch trivializes Kānaka Maoli and their culture, therefore, their political will and sovereignty are eclipsed and lacking dignity.

Contemporary Kānaka Maoli artists provide a counterpoint to these assumptions and the notion of Hawai‘i as a paradise. These artists, Al Lagunero, Meleanna Meyer, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl F. K. Pao and Solomon Enos, respond to the romanticized images of Hawai‘i that have been entertained in Western popular imagination for more than one hundred years (Springer 2019). One half of the gallery at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum is dedicated to a collage of Hawaiian themed minutia: advertisements, postcards, comics, drawings, and matchbooks (Charisma 2019:2). The images paper the entirety of the wall, from floor to ceiling, with an additional kiosk and “UnReal” comic racks. A manikin models a hula dancer’s grass skirt (Charisma 2019:2). The sight is meant to overwhelm: light-skinned hula girls and lei-bedecked sirens beam from every angle (Charisma 2019:2; Figure 3).

Opposite of this garish display is the two sided mural, ‘Āina Aloha (Charisma 2019:3; Figure 4). The green side of the mural represents healing from a Kānaka Maoli perspective, considering one’s relationship to the land, and Kānaka Maoli values (Springer 2019). According to Meyer, the mural tells a story from right to left “of ancient voyages and genealogies, elders and ancestors building community, ritualizing ceremonies, and the generations of children that become future messengers of tradition. This side is ‘ho‘oponopono,’ recognizing beliefs, values,
and practices” (Charisma 2019:2). The artists describe how the pain is the bottom layer, but they place their leo (voices) on top of it. The mural is a catharsis of “painting away pain” (Charisma 2019:2). The backside of ‘Āina Aloha is the red side; the one that shows hewa (crime, wrong doing) (Springer 2019). Meyer explains (Charisma 2019:3):

> We want to have meaningful conversations about finding ways to right wrongs...People want a reckoning and we feel it should be now...It’s an attempt at an honest reflection about what steps there are in terms of reconciliation and restitution and reclamation. These issues are very real; tourists may not feel them, but we feel them every day.

Initially, the display of Hawaiian advertisements and minutia was to be its own exhibit, “The Art of Selling Hawai‘i” (Charisma 2019:2). However, exhibit designer Scott Lawrimore felt the exhibit represented Kānaka Maoli trauma, and so he decided juxtaposing such a painful history with the art of contemporary Kānaka Maoli would make a stronger statement (Charisma 2019:3). The exhibit speaks to both Kānaka Maoli and non-Kānaka Maoli about unfinished cycles of pain, resent, trauma, and healing (Charisma 2019:4). The artists create a dialogue about past wrong doings, and how they can be made right in the present (Charisma 2019:4). They dispel the idea of Hawai‘i as a paradise with each additional layer of paint and meaning.

Trask (1999) acutely describes the effects of the tourism propaganda. She is highly critical of the presence of tourism in Hawai‘i, which she views as prostituting Hawaiian culture (Trask 1999). Her final statement to readers leaves no room for misinterpretation (Trask 1999:29): “If you are thinking of visiting my homeland, please don’t. We don’t want or need any more tourists, and we certainly don’t like them. If you want to help our cause, pass this message on to your friends.” Furthermore, Trask (1999:29) attributes any who do not follow her line of thinking to the “mental oppression” of their colonized minds:

> Even those who have some glimmer of critical consciousness don’t generally agree that the tourist industry prostitutes Hawaiian culture. To me, this is a measure of the depth of
our mental oppression: we can’t understand our own cultural degradation because we are living it.

Trask recognized tourism as a threat, expressing sentiments of frustration, denouncing tourism as exploitation, and cautioning others against participating in what she viewed as the modern shackles of colonialism.

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

Figure 3. The UnReal Comic Stand (Courtesy of Pacific Basin Communications 2019)

Trask (1999) was not alone in her critical view of Hawai‘i tourism. Throughout the Pacific, tourism is recognized as a colonial legacy. Thaman (1993:104) describes tourism as a cultural invasion of Western colonial interests. She argues it was developed to serve foreigners (especially Western imperialist countries such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States), and so it cannot prioritize indigenous island communities (Thaman 1993:108).

According to Thaman (1993:105), tourism is one of many colonial institutions in a long history of this cultural invasion. She describes how development—cars, mass media, advertising, supermarkets, hotels, and credit cards—is seen as a positive result of transnational culture
(Thaman 1993:105). However, this process of transformation ultimately changes the face of Pacific cultures permanently. As Thaman (1993:105) describes,

> Although diverse, our island cultures share in the common experience of change and transformation that all cultures undergo with varying degrees of intensity. Throughout our histories, strands of non-indigenous cultures have been woven into our cultural fabrics, leaving what our peoples perceive as unique collective ways of life, worthy of protecting and passing on to future generations.

Tourism demands supporting infrastructure, such as airports, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, pavement, restrooms, and transportation, in order to meet the expectations of the traveler. However, globalization and modernization permanently alter indigenous communities (Thaman 1993:105). The encroaching of foreign ideas compromise a people’s connection to the land, environment, and their understanding of natural forces and cycles (Thaman 1993:105). Thaman (1993:105) believes this is why many island communities are less capable of coping with natural disasters. She argues that indigenous island communities place too much faith and dependency on uncontrollable economies (Thaman 1993:105). Thus, the younger generations are alienated from their traditional culture and lands to make way for development (Thaman 1993:105).

Thaman (1993:106) describes how land, which is intimately connected to Pacific islanders identities, psychological wellbeing, and their authority, is sold off or used to develop tourism or militarism. Thaman cautions that (1993:106), “alienation from the land has historically signaled the end of Pacific cultures.” The traditions that survive this displacement are typically the ones that are the most “touristically salable,” such as dances, traditional crafts, and music (Thaman 1993:106). Tourism also comes at the cost of fishing and land use rights and the health of fragile coastal ecosystems. According to Thaman (1993:107), tourism develops in Pacific communities through colonial links. For example, Fijian colonial administrations work to pass legislation to build tourism infrastructure (Thaman 1993:107). Most operations of tourism
are controlled and owned by foreign companies, creating a complicated bureaucracy that few Fijians can navigate or participate in. Thaman (1993:107) remarks on how Fijians have such a small presence in tourism that foreign interests dominate political decisions. Traditional cultural knowledge can become fodder for the tourist machine. Thaman (1993:108) compares Fiji to Tonga, which is the only Pacific community never to be colonized. Because of this, Tongan air traffic rights are not restricted, and unlike Fiji and Hawai‘i, foreigners living on island do not dominate local politics (Thaman 1993:108). As these island communities once depended on an international market for agricultural exports, they continue to rely on foreigners to purchase a vacation in paradise. Thaman (1993:110) calls for Pacific communities to become aware of their “enslavement to the dominant cultures of colonial masters,” and to realize that these Pacific communities do play a role in the commodification of their cultures for Western imperialism.

![Figure 4. The Aloha ‘Āina Mural (Courtesy of Pacific Basin Communications 2019)](image)

Beamer (2014:L194) contests Thaman’s notion that tourism is an invasion of Western thought and tradition which is inherently toxic to indigenous communities. He argues that
Kānaka Maoli selectively appropriated foreign ideas, technologies, and politics as a form of strengthening their national identity and even resistance (Beamer 2014:L195). Beamer (2014:L221) describes Kānaka Maoli aliʻi as having made their way steadily forward despite the looming threat of imperialism. They built up the kingdom through international recognition as “an independent state in 1843 and acknowledge[ment] as a member of the family of nations” (Beamer 2014:L221). Beamer (2014:L221) continues, the Hawaiian Kingdom was “a country built on a foundation of both indigenous Hawaiian and modified Euro-American principles to protect Hawaiian national interests.” Therefore, if the integration of Western ideas over time was a conscious decision on the part of the aliʻi, then contemporary indigenous interest in development cannot be dismissed as merely the colonization of their minds.

Thaman’s (1993) caution is shared by Taum (2010), who calls for re-centralization of Kānaka Maoli culture in Hawaiʻi tourism. He observes that tourism has become warped and “visitor-centric,” which redefines hosts as servants of guests (Taum 2010:36). In this model, hosts clamor to meet guest’s insatiable expectations for luxury, predictable quality, and a destination as comfortable as their own homes (Taum 2010:36). Over time, argues Taum (2010:36), destinations become “placeless” when “unique places become no place because they look like every other place.” In order to provide experiences on a timeline to paying guests, “authenticity actually gets managed out of it” (Taum 2010:36). For example, Taum (2010:36) believes that giving a lei has lost its meaning within some tour companies that refer to the practice as “ring toss,” a phrase devoid of interpersonal relationship or connection to the land where the plants were gathered. In fact, as Taum (2010:36) laments that many lei are not even made in Hawaiʻi. Taum (2010:36) continues,
Could anyone have imagined fifty years ago that the lei intended to express love, affection, and friendship would one day be produced by strangers in a foreign land, so they could be delivered to other strangers who flew in to visit no one?!

This kind of tourism is a threat to Kānaka Maoli community identity. Tourism thrives off the landscape of beaches, mountains, and ocean, but the essential core of Hawai‘i is Kānaka Maoli culture (Taum 2010:33). This is Hawai‘i’s most valuable asset, which Taum (2010:33) believes is being pushed out of tourism. Taum (2010:34) makes a case for a restructuring of tourism. He believes Hawai‘i is too financially dependent on outsiders, which leads to accommodation of unsustainable practices in order to keep foreign interests engaged (Taum 2010:34). Instead of relying only on revenue from tourism, Taum (2010:32) contends that Hawai‘i needs to consider how to be more sustainable and work towards goals of food sovereignty, disaster preparedness, and Kānaka Maoli-centered tourism.

Kahn (2011:99) recognizes similar concerning trends in Tahitian tourism related to power dynamics between the French colonial government and the Society Islands which produce Tahiti as an ideal destination. Tourism is the pillar of the economy (Kahn 2011:99). Due to these financial interests, the government imposes marketing strategies. The Tahitian colonial government tries to create community investment in tourism (Kahn 2011:100). It sponsors mottos that seek to give each Tahitian a reminder of their own personal responsibility to embrace tourism, such as “Nous resterons leur meilleur souvenir” meaning: “We (Tahitians) are tourists’ best memories” (Kahn 2011:100). As previously mentioned, employees in tourism are required to wear Tahitian dress each Friday (Kahn 2011:100). In addition, Tahiti’s landscapes are altered by continual development and encroaching infrastructure such as docks, markets, public spaces, and new beaches (Kahn 2011:103). Kahn (2011:109) deconstructs the seductive imagery featured on postcards and advertisements for Tahiti tourism. She describes the mediated process
of image creation to perpetuate the myth of Tahiti as a paradise (Kahn 2011:117). It involves “consciously crafted commercial imagery” and “synthetic arrangements of images [which] are organized to target specific audiences” (Kahn 2011:28). Each year, the Tahiti Tourisme releases a travel planner (Kahn 2011:107). A marketing office “typecasts” travelers from various countries and creates a different cover reflecting their interests (Kahn 2011:107). For example, English has a cover showcasing ecotourism in the form of a backpacker, while New Zealanders’s cover reflects their interest in cultural practices (Kahn 2011:107). Americans are typecast as honeymooners, and Italians are viewed as romantics (Kahn 2011:107). An individual involved in compiling the annual travel planner seems aware, yet dismissive of this process, “We show everything there is. There is no discrepancy between the image and reality. We just rearrange the pictures according to what we know people want” (Kahn 2011:107). The duty of the tourism industry is the production and distribution of images that Tahiti is a place with white sand beaches, attractive men and women, and crystal blue waters (Kahn 2011:108). It’s goal is to perpetuate the perception that Tahiti is a place of desire (Kahn 2011:97). According to Kahn (2011:104), “marketing of a specific destination relies on the synthetic arrangement of decontextualized images and signs, carefully organized to convey the sense of place that tourists expect and hope to experience.” For example, Kahn (2011:109) describes a post card photographer framing an image to cut out a model’s feet so that the trash she was standing in would not be visible. While these images are real people and places in Tahiti, they are mediated to remove any evidence of pollution, erosion, or socio-economic inequality (Kahn 2011:109). Kahn’s survey of hospitality industry employees reveals varied motives and perspectives about their work. While some experienced the feeling they were servants of the tourists, for others, working in tourism is just another job (Kahn 2011:105). Kānaka Maoli have similarly varied
opinions on employment in tourism. It remains a controversial, complex issue across the Pacific. Much like in Hawai‘i, the colonial government in Tahiti benefits from embracing this mythic representation of Tahiti, because it sells the place as a tourist destination.

As Kahn (2011:96) critiques government sponsorship and maintenance of Tahitian tourism, Gonzalez (2015:163) examines how aspects of Hawaiian culture (such as the lei and aloha) were used to construct a narrative of Hawai‘i’s consent to the US’s interference in Hawaiian affairs. She notes the irony in the role played by Kānaka Maoli working in tourism, who “manufactured the feeling of hospitality,” a forced welcoming of imperialism (Gonzalez 2015:162). Gonzalez (2015:169) contrasts this “fantasy” of imagined intimacy with the reality of aggression and competition in lei sales which pitted neighbor against neighbor to see who could reach buyers first or offer the cheaper price. While visitors may have interpreted the lei filled welcome to be a heartfelt gesture of aloha in their honor, this notion was one-sided.

Gonzalez (2015:163) describes how white settlers used the lei and aloha to “manufacture a narrative of consent to imperial governance” during the time when Hawai‘i was becoming a US Territory. The sentiment of aloha that encapsulates Hawaiian values and expression is contained within lei, which are made to be given in a meaningful gesture. Gonzalez (2015:164) explores how the lei as a symbol of reciprocity was repurposed to gloss over the controversial history of colonialism. She describes how “elite-owned and -run media naturalized and recast colonial relations as travel encounters” (Gonzalez 2015:164). Through tourism, the significant practice of making and giving lei was replaced with a financial transaction (Gonzalez 2015:166). Aloha is not so readily manufactured and sold as the tourist industry would have its patrons believe. While the process of making lei at all hours of the day and night was grueling, the lei sellers of O‘ahu were able to find a sense of aloha and friendship for each other, enjoy time with
family, and support their children’s education (Gonzalez 2015:179). Gonzalez (2015:178) concludes that while tourism exploited the lei and the lei makers, selling lei supported families and gave them a capitalistic livelihood. Despite the lei’s complicated relationship with tourism, it still held meaning for the lei sellers in O‘ahu.

While Trask (1999) is critical of Kānaka Maoli working in tourism, Gonzalez offers additional consideration of their contribution. She contends how “this observation leaves under-examined the ways in which Native Hawaiians who took part in a hospitality industry did so in a context of intense social-cultural change and were themselves agents of that change” (Gonzalez 2015:162). This indigenous agency and intervention in corporate spaces resonates with the work of Tamaira (2015), Williams (2015), and Imada (2012). Rather than being passive onlookers of change, Kānaka Maoli have found ways of negotiating and influencing critical spaces like tourism. In this complicated narrative, lei makers are not victims, but agents working to establish a space for lei making within the changing economy.

In summary, these discussions show how the myth of paradise in Hawai‘i has proven challenging to dispel. While there is a surplus of data that refutes the claim to Hawaiian utopia, there is a flood of propaganda that sustains it. Certain facts appear to support the notion that Hawai‘i is a racial paradise, the most salient of which is that Hawai‘i has the highest level of diversity of any state (Hansen 2009:1). However, Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists rubutt the paradise myth by juxtaposing their experiences with the “imagined” Hawai‘i as represented through innumerable advertisements, postcards, records, and countless memorabilia. The message of pain and healing in the mural ‘Āina Aloha is more poignant when placed in counterpoint to the painful history of selling Hawai‘i (Charisma 2019:2). Even Hollywood is disillusioned with the notion that Hawai‘i is paradise. While anthropologists still debate the
ethics of Kānaka Maoli participation in tourism, the nature of indigenous engagement with the industry has changed over the last twenty years since Trask (1999), Kahn (2011), Taum (2010), and Thaman (1993) cautioned indigenous people about the industry’s dangers. As Williams (2015:173) describes, tourism is no longer strictly top-down; Kānaka Maoli are engaging with and pushing back on tourism. This is reminiscent of Gonzalez’s (2015:179) claim that Kānaka Maoli lei makers in the early twentieth century had a means of supporting themselves in a capitalistic economy. Though they removed the lei from traditional context, it still had meaning for these lei makers who were able to draw upon their traditional craft to survive during the tumultuous period following the overthrow of the monarchy. The participation of Kānaka Maoli in tourism was never a black and white issue. However, there are new shades of grey and nuanced ways for Kānaka Maoli to engage with contemporary tourism.

Another Side of the Story: Alternative Engagements with Tourism

Within the “fictional Hawai‘i” that Trask has so eloquently argued against, I have uncovered another strand in the lei of larger moʻolelo that surround Hawai‘i: the response of Kānaka Maoli to tourism. In past discussions about tourism, the theme of describing Kānaka Maoli as victims of colonial subjugation has been forefront; however, the response of the indigenous community is overlooked. For example, Silva (2017) digs into Hawaiian intellectual history published in Hawaiian language newspapers to reveal how Kānaka Maoli took the tools of the colonizers—the pen and paper—and used them towards their own ends. Trask (1999:25) was quick to call out Kānaka Maoli who engage with tourism as “selling-out” on their culture. She seemed to recognize only two possible indigenous responses: outright resistance to tourism or passive victimhood. However, this does not adequately describe the range of indigenous
agency, such as the decision of the aliʻi to selectively appropriate aspects of Euroamerican government that increased the kingdom’s international recognition and kept the colonizers at bay for a time (Beamer 2014). Within the complex issue of colonialism are examples of Kānaka Maoli making decisions about the appropriateness of cultural sharing. These responses are diverse and complex; some are more passive, while others are more oppositional. However, some Kānaka Maoli find alternative engagements with tourism, such as agency. Agency describes the ability for an individual or group to act or intervene on their own behalf. Kānaka Maoli making decisions and taking action to engage with tourism on their own terms is one way that they demonstrate this ability. Agency is a more active response to tourism; it is neither passive nor directly oppositional. The Hilo Lei Day community is similarly positioned between (Turner 1969). Lei Day is both a tourist attraction and a forum for the practice and perpetuation of aspects of Hawaiian culture by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. While Trask (1999) and Desmond (1999) are critical of tourism and suspicious of its place in Hawaiʻi, there are commentators who take a more nuanced approach to understanding indigenous engagement with tourism.

I begin by introducing Estrella’s (2013) documentary and Silverman (2013). They describe indigenous communities in other regions who are engaging with agency and balance. Though they are not specifically focused on the lei, they show how indigenous groups can develop sustainable community-managed tourism models that are custom designed to meet the community’s needs. In Estrella’s (2013) documentary, Gringo Trails, indigenous communities practice balance to mitigate the unexpected destruction wreaked by tourism. Through a series of studies, some as long as thirty years, Estrella (2013) concludes the ultimate solution is community-managed tourism that balances the community’s financial needs with the
irreplaceable value of their heritage. Estrella (2013) tells the story of Yossi Ghinsberg, an Israeli traveler who was recovered in the uncharted Bolivian jungle after being lost for three weeks. The grateful Ghinsberg later penned an autobiography of his misadventures (1985), which even sparked a movie (2017) starring Daniel Radcliffe. The story generated an unprecedented level of tourism to the small Amazon village of San Jose de Uchupiamonas that transformed the town and overwhelmed the community’s resources (Estrella 2013). Ghinsberg’s story became legend, and versions of it were exaggerated by guides who all claimed to have been a part of the rescue (Estrella 2013). Estrella (2013) describes how fifty hotels had sprung up overnight and how tourists felt entitled to touch or damage wildlife because they had invested so much money in the experience. A particularly poignant scene shows a group poking a frightened anaconda with their walking sticks (Estrella 2013). This level of tourism was unsustainable. The San Jose de Uchupiamonas community was desperate to improve their health, employment opportunities, and living conditions, but guides could not make enough money to support their families (Chalalan Ecolodge 2016). Eventually fifty percent of the community members abandoned the village, leaving a group of older individuals who wanted to stay with their ancestral land (Estrella 2013).

The community’s darkest hour provided a much needed opportunity to reboot local tourism with a small scale sustainable model. The Quechua Tacana indigenous community in San Jose de Uchupiamonas launched the Chalalan Ecolodge in 1992, a pilot community-operated ecological tourism business (Estrella 2013). The lodge’s website describes their efforts to utilize solar power and compost waste (Chalalan Ecolodge 2016). It also has a list for potential travelers to plan their trip to have minimal carbon emissions, supporting the local economy, and to be mindful of waste and local customs (Chalalan Ecolodge 2016). In this program, indigenous guides imparted the importance of preserving the forest as a worldwide pharmacy, and rather
than endangering wildlife, new species of monkey have been identified (Estrella 2013). Ghinsberg secured funding from the US government to support the village (Estrella 2013). Income from the lodge also helped the community achieve its goal of improving its health (Estrella 2013). The group refused pressures from logging and oil companies, and instead decided to prioritize the environment by having the area declared as Madidi National Park. Cesar Mamani, Co-founder of the Chalalan Ecolodge posits, “Tourism, when you can control it, is a very good industry. But if it gets out of one’s control is when you can see the difference” (Estrella 2013). The nature of tourism is a double edged sword; there may be benefits, but there will be costs in kind. Tourism has to be carefully managed, and requires discretion and mindfulness of how decisions will affect generations to come. Estrella (2013) maintains that the only party worthy to make these choices and decide how the scales will tip is the indigenous community whose heritage is in question.

Estrella (2013) details case studies of sites that have suffered similarly because of tourism. Bhutan also has a well-established notion of how to apply balance in tourism (Estrella 2013). Kehnpo Tashi, the Director of the National Museum of Bhutan describes this model. Tashi believes, “If we preserve our culture, then we can share it with the rest of the world. That’s why we keep very high value, and low impact” (Estrella 2013). The community charges a hefty sum that only a certain caliber of traveler can afford (Estrella 2013). Tashi describes how the community made a conscious decision to develop slowly, which helps them to avoid depending on tourism financially (Estrella 2013). Charging higher prices excludes backpackers who tend to be younger and more damaging to sites. Estrella (2013) documents the exponential impact of backpackers who flock to sites such as Koh Phanang in Thailand. Once an isolated island inhabited by a single family, Koh Phanang developed into an unregulated party scene bringing in
fifty thousand travelers for New Years (Estrella 2013). The island lacked proper facilities for waste and sewage, which caused extreme pollution (Estrella 2013). By studying international tourism models, Bhutan has successfully avoided being overwhelmed by such travelers (Estrella 2013). All tourists must respect Bhutan’s customs and follow environmental guidelines (Estrella 2013). Tashi continues, “We can preserve our culture with less tourism. We can educate them how to be in Bhutan” (Estrella 2013). Estrella (2013) also interviewed Sangay Wagchuck, who is part of Bhutan’s royal family. Wagchuck explains (Estrella 2013),

> In the mid 1970s, when our fourth king was coronated as the youngest head of state, people said, “How will you develop, how will you increase our GDP?” And he was a visionary. He said, “No, I want to increase my people’s GNH.” Gross National Happiness aims at striking a balance between the material, the emotional, and the spiritual wellbeing of its people. So we follow the GNH way, which is a middle path, based on four main pillars. One is sustainable development, the second point is preservation and promotion of the environment, the third point is the preservation of your culture. Without your culture you lose your identity. Last is the establishment of good governments.

These examples of sustainable community-managed tourism can be models for Oceanic islanders who need the financial benefits from tourism, but fear their ancestral homelands becoming as polluted and overrun as Koh Phanang. These communities in Bolivia and Bhutan demonstrate that less is often more. Palau has likewise implemented a high-value tourism program. In order to visit, all guests must pay $100 added on to their airline tickets. This Pristine Paradise Environmental Fee is directed to preserving the Palau National Marine Sanctuary (Kesolei 2018).

> Tourism must be kept in tight reign, and those reigns should be held by the indigenous community. According to National Geographic’s editor at large and travel writer, Costas Christ, “Yes, there is an economic opportunity here. Plan it in such a way that the beauty of this area, the environment, isn’t destroyed, that there is an economic benefit that comes in, but not at the cost of destroying culture or the land around this particular area” (Estrella 2013). This notion of
balance is an alternative response to tourism that resonates with Kekauaualua’s view of her own positionality as a “force of balance.” The case of Bolivia offers hope to Kānaka Maoli that tourism does not always have to be a colonial weapon, but can be wielded by a community.

Silverman (2013) shows how tourism can be utilized to meet community goals. Silverman considers the complex ways in which an indigenous community in another region of Oceania is intertwined with tourism. Silverman brings new considerations to O’Rourke’s film, “Cannibal Tours” (1988). In this film, tourists are juxtoposed with the indigenous Papua New Guineans, leaving the viewer to assume that the visitors are in fact the more primitive culture. The Sepik River community was portrayed as only interested in money, “mystified, awkward, and disempowered—cutouts, really, lacking voice or agency” (Silverman 2013:233). Tourism to Sepik River decreased drastically due to several factors: the high cost of charter flights and ships in the face of soaring fuel prices, the general decrease in tourism following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and the inability of airlines to have competitive prices (Silverman 2013:226). Silverman (2013:223) discusses the negative ramifications on Sepik River societies after tourism was ended. For example, the local community had been benefitting from the sale of traditional crafts to visitors. These funds were being directed toward the construction of a new road that would help make their area more accessible. Silverman (2013:223) describes how this society views tourism as a practical means to acquire funds for everyday life and to improve their community. However, tourism is more than a means of supporting oneself; it is a site of artistic expression of cultural identity (Silverman 2013).

Imada (2012), Kahn (2011), and Silva (2004) recognize the ability of Kānaka Maoli to communicate through coded cultural subtexts. Silva (2004) argues that ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and its linguistic devices, knowledge, and traditional practices were spaces of resistance and indigenous
agency. The most discussed medium is kaona. ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i words have many meanings (Silva 2004:5). Humor in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is often based in these double and triple entendre. When ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is translated to English, Kānaka Maoli words with cultural connotations are replaced by English words with their own connotations, and inevitably the meaning is altered (Silva 2004:8). History has erased Kānaka Maoli agency and depicted them as passive in the face of colonization. This “myth of nonresistance was created in part because mainstream historians have studiously avoided the wealth of material written in Hawaiian” (Silva 2004:2). From a Kānaka Maoli-centered lens, Silva (2004:10) contends that the lāhui resisted each and every phase of colonization, as evidenced in the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i newspapers. Silva (2004:63) argues that Kānaka Maoli used carefully crafted kaona in poetry and mele to convey political subtexts of resistance. In this way, they created their own space of sovereignty within ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Silva 2004:63). Silva (2004:7) demonstrates how, “Kānaka Maoli were able to preserve this domain of cultural identity, and that the Hawaiian language often served as an area from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out.” I interpret Silva’s notion of Kānaka Maoli resistance as agency in response to the suppression of indigenous voices, culture, and language.

A manifestation of these colonizing pressures is Ka Hae Hawai‘i, an 1856 newspaper sponsored by the missionary-headed Department of Public Instruction which bespoke a “progressive” civilizing agenda (Silva 2004:59). For example, Kānaka Maoli were encouraged to “out” their neighbors for observing traditional practices, such as bringing ho‘okupu to Pele (Silva 2004:62). In response, J. H. Kānepu‘u and G. W. Mila formed a Kānaka Maoli men’s hui, the ‘Ahahui Ho’opuka Nūpepa Kūikawā o Honolulu (The Ad Hoc Newspaper Publishing Society of Honolulu), to create an interdenominational paper that reported international news, and published pro-Kānaka Maoli political opinions as well as “good” mele and mo‘olelo free from
missionary censorship (Silva 2004:64). In the very first issue of the hui’s newspaper, *Ka Hoku o Ka Pakipika* (*The Star of the Pacific*), controversy ensues over the publication of “He Mele Aloha no ka Na‘auao” (A Song of Affection for Education/Civilization), which uses sexual metaphors common in ʻōlelo Hawai‘i (Silva 2004:64). The dialogue is centered between two interlocutors: Puni Ma‘ema‘e’s (Chastity) response was published in the missionary sponsored *Ka Hae Hawai‘i*, while Puni Nūpepa’s (Newspaper Lover’s) reply to Puni Ma‘ema‘e was printed in the following edition of *Ka Hoku o Ka Pakipika* (Silva 2004:64). Puni Ma‘ema‘e was appalled by *Ka Hoku o Ka Pakipika*’s inclusion of shameful, “obscene” content and insisted that a newspaper has “mana” which can lead to the corruption of youth and the life or death of Kānaka Maoli. Puni Ma‘emae finishes by comparing the mele to a tomb, “which may be polished bright and shiny, but still contains death” (Silva 2004:65). Puni Nūpepa responded to Puni Ma‘ema‘e by observing that the author of the poem was Kānaka Maoli missionary J. W. Kaiwi, hardly a corrupt figure; Puni Nūpepa argued that Kaiwi had only utilized imagery which was common in ʻōlelo Hawai‘i (Silva 2004:65). Finally, Puni Nūpepa “dared Puni Ma‘ema‘e to reveal himself as haole, and implied that if death were resulting from anyone’s actions, it was from the haole, not from the Kānaka” (Silva 2004:65). Puni Nūpepa had surmised that Puni Ma‘ema‘e was a haole with a functioning knowledge of ʻōlelo Hawai‘i that allowed Puni Ma‘ema‘e to understand the mele, but not its powerful allusions (Silva 2004:65). Through the translation of the mele to English, the Kānaka Metaphors were interpreted as obscene (Silva 2004:64). Thus Kānaka Maoli established *Ka Hoku o Ka Pakipika* as a space where they could assert their own sovereignty (Silva 2004:64). Under the pressures of colonial censorship, traditional cultural elements became like pu’uhonua (places of refuge) for Kānaka Maoli expression. In addition to language, Silva (2004:67) also recognizes that being “keepers” of the traditional knowledge is also a means of
resistance. Moʻolelo, hula, and even genealogies can be bastions of indigenous identity and political subversion.

Similar to Silva’s (2014) assertion that Kānaka Maoli publishing political commentary in newspapers were using poetry and mele rich with kaona to convey their anticolonial sentiments, Imada (2012:L478) describes hula performers exhibiting agency by asserting their political will through the medium of kaona, which was only decipherable to other Kānaka Maoli. Imada (2012:L647) describes how Kānaka Maoli hula dancers on tour in the US during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed the way that Americans came to perceive Kānaka Maoli culture. They used their tours as sites for relaying Kānaka Maoli political thought regarding the illegal overthrow and later annexation of the islands by the United States (Imada 2012:L2090). These performers were not passive victims of exploitation, but managed to find an alternative way to “resist colonialism through strategic exhibition of Hawaiian cultural practices” (Imada 2012:L2085). This resonates with Bruddah Iz, his former group, the Mākaha Sons of Niʻihau, and song writer Mickey Ioane, who used their music to voice contemporary Kānaka Maoli concerns about development, as in “Hawaiʻi 78.” They responded to colonialism by asserting themselves as a Kānaka Maoli through their art. Imada (2012:L2087) argues that these hula performers actually “negotiated with colonialism and tourist markets as self-aware agents, brokers, and political actors.” They incorporated indigenous concepts such as kaona (hidden meaning or significance) into their performances (Imada 2012:L1514). This allowed them to convey a deeper message of colonial resistance by using cultural subtexts. For example, they often selected songs composed by the aliʻi (Imada 2012:L2003). One such song is “Aloha ‘Oe,” which Queen Liliʻuokalani composed in 1878, after witnessing a woman from Maunawili, Oʻahu giving Colonel James Boyd a lei in an affectionate parting (Kanoa-Martin 2018). The song
includes references to places where the Queen was riding, such as the clouds above the pali drifting down to Nuʻuanu Valley (Kanoa-Martin 2018). The phrases, “One fond embrace / ‘Ere I depart / Until we meet again” took on new meaning when the song later became affiliated with the illegal overthrow that tore the Queen from her people (Imada 2012L:2009). Though living under house arrest, Queen Liliʻuokalani constantly worked to reinstate the Hawaiian Kingdom, but was thwarted when President Cleveland lost the election to McKinley, who had no interest in restoring the monarch (Silva 2004:166). While the average American listener would appreciate the sentimental lyrics and melody of “Aloha ‘Oe,” Kānaka Maoli would recognize a rallying cry for sovereignty. The performers were able to use their positions as a platform for resistance and sovereignty by working against colonialism within the belly of the beast. They created content for American and international consumption that represented Kānaka Maoli culture from a political perspective. This was a delicate process; being too overt could end any future opportunities for expression. Imada (2012:2085) describes this balancing act, “they performed [as] a complicated dance between the struggle for independence and the struggle to represent themselves as fully realized people with political will.” Thus, kaona was a powerful tool that allowed them to explicate cultural politics indirectly through metaphor and allusion. These Kānaka Maoli performers were so efficacious, that “Aloha ‘Oe” has been part of American pop culture for decades and featured in countless films and cover versions (Imada 2012:L2394). Americans may recognize the song, even if they are unable to appreciate its multilayered significance (Imada 2012:L2494). Imada argues that these Kānaka Maoli hula performers were not cultural sell-outs. Rather, they were engaging with tourism and colonialism in an alternative way, the meaning of which is layered in the cultural references included in their shows.
Kahn (2011) continues the discussion of alternate engagement and creation of indigenous spaces within colonial settings in Tahiti. She explores how multiple sense of place can become tangled, such colonial, Tahitian, and tourist spaces (Kahn 2011:31). In response, Tahitians have reasserted their identities through significant gestures (Kahn 2011:183). For example, as the government imposed environmental destruction of lagoons to create tourist beaches, Tahitians demonstrated outright resistance by surrounding the dredges with their canoes (Kahn 2011:181). However, not every instance calls for direct resistance or confrontation. In everyday, low risk, situations, Tahitians seek to make a space (even temporarily) for themselves by reasserting their cultural identity through use of language, food, dance, humor, attire, playful banter, or flag raising (Kahn 2011:181). Similarly, Kānaka Maoli may choose to create their own space of resistance within colonized spaces, such as tourism. For example, Kekauualua chose to teach Destination Hilo’s Aloha Ambassadors traditional place names around the island. Most Aloha Ambassadors directed tourists to Rainbow Falls and Richardson Beach. However, Kekauualua shared with me her conscious decision to assert the true names of these places, Waiānuenue and Wailuli. Kahn (2011) shows how Pacific islanders respond similarly to the colonization of indigenous space. Kahn (2011:29) also argues that Tahitians creating counter-spaces may “do so in ways that are primarily visible and audible only to other Tahitians.” Kahn’s (2011:29) keen observations that Tahitians can respond to colonial usurping of place through overt or subtextual resistance resonates with Silva (2004) and Imada’s (2012) understandings of Kānaka Maoli political subversion through kaona and knowledge. Williams (2015) and Tamaira (2015) apply this Kānaka Maoli-centric lens to indigenous artwork in tourist spaces. They explore how kaona present in Kānaka Maoli art can represent Kānaka Maoli attempts to push against colonial narratives.
Williams (2015) recognizes how Kānaka Maoli negotiate and push against the idea of Hawai‘i as a “paradise” through art. One contemporary expression of this is through incorporation of indigenous artwork in tourist spaces. Williams describes how ‘Aulani was one of few project opportunities for Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists. However, it was a chance for Kānaka Maoli to control the narrative of how they are depicted in tourism. She argues that these Kānaka Maoli artists chose to portray Kānaka Maoli as “cultural keepers,” by showing them “actively working in culturally important spaces such as a lo‘i (taro patches) and the ocean, caring for kūpuna (grandparents) and mo‘opuna (grandchildren or descendants)” (Williams 2015:175). This is a redirection from typical Kānaka Maoli tropes often depicted in tourist settings, including the sexualized hula girl, romanticized Hawaiian Belles, or the “noble savage” (Dilworth 1996). Though Williams does not specifically describe these actions as “agency,” she strongly suggests the idea by contending that the Kānaka Maoli artists chose to insert an active image of themselves into the tourism narrative, which causes a subtle change in how Kānaka Maoli will be perceived by guests.

Through her work at ‘Aulani, Tamaira (2015) expands upon this idea beyond Williams (2015); she recognized that kaona can be a mode of Kānaka Maoli agency within tourist spaces. Tamaira interviews Kānaka Maoli artists to explore how they have included kaona in their work at ‘Aulani. The Makahiki mural, painted by Kanaka Maoli Solomon Enos, is featured in the Makahiki restaurant at ‘Aulani (Tamaira 2015:200; Figure 5). From a cursory reading, one might perceive this mural to essentialize Kānaka Maoli into familiar cliche tropes that are commonly featured in tourist spaces. However, Tamaira’s (2015:200) interview with Enos, reveals a deeper meaning of Kānaka Maoli empowerment and ho‘omaika‘i (a blessing, to make prosperous). The
mural shows Kānaka Maoli in traditional clothing holding a ceremony in Mākua Valley on Oʻahu (Tamaira 2015:200).

Mākua Valley has great significance to Kānaka Maoli tradition, which identifies Mākua Vally (whose name means “parents”) to be the birthplace of the earth, formed through the embrace of Wākea (the Sky Father) and Papahānaumoku (the Earth Mother) (Kajihiro 2009). Mākua Valley is home to many endangered species and cultural features, such as burials and heiau (Kajihiro 2009). These have been damaged by the US military exercises beginning in 1929 (Kajihiro 2009). A hui (organization), Mālama Mākua, resisted the encroaching military and established the beach as a Puʻuhonua (place of refuge) for displaced Kānaka Maoli; the community was evicted in 1997, but continued to organize civil disobedience and resistance (Kajihiro 2009). A controversial agreement allows Kānaka Maoli to return for certain cultural ceremonies such as the Makahiki (Kajihiro 2009).

Figure 5. Solomon Enos' Makahiki Mural (Courtesy of Nicole A. N. Ishihara 2019)
For Enos, his Makahiki mural is a way of empowering the future of Kānaka Maoli in Mākua Valley (Tamaira 2015:201). He calls for restoration and continued resistance (Tamaira 2015:200). Through his muralistic depiction, Enos is “prophesying” or “calling into existence” a flourishing Mākua Valley community (Tamaira 2015:200). Enos asserts Kānaka Maoli not as perpetual victims of colonialism, but as empowered agents capable of realizing a future in which they are “storytellers” of their own narrative (Tamaira 2015: 201). Tamaira (2015:201) argues that creating kaona in tourist spaces is an addition to previous forms of Kānaka Maoli resistance to colonialism, resonating with previous generations who imparted kaona into songs, flags, and hula performances, as Imada (2012) describes. Incorporation of kaona into tourist spaces is another iteration of Kānaka Maoli asserting their political will in colonial spaces.

The lei makers of the Airport Lei Sellers Association on Oʻahu also demonstrated agency when they requested Hodges (1986) to document their stories. Hodges (1986) recorded oral histories of the lei sellers on Oʻahu who sold their products to travelers arriving on Steamer days, when a passenger ship would arrive about once a month. This compilation of oral histories includes interviews with each of the owners of the 12 lei stands that formed the Airport Lei Sellers Association on Oʻahu (Hodges 1986:xxxiii). The practice of making and selling lei blossomed along with the boom in tourism following the start of Matson’s “Steamer Days,” which brought travelers from California (Hodges 1986:xxxiv). The lei makers were a unique group, comprised of mostly female entrepreneurs who would generally collect the products from their own back yards as much as possible (Hodges 1986:xxxiv). Family was a big theme of these oral histories. These business women were often aided by their nuclear and extended families. Often, businesses would be passed down through multiple generations (Hodges 1986:xxxvii). A sense of kinship formed between the lei sellers, leading to the formation of the Lei Seller’s
Association in 1933 (Hodges 1986:xxxv). This created a link between the sellers themselves, and with the government. This series of oral histories shows how historical changes like the Great Depression and World War II affected this small society of business owners (Hodges 1986:xxxv). The lei makers had to adapt with the times, eventually moving to the airport with the emergence of mass air travel. Eventually fifteen stalls were established at the airport during the 1950s. Maile Lee, Lillian Cameron, and Bessie Watson and others describe their fond memories of those booming times (Hodges 1986:xxxvi). In the next decade, the lei sellers profited from a new airport and a burgeoning tourist market (Hodges 1986:xxxvi). Strong themes that emerge from this compilation of oral histories are friendship, support, family, and advocacy despite competition and changing times.

The purpose of Hodges’ (1986:xxxiii) research was to preserve the tradition of lei making and to provide a resource that could be used for education and future researchers. Hodges used library research, a series of preliminary interviews with the owners of each of the lei stands and their families, and then conducted ten oral histories, each with a representative from a different lei stand.

My project is complementary to Hodges (1986), with several key differences. While she conducted oral histories, I use a variety of methods: observation, participant observation, interviews, and talanoa. The products of Hodges’ research are oral history transcripts and recordings, while my project produces video, audio, transcripts, and provides opportunities for students to learn oral history documentation skills. In addition, while Hodges’ (1986) study was conducted on O‘ahu, my research concerns the Lei Day community in Hilo. Hodges (1986:xxxix) admits that she encountered trouble with translating from ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, especially when she encountered kaona and lei making vocabulary that could be variously interpreted.
Utilizing my own study of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, and by collaborating with Kumu Hula Leilehua Yuen, the organizer of Hilo Lei Day, I am able to embrace these challenges of language and vocabulary. While Hodges’ interviews touch on the interaction of tourism and the meanings of lei making, her work focuses on the historical and business aspects of this lei making community on O‘ahu rather than the traditional Kānaka Maoli understandings of the lei. In fact, no published research has been conducted that explores the relationship between tourism and the meanings of the lei in the communities of Hilo on Hawaiʻi Island. Drawing from Hodges (1986), Tamaira (2015), and other studies with Kānaka Maoli (Imada 2012) and informed by the broader anthropological perspectives of tourism, this community-driven MA project seeks to understand the following research question: What are the meanings of the lei within the context of tourism for Kānaka Maoli and non Kānaka Maoli cultural practitioners in the Hilo Lei Day community?
MOKUNA 3: HOʻOLĀLĀ NOIʻI (CHAPTER 3: COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN)

Community-Based Collaborative Research

The work of non-indigenous individuals has been important in the preservation of indigenous heritage and culture. Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a Maori professor of indigenous education at the University of Waikato. Her groundbreaking book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2001:17), considered indigenous perspectives and experiences of Western research, recognized positive contributions of “bicultural research and partnership research” in New Zealand, and acknowledged those who have “developed ways of working with indigenous peoples in a variety of projects and mutually benefiting way.” Similarly, Hall (2005:404) notes that not all citizens of the Hawaiian Kingdom were of Hawaiian ancestry. She recognizes that non-Kānaka Maoli can “work for Hawaiian sovereignty in partnership with Hawaiians” (Hall 2005:407). This collaboration seems positive, as long as it does not lead to non-Kānaka Maoli falsely claiming Kānaka Maoli heritage. Hall (2005:409) refers to this as being “Hawaiian at Heart,” which is evident in New Age appropriation of indigeneity and spirituality. Non-Kānaka Maoli can be valuable allies to the indigenous community and can appreciate Kānaka Maoli traditions without usurping indigenous identity. There is significant intellectual genealogy in anthropology of these non-indigenous “outsiders” who work within indigenous communities to produce collaborative scholarship.

Franz Boas recognized one way for indigenous people to perpetuate their heritage is through documentation and preservation. In 1927 Boas and his student Edward Sapir sought to document and “secure an adequate record of Indian languages and dialects” (ACLS 1928:53). They came to recognize the importance of conducting fieldwork, collaborating, and establishing
relationships with a community. For example, Boas worked with George Hunt (1895), a member of the Kwakwaka‘wakw community, to produce collaborative ethnography. Working with a community member or co-collaborator became a new standard for anthropology, which was adopted by another of Boas’ students, Martha Beckwith.

Boas and Beckwith had a close mentoring relationship (Beckwith 1918), therefore many of his ideas are evident in her work—particularly obvious in her prioritization of salvaging culture through documentation. Beckwith has also made significant contributions to Hawaiian cultural perpetuation. Bronner (1998:261) describes how Beckwith’s childhood in Hawai‘i enabled her to learn ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i from a young age. One legacy for which Beckwith is well-remembered is her (1951) English translation of the Kumulipo. This cosmogonic chant details the origins of the world, the gods, and the ali‘i. It is a genealogy and a succession of the births of plants, animals, humans, natural forces, and much detail about Kānaka Maoli culture (Beckwith 1951). One of the first translations of the Kumulipo was by Queen Lili‘uokalani (1978 [1897]), who published her version during her house arrest. Beckwith’s (1951) translation made the material accessible to the English-speaking academic community and also to the Kānaka Maoli community which had lost its great literacy. It was made possible by her collaboration with Kānaka Maoli Mary Kawena Pūku‘i who was willing to clarify allusions made in the chant (Beckwith 1951).

Pūku‘i and Beckwith made notable contributions to perpetuate Kānaka Maoli culture. Both women shared the drive to preserve dwindling indigenous cultures through language, folk stories, and traditions. Upon recognizing Pūku‘i’s vast, inherited knowledge of Hawaiian oral tradition and her desire to record them, Beckwith partnered with Pūku‘i to translate newspapers and manuscripts from the Bishop Museum (Mary Kawena Pūku‘i Cultural Preservation Society
2018). Only two years after they met during this research, Beckwith and Pūku‘i published *Hawaiian Stories and Wise Sayings* (1923), their first collaboration. Pūku‘i’s (1933) *Hawaiian Folktales* would be published through Vassar College, where Beckwith was a professor of folklore. Pūku‘i and Beckwith jointly translated a series of Hawaiian texts, largely ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i newspapers written by people like John Papa ʻĪʻī (1995[1959]) and Samuel Kamakau (Ware 2004:530). Their work made Kānaka Maoli history accessible to generations of activists.

Mast and Mast (1996) recorded thirty-five oral histories of Kānaka Maoli and non-Kānaka Maoli advocates, which shows that perpetuation is not just the purview of Kānaka Maoli, but can be collective effort. The following individuals from highly varied, non-Kānaka Maoli backgrounds, contributed in meaningful ways to protect Kānaka Maoli land, environment, and traditional sustainable farming. For example, displaced Palestinian and author Brahim Aoude is a sympathizer for Kānaka Maoli sovereignty movement and tenant’s rights, while New York native, Ed Rampell used his position as a writer for Pacific Islands Monthly to publish pro-sovereignty content (Mast and Mast 1996:15). A former Catholic priest, Gigi Cocquio applied his activist organizational experience in the Philippines to Hawai‘i (Mast and Mast 1996:62). He later worked with at risk youth in Wai‘anae Hoa ʻĀina o Mākāhā teaching them how to be self-sustaining farmers according to Kānaka Maoli tradition (Mast and Mast 1996:59). His curriculum included caring for the land, knowledge of native plants, animals, insects, nutrition, and self-sufficiency (Mast and Mast 1996:72). After such foundations were laid, Cocquio began to educate the youth about the politics of land in Hawai‘i (Mast and Mast 1996:73). He believed that land is the ultimate common denominator that can bring people together (Mast and Mast 1996:74). Marion Kelly is an activist scholar with Polynesian heritage who worked in the Bishop Museum Anthropology Department (Mast and Mast 1996:103). She consistently used her
abilities to provide historical resources to those involved more directly in the Kānaka Maoli sovereignty movement (Mast and Mast 1996:107). In the past, her writing angered the Bishop Museum staff for depicting the marginalization of Kānaka Maoli (Mast and Mast 1996:106). Kelly describes her positionality, “Rather than my being part of a movement, it is more important for me to provide the Hawaiians with this historical information, and they will make their own movement...I don’t organize people, I get to know a lot of people” (Mast and Mast 1996:107). She believed that it is not her place to take a primary role in activism, but a secondary one providing Kānaka Maoli with knowledge that can aid in their political decision-making (Mast and Mast 1996:107). Virginia-born George Cooper was so deeply involved with the activists trying to prevent mass eviction of Kānaka Maoli on Kaua‘i that he regarded the movement’s leaders as his own parents (Mast and Mast 1996:112). He understood that as a haole, his place was to research land ownership and zoning laws, advise, and organize, but not to be a leader (Mast and Mast 1996:112). As a lawyer, Cooper used his skills to fight for Kānaka Maoli land rights. He believes that “[It’s] necessary to have a lawyer involved, because these conflicts are verbal, not physical, and the people in power are always using law” (Mast and Mast 1996:115). His commitment to the cause was such that he went into debt doing pro bono work for tenants’ issues, fighting proposed development for golf courses, and supporting those fighting Honolulu zone changes (Mast and Mast 1996:117). These non-Kānaka Maoli have fought alongside Kānaka Maoli activists, understanding that their role was not in the spotlight, but holding space or providing information to empower Kānaka Maoli.

Kumu Hula Puakea Nogelmeier is another example of a non-Kānaka Maoli who made significant strides toward Kānaka Maoli cultural perpetuation. Originally from Minnesota, Nogelmeier is now one of the leading experts in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, with forty years of teaching
experience (PBS Hawai‘i 2010). He is known for spearheading efforts to fortify ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and make past ‘ōlelo literature sources available to both English and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i speakers (Awaiaulu 2019). Nogelmeier mentored immersion school kumu, who passed that knowledge on to other kumu and their students, thus many consider Nogelmeier a part of their intellectual genealogy (PBS Hawai‘i 2010). In 2004 Nogelmeier and Nakila Steele, another haole advocate for ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, co-founded Awaiaulu: A Hawaiian Literature Project in which Nogelmeier mentored a cohort of translators to render the ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i newspapers in English (2019). More recently, Nogelmeier was awarded for translating *Hi‘iakaikapōlioʻele: As Told by Ho‘oulumāhiehie* (2013), and Awaiaulu took on the translation of Disney’s (2016) animated film, *Moana*, into ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Awaiaulu 2019). Nogelmeier is an inspiration to many non-indigenous researchers working with Kānaka Maoli communities, such as Kumu Kaliko Beamer-Trapp.

Beamer-Trapp is a kumu at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Keʻelikolani at UH Hilo and the hānai (adopted) son of the late Aunty Nona Beamer, a well-known kumu hula, educator, and proponent of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli culture (PBS Hawai‘i 2007). Born on the Isle of Wight in the UK, Beamer-Trapp came to Hawai‘i at the invitation of Aunty Nona Beamer. In addition to his technical and academic contributions for Ulukau: The Hawaiian Electronic Library and his participation on the Kōmike Hua‘ōlelo (Hawaiian Lexicon Committee) creating new vocabulary for *Māmaka Kaiao: A Modern Hawaiian Vocabulary* (2019), Beamer-Trapp presents at Kānaka Maoli cultural workshops such as Aloha Music Camp.

I am humbled to trace my intellectual genealogy to Kumu Beamer-Trapp, who has mentored me for the past three years in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. When he learned of my intentions to enter the Heritage Management Program at UHH, he took me on as his haumana. Beamer-Trapp
always directed me towards the kūpuna and mānaleo (native speakers), whose voices are preserved in databases like Ka Leo Hawai‘i, the Clinton Kanahele Collections, and Kani‘āina. Eventually my ‘ōlelo became strong enough to create content for ‘Ōlelo Online, Beamer-Trapp’s language learning website. Beamer-Trapp invited me to be haumāna kāko‘o (teaching assistant) for his first year ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i classes at UHH. When Aunty Nona Beamer adopted Beamer-Trapp, she named him “Kaliko” (the leaf bud) as a symbol of her hopes for his growth and contributions to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. Similarly, Beamer-Trapp helped me to find my place in Hilo and gave me my Kānaka Maoli name. Thus I situate myself in this project as a non-indigenous researcher operating as an advocate for the conservation and documentation of a particular aspect of Hawaiian heritage, lei making.

The research question “What are the meanings of the lei within the context of tourism for cultural practitioners in the Hilo Lei Day community?” was formed through many conversations with Yuen, my main community collaborator. Noe Noe Kekaualua was the first to introduce me to lei making and the concept of balance between tradition and tourism. While it would have been natural for us to collaborate on this thesis, she was pa‘ahana (occupied) with other projects. However, she was influential on the project design. Initially, I designed this question to explore the relationship between tourism and the meanings of the lei in the communities of Hilo on Hawai‘i Island. Yuen and I re-defined the community as the Lei Day community in Hilo. The project is focused mainly on Kānaka Maoli lei makers, with a few non-Kānaka Maoli contributors, like haole lei maker and interlocutor, Kāhili Hahn. We extensively discussed issues that intersect with the lei. First, Yuen described her concern about lei making traditions fragmenting, which inspired the Hilo Lei Day community’s efforts to perpetuate these practices through documentation and to sponsor events where lei making practices are taught in context.
with associated traditions (including oli, moʻolelo, and ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi). Yuen and I also discussed the role of Kānaka Maoli cultural practitioners in tourism, specifically their responsibility to engage in cultural sharing without selling out on their heritage, which led to our conversation about agency and how a local community can use tourism for its own benefit. Other community members described frustrations with tourism, how a tradition can be perpetuated, and the break-down of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Because there were many items of concern they suggested, I determined that the research question should not limit the study to one theme alone, but allow me to explore the significance of each different idea through the interviews. The research question, with its focus on how the Hilo Lei Day community attaches meaning to the lei within the context of tourism, effectively addresses the community’s needs. These changes are reflected in the research design. Rather than using a top-down approach to decide which theme was most important, I apply grounded theory (Hussein 2014), which allows themes to emerge organically from the interviews with community members based on what they feel is important.

No published research has explored the perpetuation of the lei within the Hilo Lei Day community through collaboration with a key member of this group. Through the use of additional methods of participant observation, collaboration, and talanoa (an immersive research methodology), I place interviews in greater context and complement Hodges’ (1986) oral history project with the Lei Sellers Association in Oʻahu. In addition, my three years of studying ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi and one year working closely with Yuen allow me to move beyond the challenges Hodges faced in translating ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi and kaona. While Tamaira (2015) considered Kānaka Maoli agency through art, and Imada (2012) described Kānaka Maoli alternative engagements
with tourism, this project examines Kānaka Maoli agency through cultural sharing and continuation of lei making traditions.


As an indigenous anthropologist, Tengan struggled with customary roles of anthropologists studying indigenous communities (Tengan and White 2001). He attempted to reckon with his “identity and kuleana” which he viewed as being “formed at the intersection of indigeneity and anthropology” (Tengan 2005:247). Through collaboration with Hale Mua, a men’s group Tengan was intimately connected with, Tengan found that being Kānaka Maoli prevented him from keeping an academic distance of detachment from this community. He argued that contemporary anthropologist-subject relationships are being “unsettled” and no longer exist in binary relationships of “insider/outsider, indigenous/foreign, colonised/decolonised, global/local and modern/traditional” (Tengan 2005:252).

As the director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland, Smith (2001:1) critiqued Western research paradigms
which she believed to objectify and marginalize indigenous people. Smith (2001:51) recognized that while colonialism is carried out through military action, it is also enacted through undervaluing of indigenous cultures, and colonial education of younger generations. Smith (2001:3) advocated for indigenous researchers to develop new decolonized methodologies that would benefit these communities. Smith (2001:2) claims that research is a struggle of values between the West and the communities of interest, which are often indigenous communities long suffering the frustrations of colonization. Research seeks to understand and represent these other peoples through the imposition of Western values that may be disharmonious with their culture. In addition, the process of this research has historically benefited the researcher but exploited the heritage of the individuals studied. Smith (2001:4) outlines the need for indigenous methodologies, or other ways of knowing, to challenge the assumptions of the traditional Western process. She attempts to convince indigenous peoples that research does not have to be a “dirty word,” but can still have something to offer these communities (Smith 2001:1). More recently, Bennett et al. (2013) created the Pacific Research Protocols from the University of Otago, which describe research ethics from an indigenous perspective.

Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson (2006:159) promote alternative archaeologies to bridge the gap between the conventional Western approaches and indigenous communities. Such considerations allow room for multivocality, which acknowledges that indigenous worldviews need not fit within the confines of conventional scientific approaches. As one of few Hawaiian archaeologists, Kawelu (2015) questioned the ethics of conducting archaeological work in Hawaiʻi from which Hawaiian people did not stand to gain. She advocates for an archaeological process that exists for more than its own sake (Kawelu 2015). Anthropology based on collaboration and community can be the resolution.
Mills and Kawelu (2013:129) describe how the Hawai‘i Revised Statues, Chapter 6E created a bureaucratic process for recognition and management of significant cultural sites, but also inadvertently excludes many Kānaka Maoli on the basis of lacking a masters degree in archaeology. In addition, it perpetuated colonial structures and Western imposed standards of what sites are valuable. The ultimate result is the disenfranchisement of Kānaka Maoli peoples from their heritage (Kawelu and Pākele 2014). Mills and Kawelu (2013:130) call for a community based anthropology that accepts indigenous ways of interpreting and articulating cultural knowledge, such as genealogies, chants, hula, and relationships with spiritual forces. Western methodologies are otherwise unable to access these repositories of traditional knowledge.

The goal of the Heritage Management program at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo is to advocate for a community-based public anthropology that engages and collaborates with the descendant communities and educates professionals that will incorporate these values into their future work (Mills and Kawelu 2013:132). Descendent communities are those which have genealogical or cultural ties to a certain place. Hawai‘i has many of these communities, including Kānaka Maoli and those descended from immigrants during the plantation era. The Heritage Management program offers training and support to its graduate students who work with such communities, so that they can work towards setting a new precedent in Hawai‘i. This notion of community-based public anthropology was refined by Atalay (2012:L1343), which defined five guiding principles for this practice: partnering with communities; including these community members in each step of the project; acknowledging the existence of additional systems of knowledge; working to ensure that both the researchers and stakeholders stand to gain; and building capacity within the community. In addition to these principals, Atalay (2012:L1463)
demonstrates through a series of case studies how time and flexibility are integral components in community work. Academic timelines can be rigid and restrictive when working with these groups. Communities may have additional expectations of the researcher beyond scholarly requirements. The researcher must find a way to reconcile with both parties. My project was formed through the practical application of these values.

I draw from Lassiter’s (2005) model of collaboration as a framework for this research. This approach is appropriate for my research as I am an outsider who is entering into this community and becoming a part of it. Lassiter (2005:85) recognizes the value of close relationships between the researcher and the subject. In the past, these kinds of friendships have led to collaborative endeavors (e.g., Boas and Hunt 1895, 1975[1905], 2013[1921]; Fletcher and La Flesche 1911; Mead and Bunzel 1960; Young Bear and Theisz 1994). In Lassiter’s model, this collaboration is not a product, but instead forms the foundation of the research design. This style of research goes beyond the models of informant and consultant. Lassiter (2005:5) characterizes this shift as moving from “‘reading over the shoulders of natives’ toward that of ‘reading alongside natives.’” Full collaboration means jointly conducting research and interpreting results (Lassiter 2005:85). The ultimate goal is the creation of collaborative writing. This approach to ethnography helps to resolve issues of power, class, and bias—especially when working with communities that have experienced colonization—by giving the community a voice in the project (Lassiter 2005:96). Clifford and Marcus (1986:17) describe ethnographies “however monological, dialogical, or polyphonic their form,” to be “hierarchical arrangements of discourses.” In the end, the researcher has the final say on the organization and interpretation of themes that emerge in the results; choices will be made to represent the informants. This clarifies
Lassiter’s call for collaboration, as working jointly with a community member at all levels of the project can help produce a more balanced final report.

For this thesis, I use the following aspects of Lassiter’s (2005) model: acknowledging Yuen’s inherited Kānaka Maoli cultural knowledge; construction of co-conceived research designed to address needs identified by the informant through consultation; inviting open commentary from Yuen on each step of the process; and collaboration at each point except for the final write up. Though I do not write this thesis jointly with Yuen, I seek her valuable advice and guidance as a committee member. Given additional time, a potential avenue to explore could be a co-written text. Lassiter’s framework justifies my collaboration with Yuen, who is knowledgeable in Hawaiian protocols and the organizer of Hilo Lei Day.

After four months of working with Yuen, my academic committee and I decided to formally extend the invitation to her to participate as a member of the committee. Given that Yuen is an integral member of this community, she is able to identify their needs and represent their interests in this project. By collaborating with her, it was possible to design a project that would be meaningful for this specific community. This collaboration challenges traditional Western researcher-subject power structures and works to balance the politics of representation (Lassiter 2005:84). Because of her many roles and experiences, Yuen is a great asset to this project. Working together in this fashion is justified by Lassiter’s model for collaboration, which challenges traditional top-down research approaches where the anthropologist retains the power. Collaborating with Yuen gives the community a voice in my project and ensures that it is beneficial to the people and culture we are working with. We both bring different abilities to the table—Yuen is steeped in cultural knowledge, and I enter from an academic foundation, as a researcher with skills to offer the community.
Throughout her experience, Yuen has become aware of a trend of compression of the cultural vocabulary associated with lei making. It is her desire to perpetuate this important part of Hawaiian heritage through documentation of various moʻolelo, manaʻo, oli, and huaʻōlelo (stories, ideas, chants, and vocabulary) that are affiliated with each lei. The project is open to other cultural practitioners, especially kūpuna, who are interested in perpetuating and passing on their lei making knowledge.

Yuen designed a project sponsored by the Kūkulu Ola Program, which is supported jointly by the Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority and the Hawaiʻi Community Foundation. The project aims to perpetuate endangered knowledge of the lei. The phrase “Kūkulu Ola” means to create a foundation for life. According to the Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority, the Kūkulu Ola Program, which is also known as the Living Hawaiian Culture Program (LHCP) seeks to support:

- community-based projects and programs that enhance, strengthen, and perpetuate the Hawaiian culture and community. The LHCP supports programs that help to honor and perpetuate the Hawaiian culture; demonstrate collaborative efforts with a high degree of community support and involvement; exhibit depth and breadth of experience in performing similar work; and have an adequate plan for sustainability into the future (Hawaiʻi Community Foundation 2016).

In this project, Yuen functions, in part, as a co-interviewer with me and a team of students during a series of oral history interviews with lei makers from the community. It was her intention that these lei makers not be selected based on how well known they are, because this project aims at capturing the variety of the lei tradition. An ʻōlelo noʻeau encompasses this notion: “‘Aʻohe pau ka ʻike i ka hālau hoʻokahi. All knowledge is not learned in just one school” (Pūkuʻi 1983:24). Thus, the project would be directed towards lesser known lei makers in the community.

The Kūkulu Ola grant, awarded to Hilo Lei Day, funded compilation of lei making knowledge into video form. The grant called for a session with one cultural practitioner each month for the year 2018, 12 sessions in total. Unfortunately, an issue was encountered, one
common to many researchers: being beholden to a third party funding agency. While the grant was received nominally, financial support arrived late. Because of this, it was necessary to adjust the project. Yuen expressed her desire to document a portion of her own lei making knowledge in a series of videos. These videos were to be published to the archives in “Lei Day,” a website Yuen manages (2016b). They were also to be posted to her private YouTube account so that she and I have access to them, and also so that they remain backed up to multiple sites. Raw footage was to be edited into a series of videos, one for each practitioner. These would feature demonstrations of their style of lei making, stories, sharing personal experiences, songs, vocabulary, or oli related to the lei. These videos were to be available to purchase for a low price that will cover the production expenses, like Yuen’s lei making dictionary, which is available on Amazon for less than a dollar. Yuen’s priority is to perpetuate this material and make it accessible for future generations. Funds generated from the video sales would be applied towards the Lei Day 2019 scholarship program, which sponsors members of the hālau to help pay tuition. While the original version of this project had slightly altered, Yuen and I compiled less formal videos of lei makers from the community (including Yuen) as they demonstrated at community events. I provided Yuen with a drive of all the video, audio, and pictures created by myself and several members of the community. Yuen is sending our videos to the grant to show the results.

There were opportunities for undergraduate student involvement to document Lei Day. Yuen expressed her vision that this project would allow these students to learn oral history documentation skills by acting as assistants. Then, the students could interview their own kūpuna in their communities, and thereby encourage the perpetuation of these traditions. While the project was unable to be conducted at this time as Yuen had envisioned, Yuen, myself, and several students have captured audio, video, and photography of the community events of 2018.
This data has been compiled and made available on the hālau’s website for future researchers and cultural practitioners (Yuen 2018a). In addition, I was able to interview several community members extensively and record some of their knowledge about the lei.

Participant Observation

For this project, I use participant observation as a key field method (Bernard 1994). Yuen (2014:L695) justifies this method of research by noting “books, however good or in-depth, cannot replace the experience of working side by side with an experienced artist and hearing the words come directly from the living lips and heart.” During this project, I have observed and participated in many lei making sessions. For example, during one of our first meetings together, I observed Yuen preparing lāʻī (ti leaves) for a pāʻina (a party with food) which she was hosting for students. Later at the event, she taught me how to create a lei lāʻī Hilo. It is a lei that required two sets of hands: one to twist and one to hold the ends tight. Yuen and I made the first one together. Then, I was able to teach one of the visiting students how to make it. Thus, the student would learn by watching and helping me, and then be able to teach another of their friends. In this way, lei making knowledge was quickly shared with the entire group. Rather than simply making lei as gifts for the students, they learned the technique themselves. Another community member taught me to make two different kinds of lei by using a combination of native and foreign plants. During the interviews or other events, the community members were often engaged in lei making. On most occasions, they narrated their process and expected me to participate with them.

In addition, I have been participating in Hālau LeiManu, Yuen’s hālau, since January 2017. This is a great opportunity to participate in Hawaiian tradition, including hula, oli, ʻōlelo
Hawai‘i, and moʻolelo. Before learning the oli, Yuen and I talk through the meaning of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, appreciating the poetry and kaona within each. The hālau has weekly meetings for hula practice that usually last two hours. Before hula practice, Yuen would teach a two-hour lei making class. We would participate in an oli kōmo to ask permission to enter the hālau, or before entering the forest to gather our materials. In most cases, Kunihi Ka Mauna was the oli kōmo:

Kūnihi ka mauna i ka laʻi ē
‘O Waiʻaleʻale lā i Wailua
Huke aʻela i ka lani
Ka papa ʻauwai o Kawaikini
Alai ʻia aʻela e Nounou, nalo Kaipuhaʻa
Mai paʻa i ka leo
He ʻole kāhea mai ē

Steep is the mountain in the calm
Waiʻaleʻale is seen from Wailua
Pulled up into the sky is
The bridge to Kawaikini
Nounou hides the view from Kaipuhaʻa
Don’t hold back the voice
There is no response.

Yuen would respond with an oli kāhea to welcome us in. Then we would sit together and practice making lei while Yuen talked story about associated moʻolelo and traditional uses of the plant. Weekly lessons for the haumāna are posted to the hālau’s website.

Photo and Video Documentation

Another way that I use participant observation is by providing video and photo documentation of community events (Appendix H). Hilo Lei Day received a grant to fund the documentation of lei making in a series of videos. Yuen taught me how to properly film these lei making sessions so that various tangible and intangible traditions associated with the lei could be perpetuated in this manner for future cultural practitioners. I helped to prepare, run, and document Lei Day and associated events, which required several weeks of preparation and planning. At the request of Yuen, I organized a community project in which students could come to Lei Day and use their own device to record a lei making session with a community member. The demonstrator could be sharing moʻolelo, oli, or giving instructions. It was Yuen’s desire to
compile these videos into a large whole, that would document Lei Day through the eyes of young people who may have never attended before. This collection is a valuable resource because the data was gathered by the community rather than in an interview process. Through hosting this program, I was able to help them think about potential mechanisms to realize self-empowerment. In the future, there may no longer be a need for academic facilitation as the community becomes self-sufficient in perpetuating its own traditions. This is why Yuen is passionate about training young people in documentation skills. She prioritizes intergenerational sharing and empowering the next generation so that traditions may live on. A future project could analyze the content of these videos, which might have a different emphasis than interactions during a more formalized interview. The kinds of data gathered here are different than expected: they were more focused on techniques than moʻolelo. While this content is not systematically included in this thesis, perhaps it can be made available to future students interested in additional analyses.

I also observed the 2018 Merrie Monarch Festival, where the tradition of the lei was on display. I attended all three nights of the Festival: Miss Aloha Hula, Hula Kahiko (formal hula with ceremony), and Hula ʻAuana (informal hula without ceremony or offering). Each night I had my notebook and pen on my lap, so that I could take notes on the hula, attire, happenings, lei, and setting. While photography is not allowed during the performances, I took pictures during commercial breaks, before, and after the end of each evening. At the close of each night, I lingered to observe the flow of hālau leaving Edith Kanakaʻole Stadium. I also attended the Craft Fair and the Royal Parade. For their performances, the hula ʻōlapa (dancers) donned lei associated with their chosen song or chant. These lei revealed more about the moʻolelo behind each performance.
Talanoa

In addition to these methods, I also engage in a distinctive Hawaiian methodology that is similar to the Tongan practice of talanoa (Vaioleti 2006). Pacific Islanders often feel that Western style research is inconsiderate of their time, boring, and one-sided (Vaioleti 2006:26). Rather than using a rigid outline and formal interview styles that result in the narrator’s discomfort, talanoa is a less structured interaction which is more considerate of the narrator’s time. Both the researcher and the researched can co-construct the conversations. Talanoa also involves conversing with the narrator for so long that research topics eventually come up organically. Talanoa requires a certain amount of reciprocity and rapport, which works to ensure an experience that is positive rather than placing indigenous customs beneath a microscope (Mauss 2000[1923]). For example, when talking with Yuen, she was able to prepare her lā‘ī leaves for lei making, and a few other chores around the house. Another time, I volunteered to help her to host the pā‘ina for the students, and then afterwards I washed the dishes for her while we shared in casual, but meaningful conversation and later, a meal. In this way, the research was less imposing, and Yuen was able to share in the context of her day. Yuen is very open and encouraging of audio recording during our time together. We have discussed this together and decided that I can always have the recorder running and go back to listen to something again at a later time. I have given all recordings to the community for documentation. In this immersive approach, the researcher might operate as a “fly on the wall,” and does not direct the conversations (Vaioleti 2006:24). This technique requires patience and large amounts of time, but it is less intrusive for the narrator, and more immersive for the researcher.

At first, this methodology may seem quite similar to what is known in Hawai‘i as “talk-story” or kūkākūkā (Kahakalau 2004:24). However, there are some key distinctions. Talanoa is
more immersive than the Hawaiian practice of talk-story. Talk-story is a familiar exchange of information that aligns with local Hawaiian tradition. It is a means of conveying information that comes more naturally than a formalized interview. Talk-story creates a more level balance of power, as it is co-created by the interlocutors. However, the Hawaiian version of talanoa that I used for this research goes beyond this practice. Use of talanoa as a methodology in Pacific research is just emerging. Its potential has yet to be realized, especially outside of Tonga. In Hawai‘i, Olawuyi’s (2018) public talk at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa described the prospectus of talanoa dialogue at the intersection of climate change and human rights. He predicts that this methodology that prioritizes trust, relationships, and empathy could be groundbreaking if applied to this issue. McGrath and Ka‘ili (2009) describe the benefits of using talanoa to design a culturally targeted health promotion model to address at-risk US Pacific Islander youths. My project contributes to the emerging applications of applying talanoa in cross-cultural contexts such a Hawai‘i.

It is difficult to estimate the average amount of time I spent with Yuen in this talanoa capacity since it varied each week depending on what kind of events were happening. Generally, the total number of hours ranged from 4 to 20 hours each week. There were regular and non-regular events. On an average week, there were five regularly occurring events. Together, these weekly happenings would average 8-12 hours total each week. Thursdays had three regular events: first, I attended a two-hour lei making class; second, a two-hour hula class; third, a weekly “tea” meeting with Yuen that could last until 1:30A.M. talking-story. Fourth, the hālau had weekly online content provided by Yuen that would take an additional hour or two to review. Fifth, I tutored Kiriko Redondo, the hālau’s alaka‘i (head student, apprentice) weekly for two months in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i for 1.5 hour video conferences between Hawai‘i and South Korea.
There were additional activities beyond the regularly scheduled weekly events. I estimate the length in hours of each of these non-regular functions. On Saturdays, there was often another event (such as the cultural class at the Visitor Information Station on Mauna Kea, or the pāʻina for students) that could last 2-10 hours. There were also several days of camera training and reviewing example videos (3 hours), afternoons spent tending the garden (2-4 hours), making lei for family (1.5 hours), spontaneous visits to get Yuen’s mail and talk-story (4 hours), her generously retrieving me from Kona airport and driving back to Hilo (2 hours), hālau members’ birthday parties (2 hours). During the months before Lei Day, there was a sharp increase in the amount of time Yuen and I spent together. I would accompany her in her vehicle as she completed errands around town and talked story (2 hours), I attended planning meetings for Lei Day and met with the organizers at the East Hawaiʻi Cultural Center (2 hours), we spent many days helping the hula dancers, including Kiriko, to practice their performances and construct their performance attire (10 hours), I taught another hālau member to sew and make a practice skirt (6 hours), and we harvested plant material from Yuen’s garden and transported it to Kalākaua Park for Lei Day (3 hours). After Lei Day itself (10 hours), Yuen and I met to discuss details of the project (3 hours) and though her busy schedule prevented her attending, I met with undergraduate assistants to discuss training and requirements to support the project (2 hours).

Spending such extended amounts of time with Yuen as she went about her day was an invaluable experience that grounded this research culturally.

Engaging in this version of talanoa allowed for a myriad of conversations ranging from recipes, metal working, stories of Yuen’s family, the experience of Kānaka Maoli, earthquakes, traditional moʻolelo, to politics and sovereignty. Because of the freedom in talanoa, our discourse was never limited to interview format or even traditional English dialogue. For ideas
that Yuen was passionate about, we often code-switch to Hawaiian interactions. This could take the form of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, in which words are not limited to one translation, but become poetry through kaona. Occasionally, Yuen remembers words or phrases from her kūpuna, and together we have worked to piece back together some of her memories. Music is common in our interactions. Yuen is as comfortable singing as she is speaking, and sometimes she chooses music to express herself. She encouraged me to use her piano and work on songs with her. When arriving at Yuen’s house, I stop on the landing and offer a spontaneous oli. When she hears, Yuen will come to the door and respond with her own chant, and then welcome me into her home. It has been valuable to share in these immersive aspects of culture and life with her.

Talanoa entails long hours of being with an individual or group. This was typical of my relationship with Yuen. It was not uncommon to spend more than 12 hours a week with Yuen. Since she had previously given me permission to record our conversations, it became the routine to often leave the recorder on during these hours. Of course, if there was more work, and little talk being done, the recorder might not have been turned on. For example, there are no recordings of the pā‘ina for the students because of heavy rain that might have damaged equipment. It was not possible to capture all of these moments, because many were spontaneous and the varied nature of our work meant that I might not always have the recorder on hand. Often times I would receive a text or phone call to come to Yuen’s house for various happenings, and I was not always able to bring the recording device. Another problem was that due to the lengthy nature of talanoa, my recording device ran out of memory. On these occasions, Yuen offered her device to record instead. I followed up to get a copy of these recordings, and some of them were transcribed and analyzed in this thesis. These specific recordings were chosen because they represented the most intentional conversations about lei and associated traditions. Yuen’s
husband was able to join in on one conversation, which added an additional layer of complexity to the conversation. One of these interviews was planned, the other was entirely spontaneous, which is more in keeping with the nature of this Hawaiian talanoa and my relationship with Yuen. These two conversations focused most on answering the research questions designed for this project, which explores the perpetuation of the lei making tradition.

Sometimes these talanoa sessions were related to lei and associated practices. For example, I attended Lei Day planning meetings and then accompanied Yuen around town on a variety of errands. I assisted Yuen in tending her lei plant garden, and in harvesting various plant material for hālau events. There were many days devoted to preparing for Lei Day itself, including practices for performances, and readying holokū. We spent one afternoon reviewing video submissions for the Lei Day lei making contest. Myself and another hālau member assisted Yuen in painting a mural at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station. This mural designed by Yuen featured Makaliʻi, or the Pleiades constellation. In a spontaneous moment while we were cleaning the garden, Yuen used the cuttings of ʻiwa‘iwa and kupukupu (two types of ferns) to create a lei poʻo wili (a lei worn on the head, formed from twisting together strands of plant material) She bestowed this beautiful lei upon me, and I was followed by its fragrance all day. A few weeks later, Yuen helped me make a similar lei for my mother who was visiting. Instead of giving me instructions, she videoed as I “learned by doing,” and then when I encountered challenges, she offered guidance to improve my weaving. Yuen allowed me to interview her for an oral history project, which is analyzed, along with a joint interview with her husband, Manu. While there were many sessions to choose from, I had to select for this project the pieces that would be most relevant.
Thursdays were devoted to regular talanoa sessions: Weekly hula lessons expanded to include a lei making class beforehand, and then “tea” afterwards at Ken’s, a local restaurant open 24 hours a day, which meant that we were often there into the late hours of the night and even early morning. During these sessions, Yuen would talk about her family history, share her thoughts on tourism and recipes, offer life advice, and sometimes of course share her manaʻo about the lei or associated practices. Almost every Saturday, Yuen had a cultural event planned for the hālau. Each month, she and her husband Manu Josiah would lead a cultural class at Maunakea Visitor Information Station. We began the day by meeting at noon at Puʻu Huluhulu. There at the ahu, we would offer several oli. Then we hiked up Puʻu Huluhulu, where Yuen would point out native species and share their traditional significance. Then, we continued up the mountain, and helped set up for the cultural class. We were also able to go on an additional walk to see the silver sword. I assisted Yuen and Manu as they shared Hawaiian culture to visitors from around the world, and taught them how to make lei lāʻī hilo. Once the class was over, other hālau members and I helped to clean up and pack the car. Then, we gathered again so that Yuen could tell us moʻolelo about the stars.

Sometimes, our conversations had nothing to do with lei or my project, but were simply based on enjoying friendship and rapport building. For example, one afternoon Yuen asked if I would take her mail to the post office for her. Another evening, we shared drinks after working in her garden, and deepened our mutual friendship through our conversations about difficult life struggles we each had faced. Even though every moment was not spent discussing the topic of my work, talanoa relies on the building of relationships and trust. Even in these moments, the conversation would often drift to matters related to my research. Because I was present, I was able to witness conversations about topics I never would have been able to hear otherwise.
The immersive nature of talanoa creates a give-and-take relationship. My abilities were called upon to help teach ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i to hālau members, including Kiriko Redondo. The bulk of my work with Kiriko took place in Spring 2018, during which time I met with her weekly for an hour and a half on VSee, a program similar to Skype. During these sessions, we would practice learning and speaking ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. I planned weekly lessons and homework for Kiriko, and helped her find new materials with which to practice. I also helped another hālau member to purchase materials for practice skirts, and then taught her how to use the sewing machine. Several days were dedicated to the process of showing and helping her to make her pāʻū (a practice hula skirt).

Of course due to time constraints, not every task could be undertaken. Yuen had wanted me to bring six friends and assist in moving her kiln to a more accessible location. She suggested that I should help her clean up the old shack on her property and consider moving in. When the Lower East Rift Zone on Kīlauea erupted in May 2018, Yuen asked if I could help her clean out her storage unit and take mattresses to be donated to help the evacuated residents of Leilani Estates. She offered me a job working for her to sew dresses, make jewelry, and sell them at the market. She was asked to do a cultural survey on Mauna Kea, and suggested that I help her in this task. In order to relieve me of various commitments, Yuen placed a kapu (special privilege or exemption) upon me during a committee meeting. This means that I was not expected to attend hula, lei making classes, and hālau events. This extreme immersive nature of talanoa methodology is similar to many researchers. For example, anthropologist Gearing (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002) began a romantic relationship and eventual marriage with her primary informant on the island of St. Vincent. Good (1997) spent ten years with the Yanomami during which he was adopted into the tribe, married to a Yanomami woman, and had several children. Known for
her collaboration with many ethnobotanists, shamans, and Mestizo folk curanderos, Dobkin de Rios (2009) accrued 45 years in South America studying traditional uses of ayahuasca and its medicinal applications. Each demonstrate long-term cultural anthropological immersion.

Malinowski’s (1922) fieldwork showed how immersing oneself into another culture and becoming a speaker of that culture’s language allows a researcher to both understand his or her own biases and gain insight into the native perspective without “going native” or losing oneself within that culture’s worldview. Bernard (2006) commented on this idea of anthropologists losing themselves within the communities they study. He did not believe that total immersion into the lives of informants results in a loss of objectivity. Rather, being with informants day-to-day allows insight on the way that individuals interact with a community, and how they react to situations. It gives researchers context and understand the significance of conversations, hidden meanings, motivations, and differences in gender, age, and class. Immersion empowers the researcher to represent a community with greater accuracy and depth.

Interviews

Six interviews were conducted for this project (Appendix E). The original intent for this project was to follow the parameters of Yuen’s grant funded project, for which we would jointly contact members of the community and ask them if they would be interested in being featured in one of the videos for the project. However, because the grant failed to provide support, and restrictive academic timelines did not afford time to await further resolution, the committee advised that I should contact alternative lei makers for interviews that could be used.
Participant Selection

The selection process of participants varied. I intended to involve lei makers from a variety of backgrounds, traditions, and levels of kaulana (the state of renown). Three of these individuals were already acquaintances of mine. One was a former student. Another I was able to connect with because he is Yuen’s husband. Others were the product of community networking. Members of the community who were familiar with my work were quick to point me in the right direction. Yow (2015:L2169) describes this process as “snowball” selection. In several instances, friends told a lei maker they knew about my thesis project. If they were interested, I was able to follow up on these leads. In one instance, contact was made through a chain of two third parties. My acquaintance informed me of her friend whose family were longtime friends of a family of well-known lei makers. Thus, it was a process of working within the networks of the community to reach participants. In some cases, individuals were understandably hesitant or cautious. I ensured they were made aware of all details and possible uses of the data that would be collected, as well as the fact that there was no obligation on their part to participate. In these instances, where there was no previous connection between myself and the lei maker, a third party operated as a go-between. They were able to share details about the project with the potential participants, and if they were interested, they gave the third party permission to pass along their contact information.

Participants were contacted according to their preferred means. I assured them that I could always be reached if they had any questions or concerns. For the individuals who I had an existing relationship with, I contacted them by phone, text message, email, and in person. For those participants who I was yet unacquainted with, a third party provided an introduction. Usually this third party described the project, and the interested lei makers could provide a
means of contacting them that the third party would pass on to me. For example, one third party was a long standing friend of a potential participant, and referred the participant to me. This third party and I communicated through email while she and her friend were able to speak in person. She reported back to me that her friend was interested and gave me her contact information. In another instance, a third party met a lei maker at their place of work, and described the project to them. This lei maker told the third party that if I was interested, I could find him at his next lei making workshop, or at his place of work. This participant never shared contact details. All of our communications have been in person in deference to his preference.

Locations for the interviews were selected by the participant based on their comfort and convenience. This sometimes required significant travel to meet them. Most participants wanted to meet at their homes. Due to his busy schedule, one was less interested in setting up a formal interview, but told me that I could speak with him at his monthly lei making workshop.

Thus, each interview began with clarifying the rights of the participants and setting the tone for an ethically-grounded interview. I gave each a consent form (Appendix B) which made them aware of the risks of participating, that they could ask to skip any question, or stop the interview at any time. The Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-822 was turned on the start of each conversation. Prior to the beginning of the interview, each participant was given a consent form. This allowed them to state what level of privacy they preferred, if they wanted their real name used, and had a section where they gave individual approval for video, audio, and photos. Each interview was conducted according to the standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which included certification through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative.

At the start of each interview, I offered each participant a small makana (gift). These were usually a small food item that could be easily transportable, like specialty butter or jam. In
other instances, I brought fish and poi, which required the use of a cooler to keep these items fresh on the long drive.

Each interview was designed to last 1-2 hours. However, the longest interview lasted 3 hours, at the discretion of the participant. Some individuals were interviewed more than once in order to attain greater depth. For example, Yuen was interviewed twice. Each of her interviews total about 1.5 hours, or 3 hours total. Another participant was initially interviewed over the phone for 35 minutes, which was followed up with a 2.5 hour interview in person. Some interview participants were unable to give so much of their time, and so we limited our conversation to the 1-2 hour window. However, each made it clear that I could follow up with further questions at a later time. One interview was conducted with two participants simultaneously. This was with Yuen and her husband Manu Josiah. Yuen and I were about 30 minutes into a conversation when Josiah arrived home from work and Yuen invited him to join us. This style of interview in which spouses participate together is described in Yow (2015:L2490) as “conjoint interviews.” The benefit of simultaneously interviewing two individuals who have a long standing relationship is that they may think of questions, stories, or examples with which the interviewer is unfamiliar. This method relies on the interplay of the two subjects and adds depth to the conversation in a way that could not be elicited by the interviewer alone. Interviews were semi-structured (Yow 2015:2080), which means that broad questions were formulated in advance, but the flow of the conversation may spark other questions.

**Questions**

Questions were formulated in a way that would draw out themes including tourism, agency, perpetuation, and fragmentation. I used these questions to create an interview guide,
although additional sections that were tailored to a person’s background were added during each interview. Often times I was not able to look at the script during the actual interview because I needed to connect with the participant. In preparation, I would review the interview guide (Appendix C) and commit the main ideas to memory so that I could recall them in the moment. Each person was very different in how our conversation began. Some were more comfortable working with their hands (making lei or working with metal crafts). I used semi-structured open-ended questions that prompted the individuals, but let them determine what was important to share. I began the conversation with: “In what ways do you think lei making may have changed since your childhood?” This opened with an opportunity for the participants to describe their family history at whatever level of detail they felt comfortable. Then I continue to more specific questions such as: “Do you have any concerns about lei making knowledge being passed down to the next generation? If so, can you describe these concerns?” Agency is a challenging concept to draw out. In order to understand whether this theme is present, I asked the participants: “What motivates you in the lei making process?” This allowed them to describe their priorities without presenting them with a leading question.

Transcription and Approval Process

I transcribed each of the six interviews using Olympus transcription software (AS-2400) and returned the draft of each transcript to the respective participant. This was their opportunity to make any clarifications or adjustments to their script, which could include the spelling of names, the omission of certain parts later, or the addition of something new. This ensured that participants were given every ability to review and edit their transcripts. Edited transcripts were returned to me with signed Transcript Release forms. Each transcript contained several areas that
needed clarification. I highlighted each of these and directed each participant to them in our correspondence. Usually these issues were related to words being garbled due to wind, music, passing cars, dogs barking, or a spouse entering. Once the requested alterations were made, the final approved versions were shared with the participants. In several instances, this process was conducted via email, but I worked with each individual according to their preference. For example, one participant desired that if I needed to contact him, I could find him in person at his place of business; he provided no email or phone details. I drove to meet another participant in person to collect their signed Transcript Release forms (Appendix B). This process took about four months to complete.

Analysis

Applying Grounded Theory

I used grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Hussein 2014) to process and analyze the quantitative information collected in the transcripts. After transcribing each interview, I reviewed each transcript identifying different ideas and themes that were discussed. This was in no particular order or level of specificity. Next, I re-read the transcripts and tried to see if any ideas were repeated. I then took each of these ideas and compiled them all into a list in no particular order. I began to consider how these themes might be related to each other, and whether some might be larger, or more general than others. This led to the eventual creation of a themes hierarchy—a list of major themes divided into sub-themes.

This list went through several drafts to reach its final version. This was an iterative process that involved shifting between interview transcripts and emerging codes. I first developed a hierarchy with major themes, including cultural sharing, community, continuity and
change, and agency. I further divided these into sub-themes, such as intergenerational sharing, apprenticeships, sharing with guests, and the desire to document traditions. I returned to the text to further analyze and develop this framework. At the community’s request, I included a section for lei traditions and associated practices, which included sub-themes such as printing, gathering, kapa (traditional Hawaiian bark cloth), moʻolelo, hula, names, and farming. I would read through the transcripts again and attempt to categorize each section into one or more themes. After each successive reading and analysis, the themes framework became solidified and clear. Sub-sub themes even began to emerge as the ideas were better incorporated, for example, lei as a mnemonic device for them transmission of knowledge, sentiments of frustration, community pride, hard times, and the “good old days.” Eventually I reached a point where almost all information was able to be associated with the themes hierarchy. At this point, I assigned a code to each level of the hierarchy. For example, one code is the idea of plants being associated with a place. Some sections were very heavily coded, having as many as five different classifications within the hierarchy. Other sections were clearly associated with a single theme or code. This was a lengthy process. The reviewing of the transcripts with each successive version of the themes hierarchy took about 12 hours. Sometimes during this process, a new theme would emerge, and I would place it within the coded themes hierarchy. This happened even late in the process owing to the level of my immersion within the qualitative data that would sometimes offer new understanding.

Coding in NVivo

NVivo is a program that is used to code and process large amounts of qualitative data. I used the NVivo12 Plus version to assist in organizing and analyzing. The first step was to
familiarize myself with the program by watching a series of video tutorials found online, beginning with NVivo by QSR (2018). When I was ready to input the data, I began by creating a series of “Nodes” or levels of coding that would refer to each level of the themes hierarchy. During this process I decided to add one additional node, revitalization. Once the nodes were ordered according to size, imported each of the six approved versions of the transcripts. I began combing through and assigning each sentence, paragraph, or idea to its appropriate Node. NVivo allows the researcher to build a database of all the references, so at any time the raw data coded for each node for all interviews can be viewed.

Once this was finally completed, the next step was to use NVivo’s ability to organize data into various analytical models. I determined which ones would be the most helpful to represent the results of this project. I was able to create tree maps, which output hierarchical data into different sized nested rectangles, generated according to the amount of coding at each Node. This information can also be represented in a sunburst. Each level of the hierarchy is represented in a series of concentric rings that surround the pie chart. These are most helpful in understanding which themes were the strongest, as evidenced in the number of times it was coded, or based on the percentage of text that was coded. NVivo allowed me to do a series of queries based on the relationship of ideas, or the frequency that certain words were used. For example, it was clear that a large portion of the text of the transcripts was concerning the various processes of lei making. Overall, the thematic hierarchy of the NVivo coding forms the basis of my main results, which are presented and contextualized with the other methodological approaches in Chapter 4.
Through the grounded theory analysis of the interview transcripts, five major themes emerged, each with sub-themes (ST) that further divided into sub-sub-themes (SST), and some that further divide into sub-sub-sub-themes (SSST). The five major themes include cultural sharing, community, continuity and change, lei making and associated traditions, and agency. I am choosing selective interview quotes within each thematic hierarchy to be representative of those ideas (Appendix E). I designed the interviews in such a way as to elicit participants’ stories and understandings of most of the broad themes. However, many participants explained various nuanced details of lei making even when not prompted, which speaks to the importance they attached to the sharing of such cultural knowledge. In some cases, they discuss broader aspects of Hawaiian culture not always directly tied to lei traditions. Based upon the community’s expressed desire to capture the cultural traditions affiliated with lei making in detail, I designed the theme of lei making to serve as a repository of their cultural knowledge. This latter theme resonates with the community’s understandings of heritage management. This chapter largely focuses on the other four major theme to understand the shifting traditions and meanings of lei making as a site of tourism. This analysis shows how lei makers balance their obligations to documenting tradition with the opportunities afforded by tourism.

In Chapter Two I provided a critical discussion of tourism in Oceanic indigenous communities; however, in the transcripts, the Kānaka Maoli interlocutors are not often explicit about difficulties they encounter in tourism. In most conversations with the Kānaka Maoli lei makers, it seemed as though they assumed as a researcher I was entering in from an educated, even sympathetic standpoint. Thus, they may not have felt that it was necessary to explain themselves in this way. Otherwise, it could be that these Kānaka Maoli lei makers do not
consciously think about colonialism, which may be implicit in their reality. Sometimes the interlocutors did describe their frustrations, but in most instances, they were alluded to rather than directly referenced. Sometimes frustration was evident in body language, such as a moment of silence, hesitation, or certain gestures that intimated deeper feelings. In ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, meaning is conveyed indirectly through kaona, references to places, and metaphors. Thus in the transcripts, the fraught nature of tourism and the agency in the community’s responses are more subtle.

I interviewed five lei makers. Yuen’s background has been described previously. She is a kumu hula, artist, and cultural historian. I interviewed Yuen on two occasions, the duration of each was one and a half hours. Yuen’s husband Manu Josiah, a Kanaka Maoli from Kohala on Hawai‘i Island, is an artist and musician. He joined the second interview with Yuen. Kāhili Hahn identifies as a haole born and raised in Puna on Hawai‘i Island, with German, Irish, French, Dutch, and Swedish roots. I interviewed her once for three hours. She is an artist, a costume and jewelry designer, and a real estate agent. Of the participants, Hahn is a less traditional lei maker. She has a degree in fashion design and enjoys using a large variety of plants and materials to develop her own styles of lei. While she was mentored by a lei maker, she gained much of her knowledge through experience—by simply diving in and experimenting with plant materials until she achieves her desired results. Randy L. is a Kanaka Maoli lei seller with ancestors from China, Russia, and Waimanu and Waipiʻo Valleys on Hawai‘i Island. He has living relations on O‘ahu. I interviewed Randy L. once for an hour and a half. Kanaka Maoli Roen Hufford is the daughter of the late Marie Adams McDonald, who was a well known homestead flower grower and lei maker, formerly of the Department of Parks and Recreation in Honolulu. Hufford’s family is intimately connected to the business of flower growing and lei sales. McDonald started
her flower business in Kailua, Oʻahu and helped her daughter Hufford open her own health and flower shops selling what McDonald grew. Later Hufford and her husband Ken moved to Kauaʻi where she worked for her aunt’s floral business. McDonald mentored her children, nieces, and nephews in lei making. In 1978, McDonald established Honopua Farm in Waimea. McDonald’s family describes her in her obituary (Honolulu Star Advertiser 2019) as:

a published author of Ka Lei, the Leis of Hawaiʻi, and Nā Lei Makamae (with Paul Weissich). Marie earned much recognition for her work with lei and kapa, honored by the City of Honolulu, the State of Hawaiʻi, the Honopa Hongwanji, OHA, Mamo, Hawaiʻi Arts Alliance, and the Smithsonian Institution. As an art educator endeavoring to foster their creative potential, she is fondly remembered by her and her many students and colleagues.

The transcripts from each of these interviews can be found in Appendix E.
Table 1. Coding Scheme and Total Number of Mentions in the Transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Sub-sub-theme</th>
<th>Sub-sub-sub-theme</th>
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<td>ST T1. Continuity and Change (444)</td>
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<td>ST A. Business (117)</td>
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<td>SST i. Professionalization of Lei Making (79)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Monetary Motivation (29)</td>
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<td>SST iii. Grant-Funded Cultural Practitioners (9)</td>
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<td>ST B. Continuity of Tradition (71)</td>
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<td>SST i. Place (49)</td>
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<td>SSST a. Plants Associated with Place (38)</td>
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<td>SSST b. Place Informs Technique (11)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Changing Materials (22)</td>
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<td>ST C. Fragmentation (69)</td>
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<td>SST i. Loss (44)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Language (19)</td>
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<td>SST iii. Perceived Mis-interpretation of Tradition (6)</td>
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<td>ST D. Shift in Resources (63)</td>
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<td>SST i. Good Old Days of Backyard Sellers/Growers (31)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Finding in Nature (17)</td>
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<td>SST iii. Today Buying from Others (15)</td>
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<td>SST iii. Kuleana to Grow Your Own (16)</td>
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<td>SST iv. Misuse of Resources (5)</td>
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<td>ST F. General Change Over Time (40)</td>
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<td>ST G. Revitalization (13)</td>
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<td>T2. Cultural Sharing (388)</td>
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<td>ST A. Inter-Generational Sharing (200)</td>
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<td>SST i. ʻOhana (88)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Thoughts on Kaona (33)</td>
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<td>SST iii. Thoughts on Stories (25)</td>
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<td>SST iv. Resilience of Oral Tradition (22)</td>
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<td>SST v. Learning Specific Dialects/Language/Vocabulary (14)</td>
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<td>SST vi. Lei as a Mnemonic Device for the transmission of knowledge (13)</td>
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<td>SST vii. Lei as a reason to gather (5)</td>
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<td>ST B. Mentoring (62)</td>
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<td>SST i. An Apprentice is Taught a Skill Set Over Time (47)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Mentoring in Long-term Groups (15)</td>
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<td>ST C. Sharing through Community Events (60)</td>
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<td>SST i. Community Sponsored Events (35)</td>
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<td>SST ii. Workshops (25)</td>
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<td>ST D. Learn by Doing (35)</td>
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ST E. Sharing with Guests (22)
   SST i. Sentiments of Frustration (15)
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T 3. Community (187)
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   ST B. Desire to Document Traditions (47)
      SST i. Photos (25)
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T 4. Agency (111)
   ST A. Connection to Cultural Beliefs (28)
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T 5. Lei Traditions and Associated Practices (530)
   ST A. Lei (256)
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   ST C. Gathering (42)
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   ST F. Farming (15)
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Continuity and Change (N=444)

The traditions associated with the lei have gone through many defining moments throughout the last century, including the pressure to Westernize Hawaiian culture (PBS Hawai‘i 2007), the emergence and refinement of the business of lei making as a response to the rise of mass tourism (Hodges 1986:xxxvi), the specialization of lei making, and the changing environment. While some practices have been altered or discontinued, others thrive. The theme of continuity and change is present in seven ST: fragmentation, continuity of tradition, the environment, business, shifts in resources, general change over time, and revitalization. This is the second largest theme, after the section on lei making traditions and associated practices, which is included at the end of this chapter. That this is the second largest theme resonates with McDonald’s (1978:174) expressed confidence that the lei tradition will continue, despite modifications over time.

Business

I recognize three components (SSTs) that contribute to the idea of business: including monetary motivation, the professionalization of lei making, and grant-funded cultural practitioners. All these ideas have to do with moving away from lei in their most traditional sense, which required no compensation. Lei making has become in some ways a more specialized process, needing a specific infrastructure to support it. This is an indication of the concomitant centrality of capitalism in the colonial process.
Professionalization of Lei Making

Regarding the professionalization of lei making, Hufford describes how she and her family created their flower and lei business model. It involved making connections with lei plant growers and developing relationships with customers and employees. Having worked alongside her mother, Marie McDonald, Roen Hufford shares her experiences of developing the family business:

Okay, we were living on Kaua‘i...we were living on O‘ahu when she first started in the flower business, and one of the reasons she helped me get started in the flower business even though I didn’t want to, I mean I had worked in florists before, you know, so I guess there was that deep seated desire to have my own flower shop. And so she made it happen by loaning me some retirement money from her first profession, and we bought a friend’s flower shop, and part of the reason was so she could send me flowers and I could sell the flowers that she grew! Um, so we were all tied up in this together. And lived there and worked for the people, I was still in the flower business, I was working for my aunt in her flower shop. Cuz that’s something…it just kind of runs in the family, and um, if anybody knows anything about us, my mother was very generous in sharing her skills with everybody in the family in fact she insisted that, you should learn how to make leis, you know.

You got to meet not only the vendors who made—not only the backyard growers who made things like ‘ilima and pikake, or um, the lady down the street who grew lots of palai, so you wouldn’t have to you know go hiking for your fern—you got to meet them. And then you got to meet the people who wanted those particular items. And, in my flower shop, Mrs. Meyer would come in and it was like, “Mrs. Meyers is coming! Mrs. Meyers is coming! No bows!” You know, it was like, (imitating authoritative voice) “Mrs. Meyer doesn’t like bows on her leis.” So you know, that kind of thing. So you got to know what you customers liked, and you tried to have, you know especially in the spring time when the demand was great, you had to have the whole variety, a big inventory, you know, just everything available.

...And so I learned all about puakenikeni. From [Mrs. Cobb-Adams], and how, you know, it was a great lei for shipping, because you know it didn’t require to be refrigerated, blahblahblah... and you know just the whole thing, learning how to take care of all the lei flowers. Not just that I learned from my mom, but I learned from being in, in the flower shop. I learned from my employees who worked for the lady who owned the flower shop before, and I learned from my customers who told me what they wanted, so...

I don’t think [the shop is] still there, I know, I sold it to an employee, and she sold it to another, employee, you know...We got a lot of guys out of hot water. You know (laughing). And we got, we sold a lot of leis, you know, for canoe races on the weekend, cuz I opened on Sunday morning. I had a girl come in, and she knew how to sell. She would just sell everything out, so on Monday I wouldn’t have anything. You know I’d have to start new flowers…Yeah, so she was good at making deals with people, so she would
sell all the leis to the canoe families...So, but one day, some elderly fellow mistook the accelerator for the brake. And went straight out of the exit and into our building. But...didn’t go into my flower shop. It went into the sandwich shop next door!...And they had just gotten their bread delivered, there was bread all over the side walk. And then another night, um we had a call from the police that uh, we lived in Kahalu‘u, that somebody, you know there was a bar around the corner, that somebody had gotten into a fight, and some guy threw another guy through my plate glass window. So there was, my store was a broken window. So...then there was a flood on Valentine’s Day.

It was a very intense kind of business; cuz you’re working with a perishable material on a timeline. I remember one graduation, the door to my walk-in was open constantly, so it was warmer in the walk in than it was in the shop. And so the leis, we just had to get them out of there. And so that kind of thing. We were making carnation leis in the back parking lot. I don’t know if they still do that, you know. Mainly because I know, one year we went to Denver for a health food convention, and we drove from Los Angeles to Michigan. And we dropped in, we came into Denver, and you could smell the carnations. But they don’t grow them anymore like that. The flower market has shifted to Central and South America. Okay, so my neighbors down the road have a flower shop, and they don’t even provide heads back in the eighties, you could still buy carnation heads. You could buy two cases, the box is as big as this table, and this deep. You could order two cases, it would come in mixed colors, and you could make all your double leis, all your single leis, all your mixed leis, you can make a lot of money off of those carnations if you got them made and into your refrigerator so they wouldn’t go to sleep. Cuz carnations, flowers give off, they’re very sensitive to ethylene gas. So, you never store fruits (which give off a whole lot of gas) and flowers together. You keep ‘um separate, because it will make the flowers fade.

[Blue jade] is a wonderful looking lei, and you wonder why we don’t use it? It’s because there’s hair on it, and it’ll make you very itchy and irritate you. But the blue jade is different. And where in nature do you get that color? You think about it, and it changes color with the day. Puakenikeni changes, so first day you don’t put it in the refrigerator. Second day you don’t put it in the refrigerator. You leave it all at room temperature, you just make sure it’s damp, third day you can refrigerate it and extend it for another two days. Yeah, puakenikeni, when it’s ivory colored, that’s the first day. So you just damp paper towel, damp paper towel (sandwiched) over it. My lady used to always carry it in an aluminum roadster. I said, “Well, a plastic bin with a lid so it doesn’t dry out, will work nice.” And then you kept it, just made sure it was damp, two days, if you didn’t sell it by then on the third day when it was orange, after that day you would put it in the refrigerator... I think they like the second day where it’s kind of in between that ivory color and orange-orange. And you’ll know a good lei maker cuz there won’t be any bruises on there...Another kind of lei is to do humupapa (a technique where a lei is sewn to a backing, like feather lei) a lot. Cuz you can use different kinds of leaves, different textures and colors of leaves, and if you make a humupapa lei, you know, they can be laid flat on each other! The storage is easy, you know. And you can make those well in advance. This [picture] was taken at my flower shop, the manicurist next door posed for this picture. All the different ways you could string kīkā, you know, cuz I had a number of vendors who would make all these. I said, “I don’t care, you can make them anyway you want.” So here this is the, you know, the typical flower shop lei wrapped with the strand of rose buds, or we made these little clusters of rose bud with baby’s breath and we would wire them on to
the maile lei so they look like this. So you could get flowers in the maile lei. So that’s what this idea was to show was...But you know there’s all kinds of ways to do it. It’s just, if somebody wants to do that, and if somebody wants to purchase that.

...That’s how I would sell it at my flower shop. Then I had a lady who was a backyard grower of the drobiiums (dendrobiums). And the flowers that she would come in, they were just incredible. So, at Mothers’ Day I would say, “Give me 20 singles, and 20 doubles.” They would come in and there would be brown ones and green ones, ones with...I mean just the most--and I would, I just put ‘em in a box and send ‘em away, you know. So these are the Micronesian leis. These are really fancy ones, and she’s the lei maker. She’s the weaver. So here we did all these combos, you know, And I-I, they still do that, you know.

When we lived on Kaua‘i, there were a few girls who [sold leis] for their nighttime jobs. They would have stem roses, they’d have pīkake, and pakalana. And would have if they felt that they were going to make a good sale, we’d make them a lei po‘o you know that they could carry in their baskets. You would have a basket with a various assortment of leis.

Yes, the biggest concern is the availability of the materials. Like if you look at it from a commercial perspective, there are less and less people who are inclined to grow lei flowers, that killed the florists market. For instance--So, there was a time when I had a retail florist, and that was my bread and butter was to make leis. And you know, that was on O‘ahu many years ago. I know that experience where I needed to send flowers, my mother wanted to send flowers to a funeral on O‘ahu. She asked me to call the florist. Her first choice was to send a lei. Of course, as it would happen, this funeral was on Mother’s Day. There’s Mother’s Day, there’s always a prom, there’s Mother’s Day itself, somebody decides they’re going to get married, and then somebody has the misfortune of dying and having a funeral so (laughing). The florist that I called, I had been out of the business for a long time. I just looked on the internet and called one that looked interesting. And a lei was just out of the question. Much less something like a simple bouquet of gardenias, was just out of the question. And so you know, from the florists’ perspective, there’s just not enough flowers being grown locally for that market. So that’s the biggest change. I’m a child of the sixties, I was born in 1950, so going down to Maunakea Street, there was just lots of leis down there, and all kinds of leis. And many of the lei sellers, they had contacts with people who grew the flowers just in their backyard. So there was a lot of supply.

Hufford’s narrative describes how the business of lei making is connected to family and community. As Hufford’s business grew, she developed relationships with neighbors who grew the kinds of flowers she needed. While this meant fewer hikes to gather supplies, it strengthened community bonds. Customers came to depend on Hufford’s steady supply of flowers, and they would expect Hufford to have their “usual” lei or arrangement reserved for them. Hufford shares the challenges of working with perishable goods, and describes some of the most trying times...
when someone drove their car through the building. Overall, she relied on a web of community and family connections to support her and benefited from knowledge they shared.

I observed the professionalization of the lei in my time with the participants and also in my own experience working with Aloha Flower Ladies, a small company that sells lei around Hilo. I worked for this company for one year, during which time I drove to twenty of Hilo’s hotels, bars, and restaurants to offer lei to locals and tourists alike. Through this position, I learned about the business of lei making including pricing, how to keep lei fresh on the go, and learned the various styles, techniques, and flowers that were incorporated. Besides Hufford’s extensive memories of the business of selling lei, I observed Randy L. twice at his stall at the Hilo Farmers Market. He and several others make lei fresh to sell to customers. They also have lau hala hats, bracelets, and other pieces for sale.

**Monetary Motivation**

Today, lei making is a service that can be exchanged for money. Hodges (1986:xxxiii) recounts that lei selling became profitable in the mid-1800s. Throughout the 1900s lei sales boomed alongside tourism and in response to the Matson Navigation Company establishing regular routes between California and Hawaiʻi and the burgeoning of commercial aviation (Hodges 1986:xxxiv). Lei making offered women much needed income during The Great Depression, particularly in Honolulu, where the Airport Lei Sellers’ Association was later founded (Hodges 1986:xxxv). While some may see monetary motivation as a negative connotation, Gonzalez (2015:179) recognizes the importance of the lei as a source of income for lei makers. Financial compensation allows the interview subjects to support their families, to practice their traditional craft, and achieve goals including attending a university. While some
will undoubtedly find cultural satisfaction in perpetuation of the tradition, money is an ultimate reality. Participants describe how they value their services, and explain their motivations. Hahn emphasizes how lei making has been an important stream of income:

I’m making them for the club to donate as a fundraiser. They’ll probably sell for… I’m not sure on these because we did a lei stand fundraiser before. Usually if you go if you order one on Instagram, there’s all these people who do haku leis and different, more decorative flower crown style rather than any kind of traditional-ness. From $45-75 for the lots of flowers. But this style, you know it’s only one thing, (pink ti) it took me about 45 minutes. Yeah, so I don’t know. Last time they sold them cheap, for 35. So just because it’s easy I might do this kind for 25, I don’t know… [When I needed money before,] luckily I was able to hustle and sell some wreaths. A few years ago all the Wholefoods stores in O‘ahu, two in Maui, they ordered from us, like 90 something wreaths…When I came back from college, I worked as a Flower Girl--what you did!

Randy L. explains his pricing:

Hawaiian leis, nothing quick, it takes a while. So if you go into the market, and if they have these types of leis available, it’ll run you about twenty bucks. That’s what I sell them for at the market… Yes this is the Haumea shells… it’s one of our rarest of our shell leis that we have left in existence. Um, leis like this now, come at a price of, um like they start at like 7,000 up to 25,000. I sell them for three thousand.

When asked what her motivation is in lei making, Roen Hufford replies boldly, “Money.” Her passion is for kapa, but she teaches lei when it will help benefit local schools, or when she needed to support herself. She provides an example of how she used income from lei making to finance her education:

There were a lot of benefits, every time we did this fashion show, it was called, the fashion designer was named Richard Goodwin, and he designed, he had a whole line of wear for Kamehameha Garment Company. I don’t think they exist anymore. So, he did the fashion of the Hawaiian woman over a hundred years, hundreds of years… So leis were woven into it. And so he did it for various events, and so there were different leis for different parts. You know there was one that was worn, lei kino, you know, like side saddle, cuz she wore the regalia of a pā‘ū rider with a hat, a velvet hat, the fleece collar, and there was you know, there were certain leis that had to be made. And so, a red one, a yellow one, a white one, a blue one...you know that kind of thing. So it was kind of, it could be drudgery work, but every set was a little bit different depending on what time of year it was. And I’d get paid for that. That’s how I paid for college! Like I told you, my tuition was only $115 per semester.
Making lei for designer Richard Goodwin was a means for Hufford to support herself and achieve her dreams of a higher education.

I observed that many lei makers sell their stock at the Merrie Monarch Festival Craft Fair. Later in the evening, these lei were either worn to the festival by the purchasers or tucked safely under audience members’ chairs until after the performance when they could adorn friends or family. At the end of the night, the dancers could have so many lei around their neck that their chins would vanish beneath the foliage. Lei purchased at the Craft Fair are convenient for those who travel to attend the Merrie Monarch Festival but want to participate in the tradition of lei wearing and giving. The Craft Fair is an opportunity for lei makers to showcase their skills; however, given that this is one of the largest and most well-known cultural events in Hawai‘i, it is undoubtedly an important contributor to lei makers’ incomes.

Grant-Funded Cultural Practitioners

One way contemporary lei makers support their practice is through grants, like the one received by Yuen. During talanoa sessions, Yuen occasionally spoke of being funded by the Kūkulu Ola grant. She described how she was required to keep track of the number of attendees and regularly report progress. Based on the results, the grant may or may not be given again in the future. Receiving funding from grants allows practitioners to host cultural events for the community, but funding may come with certain conditions. Yuen describes some of the terms of the grant received by Hilo Lei Day:

So ideally we want people to be paying you know, $10—$20 a piece depending on the class. Some of them are more difficult to get materials for...and then, it’s also we’ve worked in, included in the grant is, I am required to give two scholarship positions each, uh, for each class. So you’ve got a scholarship, and then Brooke’s (another haumāna) got a scholarship.
Hufford provides an example of how grants can be used to support revitalization of resources:

Every once in a while they’ll be somebody who…I knew one who went to Civic Club, and I could be wrong if they’re Hawaiian Civic Club. But a group got together and got grant money to build a greenhouse in Honomū, it’s happening right now, where they’re growing maile.

Overall, grants allow some lei makers to afford the necessary supplies and labor of lei making.

**Continuity of Tradition**

Many changes have come to Hawai‘i over the last century, including mass tourism, statehood, immigration, and war. As the Hilo Lei Day community adjusts, parts of lei tradition are carefully perpetuated, while others are able to continue through slight, often necessary, modification. This ST of continuity and change is broken down into the SSTs of changing materials and place.

**Place**

The concept of place, which is deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture, can be understood through the story of Hāloanakalaulakapali. Through prestigious ni‘aupi‘o (“bent coconut midrib;” incestuous couplings of highborn siblings) relations, Wākea (Sky Father) and Papahānaumoku (Earth Mother) conceived their first human offspring, their beautiful daughter Ho‘ohōkūkalani (to create stars in the sky) (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:23). After some time, Wākea desired Ho‘ohōkūkalani, and she gave birth prematurely to Hāloanakalaulakapali (quivering long stalk) (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:23). When Hāloanakalaulakapali’s parents buried him in the earth, he sprouted and became the first kalo plant (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:24). Ho‘ohōkūkalani named her second born child Hāloanakalaulakapali to honor her firstborn and he became the first Kanaka Maoli and Ali‘i Nui (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:24). Thus Kānaka Maoli have a familial relationship
to their ‘āina, which is their elder brother and provider (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:24). It is the traditional kuleana of the younger sibling to care for the older sibling, so Kānaka Maoli culture renders respect and care to the ‘āina (Kame‘eleihiwa 1992:25). This idea of place is explained by Maly and Maly (2005:2) as cultural attachment which “embodies the tangible and intangible values of a culture—how a people identify with, and personify the environment around them. It is the intimate relationship (developed over generations of experiences) that people of a particular culture feel for the sites, features, phenomena, and natural resources etc., that surround them—their sense of place.” Wahi pana (storied places) refer to places that are highly steeped in mo‘olelo and ka‘ao (stories and legends). For example, Maly and Maly (2005:16) describe how Keauhou is storied through its association to Pele. She is credited with shaping the ‘āina with its lua pele (volcano), and developing close relationships with the people of that wahi (place). Wahi kapu are the sacred dwelling places of the akua, such as Pele (Pungetti et al. 2012:91). In another example, Yuen (2016a) describes how Kalākaua Park, the site of Lei Day in Hilo, is a wahi pana. According to Yuen (2016a), the section of land was undeveloped, but it may have served as a resting place for Hāla‘i farmers. In addition, trees grown there were used to construct Pai‘ea Kamehameha’s fleet (Yuen 2016a). Two mana‘o emerge from the SST of place: the idea of plants associated with specific places, and how specific places inform lei making techniques.

It is common in Hawaiian culture to describe plants by where they grow. The pilina o nā mea kanu me ka ‘āina (relationship between plants and the land) is a traditionally important concept for lei makers, who have to remember the exact location where a certain plant can be found. Kāhili Hahn shares how her own namesake is one of these pilina: “Yep, cuz I was named after the kāhili ginger that grows in Volcano.” This process of association is aided by Hawaiian place names, which exist for most of the natural landscape in Hawai‘i. For McDonald’s (1978)
book, each lei was photographed in the ‘āina from which it originated. While flipping through the pages of *Ka Lei* (1978), Hufford could recall specific locations where each plant was harvested, and can describe their fragrances even after many years (Figure 6):

And then there was another lady, I can’t remember her except I met her when my mom moved up here, she was um, she had pīkake in her front yard, she lived in Puakō, and she grew pīkake and ‘ilima….And then, even back in the 80s and 90s there were people who started growing maile in Kaʻū, and down that area, and I think they still, maybe even in Mountain View. I don’t know all those people…And so a lot of the tuberose came from Waimānalo, there were two big growers in Waimānalo, they probably don’t exist anymore, since it’s been you know, 37 years since I’ve been over there. Then there were small orchid growers that would put up a shade house…They grew the baby roses on O‘ahu, near Mililani…There was a time you go up and down Hāmākua, they had lots, Honomū, Onomea, you could see [vireya]. The small farms, and they would grow them…I posted a picture on my Facebook page of some vireya, you know, tropical rhododendrons, Hilo’s got lots of them, right…And they had a place in Waimanalo. They had a patch of ginger… And that was a lei that she, from this place, from Waimea. Mrs. Lekelea, she would just—a lot of the people in this community were associated with the Ranches. So they made leis for all the ranch events, and um, so they knew all the places up mauka to get ‘a’ali‘i and all these wonderful native plants. And so she would make leis. And the colors of those plant materials were just gorgeous, you know. So Mrs., she won a lot of prizes.

The association of place with plants is enduring. Hufford could recall multiple examples with ease. Often a specific individual or group are included in these memories.

Randy L. tells how a species of white ginger was carried by his family from place to place through generations. It was imported from China by his ancestor who liked them so much he took them with him: “My grandfather from Waipiʻo Valley, actually Waimanu Valley, (my home) on this island (the flower grew there). So when he moved from this island to the island of O‘ahu, he actually took the white ginger with him from Waipiʻo.”

Kānaka Maoli knew the land intimately and used what it provided. Handy and Pūkuʻi (1998:6) describes how ‘ohana living within and ahupuaʻa (land division usually extending from the uplands to the sea) practiced an intricate trading system:
ʻOhana living inland (ko kula uka), raising taro, bananas, wauke (for tapa, or barkcloth, making) and olona (for its fibre), and needing gourds, coconuts, and marine foods, would take a gift to some ʻohana living near the shore (ko kula kai) and in return would receive fish or whatever was needed.

Thus, place informs lei making techniques. Hufford expands upon this association:

You know, that’s part, people up here, that’s what they do, they make haku leis, cuz they don’t have string. Fiber plants grow at sea level, right? Hau grows at sea level. Of course, raffia grows in Ben Franklin… You know, yeah, that’s not the only fiber plant, fibers that are available to make leis, so people up here have lots of ferns, so that’s what they make their leis out of, they haku lei. But my mother taught me how to make a lei. If I was in any event, you know if you were down at the seashore, there’s stuff at the seashore. And that she learned from—by talking to the people who lived in those places. I remember she told me she met Nelson Doi, Nelson Doi used to be Lieutenant Governor of the State. He’s passed. He was a very important politician. But Nelson Doi was from this community, he grew up in Kawaihæ. What do they have in Kawaihæ? Kiawe trees (which were introduced in 1827). And so they made their leis out of kiawe flowers. And so she learned that from him. You know, Japanese family, just like any family, you used what you have around you, so that’s what they made their leis out of. And, and you know she was able to use what she had. So, so if we can figure out how people can string up stuff from the environment, and use— they can make leis out of anything. Cuz Hawaiians did that. They made a lei when they traveled from one place to another, to show you that they had been there! I came from Hāmākua and I went through Waipiʻo, and then I went, I went mauka, and then I made another lei when I got higher up, you know. And unfortunately, with Rapid ʻŌhiʻa Death, you know, they took away you know, the staple, of our leis, especially for this island…So like this lei, was gathered down at Kahaluʻu. In um, Kona. We went to get the lei limu kala. Maybe limu kala. Um, this is from here, Hāmākua side. So that’s the color of the lei from this island. These are all, this one we had to do a lot of searching for this one, and this one too. (laughing)…So you stood there during the lei contest, next to all the leis, wearing the leis of the different islands.

And because [my mother] worked for the Parks and Recreation, that was part of her job, to help put on the lei contest. She learned all the different ways to make leis depending on what lei materials were available to you. Because it was her job, but she had that interest anyway.

According to Hufford, Kānaka Maoli made lei from a wide variety of plant materials. Each place came to develop associations with specific lei made with materials common to that area. Just as ʻōhiʻa lehua is affiliated with Pele and Hawaiʻi Island. This is why Rapid ʻŌhiʻa Death (ROD) was devastating to Hawaiʻi island lei makers.
The Hilo Lei Day community connects to history through the space of Kalākaua Park. As the site of the original Hilo town square, it has been the home of Lei Day since its inception on Hawai‘i Island. While Lei Day began in O‘ahu, the Hilo Lei Day festival has been a way for the town to celebrate its own heritage. Yuen and Josiah performed several songs that were written to honor Lei Day in Hilo, such as “Hilo, My Home Town.” In talanoa with Yuen, she imparted her intention to establish a Friends of Kalākaua Park organization that could be a sister organization to the Friends of Lili‘uokalani Gardens, another park dedicated to an ali‘i. The Merrie Monarch, King Kalākaua is remembered for reviving hula. Thus, the Merrie Monarch Festival was created in his honor. To recognize this ali‘i, Yuen places two lei upon his statue in Kalākaua Park in the opening ceremonies of Lei Day. I observed that one lei is draped on his shoulders, the other encircles his ipu (a drum fashioned from a gourd, used to beat rhythms for hula dancers).

Figure 6. 2 August 2018, Hufford points out family and friends in *Ka Lei* (1978) (Photo by Schuler)
**Changing Materials**

Due to many changes in the environment, shifts in the flower market, and development of land, the lei has evolved. Manu Josiah notes that the lei has changed over time, but the basic tradition still exists. However, he is not pleased with some of the new styles: “You see people wearing condom leis. You see all kinds of different leis, and I guess the older I get, the more, um, the more um, …what’s the word I’m looking for, the more insulted I get when I see stuff like that.” Hufford describes how changes in materials over time allow the tradition of the lei to live on:

The flower market has shifted to Central and South America. Okay, so my neighbors down the road have a flower shop, and they don’t even provide heads back in the eighties, you could still buy carnation heads… But like I said, the main thing that lei makers are faced with these days was the supply of materials…And what do we like, why do you want to have, what’s the first thing you do when you pick up a flower? You stick it in your nose! You want it to have fragrance. And that’s what the Hawaiians—they’re very sensory oriented people. The leis had to look good, they had to smell good, they had to move nicely, you know. So, many of the flowers are being bred to make lots of flowers, or to make flowers that last longer, or flowers that are wonderful colors, but they don’t smell…But they don’t have choice. Just like orchid leis now come from Thailand. They come already made from Thailand!

Generations of breeding flowers to maximize product led to loss of their characteristic scents.

Due to the demand for lei, flower growing has been outsourced to other countries:

They don’t generally have a good fragrance unless they are the white varieties, you know, but the colorful varieties, you know they almost look like, I don’t wanna say silk flowers, but before—there was plastic, and then there was this kind of um…it was like a fiber material, like a…I don’t know what it was. And then there was silk flowers. That were made into leis to help meet the needs, you know the marketing needs. You know if you have a convention of a thousand people, you need a thousand leis. You know, you could have a fake one, you know. Now it’s kukui nuts, which are processed in the Philippines maybe. And then they take them—they take the leis apart, and they restring them with mock orange leaves in between. Or they put sea grape— you know sea grapes?—in between, you know. I mean, so or they use, aralia (schefflera actinophylla), you know the octopus tree, a red. So I mean, or we made ti leaf leis, so Hawaiians and local people, I don’t want to say just Hawaiians, it’s all kine people, they’ve been very inventive. You know they make a lot of leis out of leaves now, because there are more leaves available.
…But you know, giving a lei is as much for the giver as for the receiver. So it’s important for the person who made the lei—or even bought the lei, it’s important for them. There’s a relationship there. So, as long as we want, as that relationship is important, there will be lei makers. You know they’ll make it out of something. It won’t look like the leis that were made when I was a child.

In light of the many environmental changes affecting Hawai‘i today, some lei makers have found it necessary to change certain materials in lei so that the tradition could continue, if slightly varied. I observed Yuen using materials that would mimic the texture and color of ‘ōhi‘a lehua and maile. In this way, songs referencing certain flowers could still be used at Lei Day.

The Hilo Lei Day community discriminates between native plants and those that have come to Hawai‘i over time. For example, the ‘awapuhi melemele and ke‘oke‘o (yellow and white ginger) was brought by the Chinese prior to 1871, yet it has become a treasured component of lei making, associated with love and love making (McDonald 1978:125). Later in the SST of Kuleana to Use Responsibly, I describe how the Hilo Lei Day community preserves natives and uses some foreign plants for lei making, particularly if they are invasive. Randy L. uses ‘āwapuhi melemele to teach tourists lei kui, made by threading flowers on to a single string. While these plants may not be a part of traditional lei making, many of these invasive plants can be used in the same ways as traditional natives can be. Yuen distinguishes native plants from non-native in her cultural classes. While some lei makers use raffia from the craft store to make lei haku, a three-ply braided lei, Yuen avoids it in order to teach from a more traditional perspective.

**Fragmentation**

Yuen expressed concern for what she perceives to be the fragmentation of lei making traditions. This ST is evident in each interview. I divide this concept into the SSTs of loss, language, and perceived misinterpretation of tradition.
All participants share feelings of loss. Manu Josiah offers his thoughts on the loss of lei making traditions:

I’m not a lei maker so I don’t know, but my perception is that it’s changed a lot. In the sense that you can, I think in, the good old days back when, you could ask someone what kind of lei they had on, and they could tell you. I would venture to guess that if you went downtown during...some kind of festival or whatever and people had leis on—I would venture to guess that more than half the people you ask, what kind of lei they have on, they wouldn’t be able to tell you. I think speaks kind of volumes about the, the “wrap ‘n’ go society” that we’re in. If we, if we...when we were growing up, if you needed a lei, you made it. You didn’t run to Sack N Save and just grab one from the freezer, the refrigerator. You actually thought about it a couple days before you needed it, and you would go out and harvest it. Today we have ready-made leis that kind of take away from the poetry, I think that’s really important. The poetry that exists in things that you make, including the lei. Like when you don’t know how it was made, who made it, and why, you lose the, you lose a part of the meaning of that lei, the poetry, the essence. And um, I would venture to say that that’s pretty, that’s a pretty dramatic change that’s happened over the years, that’s I think pretty prevalent now.

Josiah reminisces about his childhood when lei knowledge was more widespread and taken for granted. He compares this to contemporary society, which he believes is compartmentalized; the practice of lei making is designated to “lei makers.” In his recollections, everyone knew how to make lei and did so fairly regularly. He posits that contemporary lei are a reflection of capitalism; the labor of making the lei is outsourced. Josiah’s wife, Yuen, shares her own thoughts about how the lei tradition has changed over time:

Kind of like food, I think. In that, you know, we now have the McDonald’s leis, where they come in little plastic boxes, and there’s not really a lot of mo’olelo to them, and... but we still to some degree have, you know, the chef-made lei for your wedding or something, you call, you know, you arrange it several months ahead and you have a professional lei maker who goes all out and takes it as an opportunity to showcase his or her skill in lei making for a special event, you know your prom, your wedding, Lei Day, you know Lei Day Queens lei kind of thing. So there’s that, then you have your home-cooked meals. So, and I think that’s what I see less and less of is the home cooked meal. We see less of the home-cooked meal in families. Some sociologists and psychologists say that’s led a lot to some of the issues we have with the breakdown of the family, and how young people are growing up really not feeling connected to their families, because we don’t sit around the dining room table and eat a home-cooked meal together anymore. And to me, lei making
can kind of be seen that way. We’ve got the McDonald’s style leis in their little plastic boxes, we get all kinds of those, and if you can afford it you can hire a professional lei maker to make your event absolutely spectacular, but hardly see people sitting, down, you know the family going out and harvesting together, and sitting down together. When Manu and I were kids, it was still pretty common that the whole family would go pick leis, you know, the small kids go up the tree because they won’t break the branches cuz they’re light, and then you know the middle sized kids are running around picking up the flowers, putting them in the bags, and when you get home, Mom and Tūtū are sitting there with the long needles, and the kids are arranging and sorting the flowers, by size or color or whatever. You know, it was a whole family activity, like today you buy a sack of flowers and you have one person in the back room stringing them.

Yuen responds to Josiah’s critique of the lei in contemporary life. She agrees with him, and uses a metaphor to further explain how the lei has become a less common part of daily life, and more relegated to special occasions and professionals.

In conversations with participants, some did not express concerns for loss of lei making knowledge. For example, Randy L. explained that he feels confident that such traditions have been passed down, even though they are not all contained in their entirety within the mind of any individual. Hufford described a similar opinion. When asked if she had any concerns about the survival of lei making traditions, her response was that the lei would always find a way, even if different materials and new styles are used. The two participants were not worried about cultural loss, but rather environmental loss, which will be explored in a later section.

Language

Like many Hawaiian traditions, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and the lei share a pilina (close relationship). Understanding ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i allows one to understand the ‘ike (knowledge), kaona, and mo‘olelo associated with certain plants. For example, Yuen (2016c) shares the ka‘ao of the ‘ōhi‘a lehua, the traditional flower of the Island of Hawai‘i. In this mo‘olelo, Pele appears to ‘Ōhi‘a, a man who is in love with a woman named Lehua. ‘Ōhi‘a refuses the goddess’s
advances. In her anger, Pele causes the earth to shake and lava to spew from it as Pele attempts to kill the lovers in revenge. Before they are consumed by the inferno, the spirits of the forest transform ʻŌhiʻa into a tree, and Lehua into a crimson flower, held safely aloft and away from the lava. Today they remain locked in an eternal embrace (Yuen 2016c). From this kaʻao comes a gathering protocol. As Yuen (2016c) describes, “lei makers never pick these lovely blossoms on the way into the forest, only on the way out.” Lehua weeps to be parted from her love, and will cause rain to fall, and possibly for the gatherer to lose her way. Contained in this moʻolelo and protocol is knowledge associated with weather patterns, botanical information, and the environment. As Yuen (2016c) explains, it is practical to harvest lehua in the morning before the misty rain can cause one to become lost. In addition, the flower will last longer if it is harvested in the cool of the morning, and brought swiftly home. Its fragile nature also prevents it from becoming a McDonald’s lei, because the blossom will wilt. Thus, there is rich cultural information concealed within ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. Also like lei making, the language needs to be safeguarded. Participants were concerned with the actual loss of language vocabulary and also with the modern attempts to re-invent words (which in many cases already exist in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi) from an English perspective. This usually takes the form of an English word like “bowl” being transcribed into Hawaiian sounds: “pola.” Pola is now used to describe a coffee mug. However, a Hawaiian word, “apu” (meaning “a small drinking-vessel, usually made of coconut shell; a cup”) already existed and its meaning may have just been extended (Ulukau 2018). Of course, there is always a need for new words to keep up with all the commodities we have today. However, another way to approach this problem is to use Hawaiian words to describe the object rather than bringing in foreign cognates. For example, Yuen describes her feelings on the huaʻōlelo for motorcycle:
And so this, we need to find another name, but I like one of the old names for motor cycle. I think nowadays people say something like “mokakaila” I don’t even know; I refuse to say it. But it’s just a transliteration, where I like lihoaliʻi” (little metal horse). I remember reading a novel years and years ago about Native Americans, Navajo in this novel, the Navajo people were talking about the exact same issues. And this Navajo guy was like, “I am not going to call this stuff (referencing coffee cup in her hand) ‘kopi!’” And I can’t, I have no idea how to pronounce the Navajo word for it, but it’s “small split round things.” It’s much more poetic, like Manu said. When you just translate, you lose all the poetry.

Yuen’s husband Manu Josiah remembers growing up in an ‘ohana Hawaiʻi when speaking ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi was controversial:

The other interesting thing about the leis was that I grew up in an era where um, where Hawaiian language, ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi, was spoken only by certain few people, not everybody spoke it and not everybody wanted to speak it. So the ones that did speak Hawaiian were the kūpuna because they were before the time when it was not acceptable and not…not looked at in positive life, so their everyday communication in language, one was Hawaiian language, and two was English. Whereas everybody else was one English and maybe a pidgin Hawaiian kind of thing. And so, the only times where you could hear the language being spoken would be during times like lei making, and storytelling during lei making.

Unfortunately, today you know we have lei making for commercial. And I say unfortunately, I mean it’s a living for some people, but um, and so if you’re driven by money and not, you know making money, sometimes that whole aspect of working with your hands gets lost because you’re focused on production and not just sitting around using that as a tool to communicate with each other. So that’s how I picked up, a lot of, a lot of, um, my family history, that’s how I picked up a lot of the ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi that was specific to our family and the region we live in. And so, um you know, sometimes if we’d come down from Kohala, and make a trip in to Hilo, and it would be, we would use phrases that I can’t recall specific ones, we would use phrases that would get looked down upon, because it was a very country kind of way of speaking. People would equate it today to be like pidgin. Up until recently pidgin has been, the creole dialect has been looked down upon as being uneducated, when in actuality it’s just another dialect.

Josiah believes that contemporary for-profit lei making has resulted in an erosion of family bonds which were traditionally forged while making lei together. As a result, family sayings and phrases are passed down as successfully.
Perceived Misinterpretation of Tradition

Yuen and her husband Josiah are troubled by what they perceive to be misinterpretation of Hawaiian tradition. Yuen and Josiah recall how English thinking has impacted ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and consider several manufactured stories that were played off as tradition:

(trying to recall the term for the green flash) But it, it’s not like something “hinuhinu ‘ōma‘o,” or anything like that, which I have heard people try and create that. Kind of like Kamehameha Nui. That just grates on my ears. Because there is a Kamehamehanui, and this guy ain’t it. You know, he’s Pai‘ea Kamehameha, and to me it’s appropriate to say Kamehameha kealiʻi‘aimokuohawaii‘i or Pai‘ea Kamehamehakeali‘inui, but to say Kamehamehanui that is the proper name of a specific individual of Maui. Not, um, of this guy. And…so I kind of wish people would go find the original Hawaiian name rather than taking the English name and back-translating into something new. It’s like people call this Mokunui now. They call this island Mokunui. (hisses)

And some of the, some of the so-called traditions of the lei are really, we’re losing some of the real traditions—the old traditions—and some people are just, people not from the islands are just making up stuff. Like you know, “Oh in the old days, only the chief could wear ‘ilima! And maile, commoners would be executed for wearing that kind of lei.” Now that’s just you know, that’s just utterly ridiculous.

And…you know, because it…has these meanings, and all of the stuff I’ve heard about being executed if you wore the wrong lei, I never heard any of those stories until I heard haole tour guides telling it after the mid 1990s. And I’ve never seen any of that recorded. There is one, there is one passage that talks about chiefs coming together…I forget who it was…was it Thrum? I’ll have to look it up. Chiefs coming together and tying maile together to end a war. I think that was bogus. I think somebody made that up to make the haole happy. It just…

But I think it’s important to sort out the chaff from the grain. Like there’s somebody was telling people, some tour guide was telling people that a girl can tell how much a guy likes her by how many strands of pikake he gives her. And, you know that’s just like (scoffs) what’s up with that? If, does that mean only rich people can love, if you check the price of pikake? You know, maybe some guy who’s unemployed or has a crummy job, his heart may be just totally filled for this girl, and all he can do is go to his aunt’s house and make one strand? Would he love any less than somebody who can afford a six strand lei, like somebody who’s a trust fund kid, or happens to, you know, have a really good job? So, I think we have to weigh some of the stories with real discrimination. And look at them for…does the story fit within the context of Hawaiian tradition? So.

Yuen expresses her concern for commonplace misinterpretation, or even invention, of Kānaka Maoli traditions. She offers several examples of non-Kānaka Maoli tour guides telling stories and
examples that were inconsistent with Kānaka Maoli traditions. Yuen was very frustrated by these misinterpretations, which she had never found in any reputable source. After one of these instances which occurred in the 1990s, an individual asked Yuen that if she is offended by the inaccurate information available, why hasn’t she published something reliable. Yuen responded with the creation of her (2016c) online magazine, Kaʻahele Hawaiʻi, in which she wrote articles about Hawaiian places and history to combat the troubling falsehoods.

Josiah is spurred by his wife’s thoughts to share his thoughts on contemporary lei styles that use controversial materials:

Yeah, I think it’s interesting with the different kinds of leis that you see nowadays, not just flower leis…You know I think one of the…over the last twenty years or so, probably longer, 30 years, you see people wearing like money leis…You see people wearing condom leis. You see all kinds of different leis, and I guess the older I get, the more, um, the more um, …what’s the word I’m looking for, the more insulted I get when I see stuff like that.

Yuen continues and develops Josiah’s theme by identifying what she interprets as the fatal flaw of these controversial lei:

Yeah. I think for me, I think something like a money lei which has that real kind of commercial connotation to it if to me, if you went and the hundred dollar lei is real popular, like 100 dollar bills folded up into flowers…that’s a very popular one. So if you’re going to pay $150 to someone to make a $100 lei, and give it to your friend…I’m kind of conflicted, because it’s weird to me, but then on the other hand, maybe…that’s where we come to the moʻolelo behind it. What’s the moʻolelo, it’s the moʻolelo, you totally forgot it was your buddy’s, was your nephew’s graduation, so you run out, and you know throw money to go get a lei that everybody else is going to go “Wow.” Or, you know, or “Aunty so and so could really use an extra 50 bucks,” so.

On one hand, Yuen recognizes the importance of lei makers’s income; on the other hand, the idea of using money to make lei seems contrary to the lei making tradition which incorporates a deep spiritual aspect of mana. Josiah and Yuen are critical of contemporary lei that misrepresent Kānaka Maoli culture to non-Kānaka Maoli.
Shift in Resources

I explain how the business of lei making has changed over the years by examining the sources for the plant materials as they change over time. There is a general trend of moving away from the “good old days” of backyard growers, towards buying wholesale from third party farmers. This is not a clear cut distinction; these practices overlap, and there is also a middle ground of gathering flowers that is practiced to some degree to supplement product.

“Good Old Days” of Backyard Growers

Hufford gives an account of a time in the lei business when much of the supply could be harvested in people’s backyards. Hufford also posits why this started to change:

So I got to meet a lot of backyard growers. There was one young woman who came in, she was a mother, and um, her husband, worked as a baker at Kāne‘ohe Bakery. I grew up in Kāne‘ohe, so those are my stomping grounds. And she said, “I’m a Cobb-Adams.” And you know the Cobb-Adams brought all the puakenikeni to Hawai‘i. And I said, “Yes, I know that, my Uncle was married to a Cobb-Adams. They were blahblah blah, and I went to school with Cobb-Adams.” And, she said, “Well, that was my inheritance, to have all the puakenikeni, so I can provide you with all the puakenikeni leis that you want.” I said, “I’ll take ‘em all.”

Running Hufford’s flower shop relied on personal relationships with individuals who grew large amounts of certain flower species:

In the flower business, you learn who’s the flower wholesalers, what they’re bringing in, so on and so forth, you learn all the ins and outs, so… But like I said, the main thing that lei makers are faced with these days was the supply of materials. There are still some small people, so like my friend who has a flower shop down the street. She has her sources. So she can get pīkake, she can get ‘ilima, she can get pakalana in season, and… Yeah, so the, you know the supply of things is a big deal, but if you want to be in the florist business, you have to find your sources.

I am fortunate in that my mother planted a lot of things that we could make leis out of here. So maybe if people asked her to make a lei, she could just go outside and get it. Some of those things are annuals, so they have to be replanted, but some of the things are perennial, like ferns, and uh, ‘ōhi‘a lehua… And then there was another lady, I can’t remember her except I met her when my mom moved up here, she was um, she had pīkake in her front yard, she lived in Puakō, and she grew pīkake and ‘ilima.
…So my mother would, she’d make lei out of star jasmine. It would last only a few hours, but I remember that from when we were growing up in our very first, the very first house that we bought. We had star jasmine. The other thing that we had in the yard was croton. It’s nice to look at, you can’t use it for anything. It has a sap that stains, and so, but she would make Christmas wreaths, they wouldn’t last the whole season, but they were really bright and showy, you know!...The first tree that she and my father planted was called a fern tree. They got it from Makiki Nursery. And it just made rubbish all over the place, so…

There were always leis in [my mother’s] life, ever since she was a child, when my grandmother had a garden. She grew her own flowers out of which she could make leis. And so the same thing happened to me, my mother always had a flower garden. She made sure we had lots of, there were several different kinds of plumerias, we had all kinds of other things that you could make leis out of, there were ferns, there were gardenias, orchids, there was all stuff you could make a lei out of.

…The house before, we got, this farm had flowers like that too. And my aunty’s yard, I was just talking to my cousin about that. Cuz their house, they hardly had any room in there in a yard, but my uncle put in a green house, he put anthuriums in there, he grew maile starts, and he put the maile underneath his lehua trees, and you know they grew up underneath the…all in Kāne‘ohe. So we did stuff like that.

Hufford’s narrative recalls how in the 1970s selling lei could easily pay for college tuition.

…Yeah people don’t do that. Yeah, bozu, crown flowers, that kind of thing. They grew lei flowers and that’s how they financed his college education. Of course, college, back in, I graduated college, UH Mānoa in 1973. And my tuition, full time tuition for one semester was $115…So that’s the biggest change. Things cost a lot of money, I think people are wrapped up in having to spend their time earning more money to pay for things. So they don’t have time to do a backyard garden. It’s been a long time since I lived in O‘ahu, I know there’s many, many more people since I grew up. People don’t have that kind of space to put in a little garden where they can grow flowers for themselves or to sell to a florist to make leis. When I was a child, when Lei Day came around, we just scoured the neighborhood, and everybody had plumerias. You know that’s what we made leis out of. We made lots and lots of plumeria leis, all different kinds. I don’t see that anymore. Of course, I don’t go to O‘ahu that often.

Hufford’s richly detailed childhood stories of whimsical gardens full of flowers exemplify the nostalgia of the good old days when many people grew their own lei plants. She describes a different time in which people appreciated the work of making a beautiful lei rather than just its monetary value.

I observed lei plant gardens at Yuen and Hufford’s respective homes. While interviewing Hufford, she described how many of her mother’s plants are still growing in the yard, for
example, vireya. She said this was so she could still be able to go out in the yard and gather enough to make lei on special occasions. However, Hufford admits that the scale is significantly decreased since her family’s main interest these days is farming vegetables. Similarly, Yuen keeps a lei plant garden maintained year round, so that various flowers are always in bloom. She provides plant materials from her own garden for Lei Day, some hālau lei making classes, and cultural classes at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station.

Gathering Flowers

Four participants share their experiences with gathering plant material from nature. Hahn and Yuen both recall picking lei flowers in their family gardens. Randy L. harvests some of the flowers for his lei making classes from the side of the road. Hahn recalls her numerous sources for harvesting lei plants:

Yeah, these ones I bought, these from mom’s yard, these from Volcano House…These things, I don’t know what they are, but Sierra liked them. We pulled over at Target, to pick red ti leave they have in all the bushes. The sides of the road, wherever. I refrain from picking them out of people’s front yards, unless I have permission, but Target, vacant lot…

Yuen describes harvesting puamelia (plumeria), a non-native plant which has been adopted into lei making tradition: “And…um my grandmother taught me much more about making lei. So we would go out--one of my favorite memories with her was going out by the light of a full moon and harvesting lei--harvesting plumerias to make lei.” Next, Randy L. discusses his sources for the material he uses in lei making classes: “Well we were stringing what we call a lei ‘awapuhi melemele, this is the yellow ginger lei and these are the wild flowers that grow along our road side and also in people’s gardens…these were picked alongside the road here.” Finally, Hufford shares a moʻolelo about finding ferns with her mother:
We lived in Kāneʻohe and the flood plain now below Hoʻomaluhia Park, I don’t know if you’re familiar with that, but anyway before they put Hoʻomaluhia in, that was designed as a watershed area, to catch the water…It’s right at the base of the Koʻolau as you come out of the Wilson tunnel. But below that, before they put in Hoʻomaluhia, they put in two subdivisions, they were always getting—they had big drainage canals, but that was where the water settled, and uh, they had a couple planters, sitting there with giant papyrus, and lots of heliconias…And we used to go in there and you know, muck around when we were kids. But she, um, that’s where we discovered our fern. That was our fern spot.

In lei making classes with Yuen’s hālau, Yuen, the haumāna, and I gathered flowers from the forest. The Church of the Holy Apostles in Hilo allows Hālau LeiManu to use facilities for hula practices. Special permission was given by the church for Yuen’s lei making classes to harvest certain plants from the forest behind the parking lot. Hawaiian protocol was followed for this process. Before entering the forest, Yuen chanted an oli to the trees. The words of this chant informed the plants of our intention to gather only what was necessary, and to use the harvested materials to educate community members about Hawaiian traditions. This prepared the space for the hālau’s entry. Once this formal protocol had been observed, Yuen instructed the haumāna how to properly prune the kukui (candlenut) trees. Hand trimmers and gloves were passed around, and the hālau entered the forest. After several limbs were gathered from the kukui as Yuen had shown, the group exited the forest together.

Buying from Others

Today the general trend seems to be buying flowers wholesale rather than harvesting from backyards. Hufford and her family experienced this shift in plant material sources:

Then there were small orchid growers that would put up a shade house. And since land is such a premium on Oʻahu, especially, because there’s such, that’s where the population base is. It’s not here, it’s on Oʻahu. So the competition for housing and flowers, you know they just don’t go together. So, I met some small growers of roses, so all the roses come from Central and South America. Carnations come from Colombia, and they don’t smell.
But when I was in my flower shop on O‘ahu, I mean, you bought…You would make sure you had a standing order for tuberose whether you knew you could sell it or not!...You got you know your two bags of tuberose. It was about this big, brown paper bag, two bags twice a week, three times a week. You took it whether you needed it or not. So when graduation came, you could say, “Can I double my order?” And of course, they wanted to sell as many flowers as they could, they didn’t want to hold back on anybody, but you know sometimes weather is a problem.

So besides the, um, lack of resource, you have that flower growers are getting older, and their families may not want to continue the business. When I was growing up, the big eye on the wholesale market was Watanabe Floral. And Watanabe Floral, they had, they grew roses here in Waimea. For heads, for stems. They grew the baby roses on O‘ahu, near Mililani. They don’t—they got out of the business.

The steps of lei making became compartmentalized by specialized individuals who would handle certain steps in the process. This allowed for a smoother business operation, but purchasing flowers from a wholesale grower further distanced lei makers from the environment.

Whenever I need to speak with Randy L., I find him at the Hilo Farmer’s Market, where he makes and sells lei each week. I have observed him there several times at his booth. On one occasion when we needed to discuss his transcript, he invited me to join him at his table to talk-story. When I arrived, Susan, another member of Hālau LeiManu was waiting on Randy L. to finish a puakenikeni lei for her birthday. This style of lei is a lei kui. During our conversation together, Susan and Randy L. began describing their experiences of the recent volcanic activity and how they had been affected. Lei makers must be adept at dealing with environmental changes, which happen frequently in Hawai‘i.

*Environment*

The participants each expressed their concern for a responsible relationship with the environment. They are also cautious of the strength of natural forces and their effects on lei making. This ST is subdivided into the SSTs of unpredictability of nature, misuse of resources, kuleana to grow one’s own lei garden, and the kuleana to use supplies responsibly.
Nature’s Unpredictability

Lei makers regularly face the unpredictability of nature. Participants describe hurricanes, flooding, vog, rain, temperature, and climate change. I have chosen to highlight the Lower East Rift Zone eruption examples because they were most relevant to the lei makers at the time of the interviews. These interviews were conducted during the eruption of the Lower East Rift Zone, which began May 13, 2018 and lasted about three months. It directly affected many lei makers across the island. This could have led to more than usual mentions of Pele and other natural forces, and led to major concerns about plant sources and access to Puna and Volcano. In fact, an earthquake occurred during an interview with Randy L. in Volcano. This redirected the conversation:

(Earthquake begins. Table starts shaking) There was a little shaker! If it starts going a whole minute, then we gotta worry. Yeah the last time I was here, it rocked, yeah, and there was a big poof on that side from Halema‘uma‘u. It erupted that pressure thing, that was here. At one (inaudible) just before I had to leave here, they said we just had a little eruption, I said okay. But it shook over here pretty much. (Comments on the workers in Volcano Arts Center running all over to grab the things that were falling on the floor) That’s why when you live on the Big Island, knowing that we have, if we display anything on a shelf or something, if you glue it to a shelf, the shelf nailed to the wall. …self-locking cupboards…Don’t have anything, like high standing cases of your favorite china cuz that comes crashing down. You gotta have something that’s actually attached to the wall. You gotta nail to the wall or whatever. I remember when I…everything was nailed to the wall, and the glasses was not nailed, but we had this two-way sticky thing that would…so it wouldn’t fall off yeah.

For Randy L., volcanic activity is a natural part of the environment that lei makers and Hawai‘i Island residents learn to live with and respect.

All this time, I’ve been doing it the last 5 years up at the Gallery in the Park, yeah before the eruption. [Pele] was already pooling all the years that I’ve been up here, but never like what it is now…But you know, I look at it as a good thing, it’s a new beginning, it’s a rebirth, you know giving it a clean slate, you know, the whole area, everything had been compromised down there, the whole area, you know, not only the land itself, but the, we have all this fungus that’s been affecting all our ‘ōhi‘a, now it’s gone. The ‘ōhi‘a is sprouting back in Kalapana, and all the (inaudible) is dead, all the albizias are dead. And all the other stuff…
You know I took a ride into ‘Opihikau, recently, and the only things that are surviving are the lauhala and the ika ferns and the trees…and the trees and stuff, everything else that has been invasive is gone. It just dried up and died. Which is wonderful.

Randy L. observes that powerful natural forces serve to balance out environmental threats. Lava flows cover over places where invasive species have taken hold and provides the land with a new start. He recognizes this relationship is precious; few places in the world can reset the clock as effectively. Randy L. also recognizes that humans have a responsibility to be ready and accepting of the intervention of these natural forces.

...Yeah it’s quiet. But the air gets compromised, the atmosphere gets compromised when the volcano decides to go. They’ve been rattled like every day, a few thousand earthquakes so far in the past.

It’s gonna take at least a few years [to reopen the Park], because of all the damage. And it got that big hole over here in the road that they just filled with cement! Hello? You can’t just fill a sink hole with cement and think it’s gonna stay there! It’s just gonna add pressure, that big hunk of cement is gonna come flying up into the traffic! Yeah it’s gonna go as long as the way it is, another 30-40 years of it. It’s not gonna stop. It’s not gonna stop.

While Randy L. believes Hawai‘i Island residents should respect volcanic activity, it can pose challenges to infrastructure and safety.

Hufford describes the effect of the Lower East Rift Zone eruption on lei makers:

With the loss of one of the largest orchid growers here, my neighbors is hurting. Because she said they would buy everything—they would buy stems, they would buy heads as well, they would buy everything. And they would even take, you know if the spray was faded, they would be plucking the flowers off to make leis. You know, they didn’t just, if the spray started to fade, they didn’t just throw the whole thing out, they’d save the flowers and make leis out of it...And unfortunately, with Rapid ‘Ōhi’a Death, you know, they took away you know, the staple, of our leis, especially for this island.

Hufford identifies two environmental threats to the lei making supply: the 2018 Lower East Rift Zone eruption and Rapid ‘Ōhi’a Death. Due to these, the supply of ‘ōhi’a lehua and orchids are severely affected.
I observed how the Hilo Lei Day community was impacted by the 2018 Lower East Rift Zone eruption and I experienced some of these disruptions. Leading up to the opening of rifts in Leilani Estates were hundreds of smaller quakes and the formation of cracks that indicated the presence of moving lava beneath the ground. This was a highly stressful time for the people of Puna, including two members of Hālau LeiManu, as they waited for the activity to escalate without knowing where it would occur. Hawai‘i Island was rocked by several significant earthquakes at the start of the eruption in May 2018, the greatest magnitude measured 6.9 on the Richter scale (CBS News 2018). The largest earthquakes occurred on May 4, mere days after Lei Day. Yuen told the hālau that practice would be cancelled until the haumāna could commute safely, as several of them live in areas affected more severely. Several members and I met with Yuen anyway at the usual practice time to discuss the recent happenings. Throughout the summer, vog (smog or haze containing volcanic gases and dusts) impacted much of Hawai‘i Island, particularly Kona. I observed Yuen donning a special face mask, she explained to me that she is very sensitive to vog. I myself was required to seek medical care when the poor air quality triggered asthma. I was told by the clinic that droves of residents had been presenting with similar concerns. I observed Hahn, Randy L., and Hufford expressing their hopes that the lava would burn up the invasive species (especially albizia trees, coqui frogs, and ROD in Puna. Beamer-Trapp told me he and his wife felt the ground cracking during their appointment at a doula’s clinic, which is now buried beneath Fissure 8, the most active feature which formed a perched lava channel that would eventually reach Pohoiki. During the cultural class Yuen taught at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station, the lava glow from Fissure 8 could be seen from the mountain. Yuen mourned the loss of 80% of papaya farms. Kāhili and Hufford wondered at the loss of one of the largest orchid growers, and commented on how that was affecting the lei
plant supply. Hahn pointed out the poorer than usual quality of the flowers she used in the lei she
made during our interview. She posited that anthuriums usually last several weeks, but new
supplies may not have been available. Hahn also described to me how she had taken a lei poʻo as
a hoʻokupu offering to Pele at Halemaʻumaʻu. At hula practice, Susan and Krissy, two of the
members of Hālau LeiManu shared the story of the loss of their home. The two women had been
able to save a few precious items before evacuation, but Susan lost most of her artwork, which is
her livelihood. Upon returning to their land, all that was left to mark its existence was the charred
remains of their detested albizia tree rising above the field of lava.

Kuleana to Use Responsibly

The lei makers share their techniques to mālama i ka ʻāina (care for the earth). A careful
balance must be maintained. Two participants intentionally use invasive species before natives.
Randy L. teaches the steps to responsibly make a yellow ginger lei:

Well, we’re stringing what we call a lei ‘awapuhi melemele, this is the yellow ginger lei
and these are the wild flowers that grow along our road side and also in people’s
gardens...We had the raw flowers, just to give you that experience, these were picked
alongside the road here...Well now you know how. This season, the yellow ginger, I only
teach it when it comes into season like this in the summer, otherwise I’d be doing...I
couldn’t bring the stuff that I was gathering by my place, it wasn’t allowed in the Park,
thinking that I’m gonna bring the ROD into the park. Well, my trees are pristine, they’re
still growing, never even none of them got affected by the disease.

Randy L. is conscious of the growing season and prevalence of the ginger plants. Rather than
exhausting one specific supply, he gathered the flowers on the side of the road where they grow
wild, and from several individuals’ gardens. Thus, he ensured that he placed no undue stress on
the species.

Hufford shares a friend’s techniques to maximize the productivity of her stock:
What my neighbor does is she buys mini carnation stems, and she forces them, which means she puts them in warm water when she gets them. And she harvests the flowers every day, till all the buds bloom out. So at graduation time, because HPA is the largest--their colors are red and white, so she always makes sure she has red and white mini carnations. Honokaʻa is yellow and green, I don’t know what Parker School is. But she gets red and white mini carnations, and she has buckets of them, and they’re all in warm water and they’re harvesting the flowers every day. So to make leis out of them.

In this way, lei plant growers are able to reap a maximum amount of flowers from fewer plants, so nothing is wasted, and fewer plants are needed to meet the supply.

At Hilo Lei Day 2018, I observed Kiriko Redondo, the alakaʻi of Hālau LeiManu, wearing lei lāʻī hilo styled to have the appearance of a maile lei. Though made from ti leaves twisted in a double helix, a lei lāʻī hilo seen from a distance has the appearance of a vine with leaves. To make the lei lāʻī more full, Yuen allowed the “tails” of ti leaves to protrude from the helix at smaller intervals. This invoked the idea of a maile lei without having to harvest it. Yuen chose to use a more plentiful species in the place of the threatened native plant.

**Kuleana to “Grow Your Own”**

Three participants emphasize the importance of growing your own lei garden. Hahn describes gathering supplies from her mother’s garden, and planting anything she can on her own land. Randy L. shares his own convictions for responsible growing:

My thing is grow your own, where you can… I down in Hilo once a week at the Hilo Farmers Market, where I also demonstrate (lei making). We make our own things and stuff. I will weave something while I’m there, or we string lei puakenikeni while we’re there, sometimes I might have a lei to make I’ll have my own palapalai something that I’ll take down there. People get attracted to that…

By caring for their own lei plant gardens, lei makers need not exhaust forest resources. In addition, understanding the plants is important for lei makers to use them responsibly. By
growing their own gardens, they will learn growing seasons and how each plant is affected by rains and soil, and insects.

Hufford details the process of creating her mother’s lei garden:

So we wiped out the whole lawn in our backyard. She just scraped, I don’t know how we, or I think we just threw, we just put the plants on it. But the grass isn’t like this kind of grass that we have here in Waimea, it was, you could kill it really quick. So we put the plants right on it, you know I don’t know how many weeks it took us to move all those plants. They put it right all in a big clump with an aisle in the middle of it, and then we just went to City Mill and we got all these wood shavings. I mean, truckloads of it, just put all these wood shavings around it. And when we sold the house, the whole thing was all flowers. You know, just with enough to fit the lawn mower in a pathway. It was just all these epis (short for epidendrum orchids) and between the epis she would plant marigolds, and zinnias, and all those other stuff that we’d have to make a lei…

And gardenias, we always, had the gardenias the length of the house, which was about 50 feet long, and just the whole gardenia hedge right on the eaves, below was carna-ru–plumerias. Yellows below, the strip-ed Hae Hawai‘i, you know, up on the top…Pink ones we went to my auntie’s house to get. We had kākānia (Apple of Sodom) in the backyard, way in the back so no one would fall into it. But that’s all the kind stuff we had.

Lei plants dominated Hufford’s childhood home. She learned from her mother, Marie McDonald how to plant and care for each kind of lei plant.

In a conversation with Hahn, she expressed to me her assumed personal kuleana to replant cuttings rather than throwing them away. I observed her gathering up the extra bits of Song of India from the lei she made during our interview. She explained that she places emphasis on the well-being of the environment and native species.

Misuse of Resources

The participants condemn the misuse of Hawai‘i’s fragile resources. Randy L. used a mo‘olelo to explain his thoughts on improper harvesting of plant materials. He shares his concerns about hālau abusing maile:

I did an interview…in Kalōpā talking about the forest there. How it’s been exploited by some of the hālau and stuff that go up there and use…just rape the forest without any
notion of how long it takes these things to grow. I noted to them that there was a vine… I was up there just picking up… some lei, but um, I think it was during a graduation or something, somebody because the maile was growing so high in the tree, reaching down, as it cuts the maile vine which has been sitting there for probably 50 years. And it just killed everything. Yeah, I mean to me it was horrible. I mean… [I used it for] 30 something years, and now it’s just gone. [I] used the parts that hung down, they cut the big vine and killed it. You know, one day, someone needed a lei for something, but they don’t know the proper...the maile vine with...tree. And it went up the tree and came back down, and they just cut what they needed, they cut the whole tree down (because they couldn’t reach the maile) and killed it.

Randy L.’s story of the hālau that cut and killed a 50 year old maile plant illustrates the importance of lei makers understanding their plant resources. Previously, Randy L. was able to responsibly use pieces of the maile plant for 30 years. This kind of traditional knowledge is essential when harvesting.

Hufford describes how she has adopted new protocol since the onset of Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death:

I mean, I made a lei with ‘ōhi’a all the time. You know, if it was blooming—yeah! Let’s put some— you know, I mean, I don’t, I didn’t go to the mountains. It’s all growing here, because we put it here. But you know, I have this plant down there, the liko is like going nuts, you know, and I can’t use it! I said, “If you’re going to use it in town, I’ll use it, I’ll put it in a lei. But if you’re going to give it to somebody and it’s going to leave this place, I can’t, you know, I gotta use something else.” And I will.

For lei makers like Hufford, the impact of ROD is a tragic loss. Hufford had to set her own boundaries to prevent the spread of ROD.

At the 2018 Merrie Monarch Festival, I observed that ‘ōhi’a lehua was rarely used in lei. During the breaks in the performances, my neighbors and I discussed the dancers and their attire. One woman who sat behind me was there supporting two members of her family who were competing. She mentioned that there was a ban on transporting ‘ōhi’a this year because of ROD. However, I did notice at least one Miss Aloha candidate who was wearing a lei po’o and lei ‘ā‘ī
made from yellow lehua. The woman behind me guessed that the lehua might have been from there in Hilo, so that it was not transported and risking spreading ROD.

General Change Over Time

Participants share some general changes affecting lei makers on Hawai‘i Island from the 1950s to the 2010s. These general changes affect lei styles, lei making, and the growers. For example, Hufford describes the changes in property laws and the decline of backyard lei plant farmers:

Both my husband and I were in our mid age, I was 40 when we moved to the Big Island and started living in this place. Um, prior to that time, my mother got the lease in 1978. And it’s an agricultural lease from Hawaiian Homes. So, the rules were such that you could not build a dwelling on that agricultural lease. Those rules were changed right around 1987, 1988...I wanna say. So then she decided to sell a piece of property that she, she and my dad held in fee...But there’s nobody who’s doing this (gestures to the surrounding farm).

Hufford also notes changes in the Hawaiian lei making community: “You know we communicate differently now, right? Before we’d call each other up or we go to their house, but they lived close, right? Now, everybody’s spread out on all the different islands, on the mainland.” Hufford describes general changes in the styles of lei seen:

When that guy, that policeman who died, he was wearing a vanda lei in that picture that they showed. Like, wow where did he get that vanda lei? And either you could drive here, you could drive here in the 70s, you could drive along Hāmākua and you could see the vanda farms. I don’t know why people don’t grow vandas anymore. So easy. In a small space, you can grow lots of vandas. And you pick ‘em every day, you got plenty of leis! Yeah, cuz vandas grow like this, they grow straight up and down. Right? So and then you just pick the flowers every day that are blooming, and you just save them.

It is unclear why vandas are rarely seen in contemporary lei making. It could be that lei materials are subject to larger fluctuations of fashion. For some lei supplies, it is merely a matter of cost and efficiency.
Yuen and Hufford both mention spray painted orchid lei that come from Thailand. The introduction of new styles, “Who’s gonna make those leis here? Immigrants, right? So what the Micronesians and the Marshall[ese]--the Micronesians especially. What they did was they brought with them, was Micronesian style leis.” McDonald (1978:178) notes, “The distinctively different Micronesian leis are becoming more commonplace as island craftsmen and lei lovers are being exposed to them. The ‘purist’ may regard this new introduction as an infringement on cultural uniqueness while others welcome it and are excited by it.” As Hufford notes forty years later, the incorporation of a lei style distinctive to the various island communities comprising the region of Micronesia into Hawai‘i is still ongoing.

**Revitalization**

Though loss is commonly mentioned, the ST of revitalization is also present. Participants describe the efforts of lei making workshops, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i programs, keiki (children) lei making competitions, Lei Day festivals, grants to plant maile, and kapa exhibits to perpetuate Hawaiian culture. Hufford describes how lei making competitions encourage children to learn and practice Hawaiian tradition with skill. Participants recognized the importance of efforts like Ka Leo Hawai‘i, the first ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i radio program, hosted by Larry “Kauanoe” Kimura. This program is now available online with transcripts in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and English. Hufford expresses her hopes that the exhibit will document and showcase the process of kapa making so that many people may be able to learn. While she still teaches lei making workshops, she recognizes the importance of perpetuating other Hawaiian crafts and allowing the community to benefit from this experience. Manu Josiah sums up this theme with a degree of optimism:

You know the good news is, we still have lei. And we still have the basic tradition of lei. And that’s, you know, that’s good news, and there are people that are still around and
they are teaching the moʻos how, how to do lei making in the correct way, how to learn the oli kāheas and stuff when they’re harvesting, and all that kind of stuff. There are still, you know, and that’s the beautiful thing that the immersion programs have been um, been doing that’s been a positive in that regard, to lei making. In spite of all these distractions…There are still roots in the ground that hold fast to the traditions of not just lei making, but all crafting kinds of things, and that’s the good news.

Josiah expresses his gratitude for the cultural revitalization movements that have educated younger generations about Kānaka Maoli tradition. He believes that these programs combined with community and family initiatives indicate that traditions will be perpetuated.

Cultural Sharing (N=388)

The transfer of ‘ike (knowledge) is essential for its survival. Handy and Pūku‘i (1998:142) describe how knowledge and mana were traditionally passed through hā (breath). By breathing into the mouth of the successor, he or she would one day grow to possess the same skill of the kūpuna who passed it on. While this ancient custom may still be practiced, lei making knowledge has survived in various degrees through a variety of oral traditions. The traditions, rituals, language, and techniques of lei making have been passed down from generation to generation through the process of cultural sharing. I define the theme of “cultural sharing” as the intentional education of others about one’s own heritage. This practice comes in many forms. Through my analysis, I recognize five different modes of cultural sharing: intergenerational sharing, mentoring, sharing through community events, sharing with guests, and learning by doing. The theme of cultural sharing was the third most commonly described category. The size of this theme shows the commitment of the participants to sharing their traditions within and outside their communities.
Intergenerational Sharing

Stories told by the interview participants converged on various forms of intergenerational sharing. This ST of cultural sharing is the transmission of traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. I identify seven SSTs, including the lei as a mnemonic device, specific vocabulary, thoughts on stories, thoughts on kaona, the resilience of oral tradition, family, and the lei as a reason to gather. Manu Josiah’s description of intergenerational sharing in his family exemplifies the conversational nature of how lei knowledge is passed on:

The lei was for us, was kind of like a tie, the bridge between generations, because depending on the circumstances that you were making the lei, you could learn so much about your ʻohana…You hear all these things and if you’re smart enough, you just sit and listen, and not try to, um, not try to interject. You just sit. And you know that’s where I got a lot from my mom, is, is cuz she did a lot of lei making and crafting things, and she would sit and talk, but after a while she would just ramble, and talk about anything that came to her mind. So you would hear certain things, like recipes to learn how to prepare certain kinds of foods, you would learn, you know, some of the dark secrets of the family that nobody talks about.

Josiah views the lei as an opportunity for intergenerational conversation in which kūpuna and parents pass on family traditions.

ʻOhana

One aspect of intergenerational sharing described by participants is ʻohana. Some participants associate certain lei or fragrances with members of their family. Many recall memories of learning lei making from certain family members with richly detailed stories, complete with vivid descriptions of colors, scents, and textures, such as the cool feeling of fresh puamelia picked at midnight beneath the moon with their grandmother. Participants shared stories about their ancestors: where they came from, what they did, and where they lived in Hawai‘i. Randy L. tells about his heritage stemming back to a konohiki (headman of an ahupua‘a
land division under the chief) of Waimanu Valley, immigrants from Russia and China, and how his ancestor liked the white ginger so much that he imported it from China to Waimanu Valley.

Family almost always seems to be included with story about the lei. Participants shared stories of embarking on projects, businesses, and hosting cultural events with family. Hufford describes starting flower selling businesses with her family:

I was working for my aunt in her flower shop. Cuz that’s something…it just kind of runs in the family, and um, if anybody knows anything about us, my mother was very generous in sharing her skills with everybody in the family in fact she insisted that, you should learn how to make leis, you know. Many of my cousins who are maybe 10 years and a little bit more than that younger than me, cuz I’m one of the older cousins, so they all learned how to make leis and…One of my cousins, was a lei queen... (both laughing) So now, she judges the lei making contests...The current thing is kapa. That was the other thing that my mother, um taught me how to do.

Hufford’s memories always involved her family members. Multiple generations are involved in lei making and its associated events. Older relatives take on the responsibility of educating the younger.

Randy L. describes bringing his children to Queen’s Bath one last time before the lava filled it. However, they were too late when they arrived, but filled a five-gallon bucket with kūpeʻe (edible marine snail) that were climbing on the rocks to escape the lava. After cooking them with his family, he still wears the lei kūpeʻe upon his pāpale (hat) and remembers that special moment.

I observed participants describe family as a lei one wears proudly, such as the phrase “kuʻu lei makamae” (my precious lei) which describes the shape of a child’s arms wrapped around the neck of a grandparent. Adoption was described as well, and always within the context of strong family ties and helping children to thrive.
Thoughts on Kaona

The interviews were rich with cultural details relating to kaona from the participants’ experiences. The examples of kaona are coded in the section of lei making and associated practices. The mana'o associated with kaona are discussed here.

Some participants explained layered meanings of names for people and places and the kind of mana that invokes. Kaona was also discussed as an important cultural mantle to pass on. Hufford shows how kaona is not a universally understood subtext by describing the sending of a mile of lei lā‘i hilo to Florida after the shooting at Pulse nightclub. Without knowing the meaning of the lei, the recipients assumed they had been sent “this big pile of rope.” She also describes how the lei becomes the symbol of Hawai‘i in this instance.

Yuen told a heartwrenching story that describes the intertwining of two types of lei and their respective kaona:

One of the classic examples that was taught to me when I was young, a classic example of why it’s important to know the mo‘olelo behind the lei, is there’s a beautiful song, uh...that this man writes...about...I think his sweetheart is a beautiful lei hala, and he is like a lei lehua, and the two are wili. . . wili ‘ia together. And...So if you understand these two lei, you know that the heavy weight of the hala is going to crush the lehua. So it’s a really beautiful song, and the poetry sounds lovely, but what it’s really saying is, “You’re crushing the life out of me.” So it’s important to know that, and then knowing the different meanings of say, hala, did he choose hala because it can mean loss? And so despite the pain that this relationship gives him, did he choose to express her as hala because it is very painful to lose her even though there are these problems? But then you can’t just have that one meaning of hala as that ‘eha kind of loss, that tearing apart of what could have been a viable relationship, because you can also give the lei hala at a funeral, to give the encouragement to release the pain of this person, of losing this person. So are they really focusing on that release, but release of pain?

Yuen shows how lei can be a poetic expression of complicated emotions. These understandings of kaona are implicit in the lei, and can be utilized by knowledgable lei makers to tell stories without words. Manu Josiah explains how kaona can have multiple layers that are open to interpretation:
To me, the lei there’s a specific, a very personal and specific meaning of the lei, and then there’s a broader meaning of the lei, and um, I think that some meanings of the lei [are] different based on where you come from in the archipelago of Hawaiʻi and what they represent but there is a general basic foundation of what the lei represents, but then I think it’s very specific to each region, each community, each family, each person.

Kaona can be associated with places, or even special relationships between friends or lovers.

Kaona is an important element in names of people and of lei. For example, lei limu pāhapaha is associated with Kauaʻi, the moʻolelo of Polihale, and a kinolau (bodily manifestation of a deity) of Kanaloa (McDonald 2003:77). Names were described by participants as losing their poetry when translated from Hawaiian to English, because English narrows a kaona to one specific level. In ‘Ōlelo Hawaiʻi, a single word can play between multiple connotations simultaneously without having to be pinned down to a single idea. Some participants made comparisons between the older Hawaiian names for things and the updated, static, dull modern names. Yuen compares the older and newer phrases for “telephone.” Though Yuen cannot recall the original Hawaiian phrase, she remembers it translated roughly to “the sweet voice from afar.” This is compared to the modern phrase, “kelepona” which is a derivative of English. Yuen and Josiah expressed their frustration with this new style that cheapens and quashes the playful style from ‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi.

Importance of Stories

Moʻolelo is an integral part of intergenerational sharing. Each of these sections were on average longer than others. Roen Hufford describes how the lei maker and receiver are creating a story, a story both parties will always remember, sealed with the gift of a lei. She recalls how people used to make “a lei when they traveled from one place to another, to show you that they had been there! I came from Hāmākua and I went through Waipiʻo, and then I went, I went
mauka, and then I made another lei when I got higher up, you know.” Yuen also shared similar stories. For Yuen, the mo’olelo elevates the lei from a craft to an art. She recalls her father saying, “All art tells a story.” She notes that the same lei may tell a different story for each person, and that those stories may evolve over time, similar to the lei.

Hufford’s mother, Marie McDonald placed so much value on mo’olelo that she created special sections in her (1985) book for personal narrative associated with each lei. For McDonald, both botanical information and mo’olelo were essential. As Hufford flipped through a copy of her mother’s book, each lei photo brought memories to the surface of her mind:

And your copy, has the expanded index—the appendix, the post script she called it. Okay so, this is my dad. And this is here on the farm, where she took, yeah, the same idea as a pa’iniu, and she plaited it to make this lei. And so, they were trying to use proteas. Yeah, well she had lots, so she was trying. Here, here she combined the silver tree with things you could try...This is my friend Heather who lives in Oregon now. And my cousin, Johnny Jean, so, and this is Kawena Pākuʻi, this is Mary Kawena Pākuʻi. And this is Aunty ‘Iwa, a member of her family. That’s ‘Iwa, yeah. So, this, this is the dedication page, the book [Ka Lei] is dedicated to [David Lloyd] Kaʻohinani [McDonald]...This is my brother. He died at an early age. He was, before this book was published. He was um, in 1976.

Hufford recalled the circumstances of every image, the name of the subject, why the photo was taken, and what kind of lei they were wearing. She described the book as a “family album” that awakened these stories.

Resilience of Oral Tradition

Participants recall who mentored them in lei making and specific stories of their ‘ohana. Randy L. described his family of lei makers, “My lei making skills are passed down with me from my Grandma, my kūpuna, so my lauhala weavings all kūpuna that taught me. And I guess you know I did this as a young kid and not knowing that I would still be doing it like 60 years later (laughs).” He is honored to wear his family lei niho palaoa (whale tooth lei, though Randy
L. specifies that his was made of orca tooth) which was passed down through his family from Waipiʻo Valley, stemming back through many generations.

Some participants, like Randy L., were confident in the resilience of oral tradition and unconcerned about data being lost across generations:

You know a lot of our…a lot of the knowledge of making certain leis were all passed down, leis come in all forms, they come in shells, seeds, flowers, feathers, you know that kind of stuff, each, so many people, they don’t know all the leis, I can, but I’ve done it but, feather leis, shell leis, like these here, lei kūpeʻe…

Randy L. articulates that though there are many kinds of lei to learn, and no participant can hold all the knowledge, that the information is perpetuated through a bank of collective lei makers passing on their piece of the tradition. Josiah describes the mechanics of passing down oral tradition, from which he was able to glean cultural knowledge from his family:

But if you were smart, you would just sit there, and as a kid, and just be quiet and listen. Because you would hear the stories over and over again if you did. And if one aunty would tell a story and you caught pieces of it, a couple months or maybe even longer, she’d tell it again, and you’d hear it. And it would be in these gatherings where you’re doing things with your hands, and then you start getting not only just the story, but you start to understand what kaona is.

Transferring knowledge was a process that occurred over time and multiple family gatherings.

**Language Associated with Family and Place**

Participants associate different dialects, sayings, and huaʻōlelo with their families and ʻāina. Josiah describes family sayings that were passed down through the generations. One was associated with the green flash that is said to happen after sunset; the other had to do with gathering for family meals. Josiah recalls specific phrases and language used by his family in Kohala:

[You learned] not just Hawaiian language, but Hawaiian language as it pertained to your family and where you’re from. Cuz I would hear Hawaiian language from Kohala which
is like, real country, and, then I would hear Hawaiian language from Kãneʻohe on Oʻahu, and were, we would flop back in forth…I…So that’s how I picked up, a lot of, a lot of, um, my family history, that’s how I picked up a lot of the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi that was specific to our family and the region we live in. And so, um you know, sometimes if we’d come down from Kohala, and make a trip in to Hilo, and it would be, we would use phrases that I can’t recall specific ones, we would use phrases that would get looked down upon, because it was a very country kind of way of speaking. People would equate it today to be like pidgin.

Josiah describes how language and vocabulary could be associated with families, place, and even socio-economic status.

**Lei as a Mnemonic Device for the Transmission of Knowledge**

Participants remembered specific moʻolelo and cultural data that are associated with lei making. The lei was utilized as a tool to help illustrate Hawaiian concepts. Through lei making, Yuen was educated about muku and anana, which are Hawaiian measurements described on the body. A muku is “a measure of length from fingertips of one hand to the elbow of another arm, when both arms are extended to the side” (Pûkuʻi and Elbert 1986). Anana is a fathom, or the distance between “the tips of longest fingers of a man, measured with arms extended on each side” (Pûkuʻi and Elbert 1986). Yuen compares the lei to an abacus or an English tally, in that it represents something larger than itself.

While members of Hālau LeiManu sat practicing lei nīpuʻu (formed by tying petioles of leaves together) with kukui, Yuen talked story about the medicinal properties of the plant and its association with the kūpua (a demigod or cultural hero, especially one able to possess several forms) Kamapua‘a. From the pile of harvested kukui, Yuen chose a large leaf with upturned edges. Holding it at eye level, Yuen explained how the silhouette of Kamapua‘a, who takes the form of a pig, could be seen in the kukui. The upturned corners formed the ears and the center point appeared like a snout. After sharing a moʻolelo about her first time seeing a hog as a child,
Yuen also explained how the bunches of kukui nut on the tree resemble the pig’s testes. The comparison of the kukui with Kamapua‘a helped Yuen to remember the traditional mo‘olelo surrounding the plant.

**Lei as a Reason to Gather**

The lei was referenced as a reason for families to gather. Manu Josiah recalls sitting with his family, gathered around lei, and learning stories and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i from the kūpuna. At the time he remembers, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i was highly looked down upon, and so opportunities to learn from the kūpuna were rare. However, having everyone working on leis provided a rare setting for learning stories and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. His wife Yuen agrees that this helps bond together multiple generations and give them a chance to have cultural conversations. From these stories, she recalls, one would be able to learn over time about kaona. Yuen describes lei making as a family endeavor:

When Manu and I were kids, it was still pretty common that the whole family would go pick leis, you know, the small kids go up the tree because they won’t break the branches cuz they’re light, and then you know the middle sized kids are running around picking up the flowers, putting them in the bags, and when you get home, Mom and Tūtū are sitting there with the long needles, and the kids are arranging and sorting the flowers, by size or color or whatever. You know, it was a whole family activity, like today you buy a sack of flowers and you have one person in the back room stringing them.

Yuen compares contemporary lei making to lei making in her childhood, in which whole families engaged in the practice together and divided the tasks.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring relationships are very common and were mentioned by all participants. Each narrator described learning from an elder and passing on knowledge to the next generation.
These relationships are one of the mechanisms by which cultural knowledge is perpetuated. The participants seem to regard mentoring the next generation as a kuleana (responsibility). Most narrators reflected on past kumu with nostalgia and remembered specific examples of learning from them. It is divided into two SST: a single apprentice is taught a skill over time, and mentoring in long-term groups.

Apprenticeship

There are many examples of adults taking individuals under their wing to train them in a skill set. They are described as respectful relationships requiring patience and are often characterized by demonstrations of commitment. Yuen describes receiving a call from Aunty Rose Fujimura, one of her mentors, who said simply, “Leilehua. Aunty Rose. I need you. Call me.” Yuen says she understood this to mean “You will show up and do as you’re told,” even if it meant a spontaneous drive to Kona.

Through learning about the lei, the mentees were also able to learn about life skills. Yuen describes her grandmother teaching her to walk in heels and a holokū up and down the stairs, which served her well in one of her first jobs as a model. Hufford recalls how her mother trained her in lei making and business:

We were living on O‘ahu when she first started in the flower business, and one of the reasons she helped me get started in the flower business even though I didn’t want to, I mean I had worked in florists before, you know, so I guess there was that deep seated desire to have my own flower shop.

Her mother would also mentor other people who were struggling with lei making; after helping them identify their problems, several of them went on to win awards.

Roen Hufford describes her relationship with a young girl she has spent years mentoring. She details how the girl began by learning basic tasks like weighing vegetables and sorting
flowers, and then grew to learn lei making and eventually kapa when Hufford determined she was ready. To Hufford, this kind of relationship is valuable and rewarding when the mentee comes into their own. Hufford summarizes this relationship, “So I have accomplished everything, she’s paying attention to what she’s doing, she’s able to handle the plant material and get what she wants out of it.” Among life skills, Marie McDonald taught her daughter to teach others:

So it has to do with the teacher, who’s the leader. Yeah my mother was good, oh my mother knew what she was doing. Yeah so, and she was able to recognize, what your skill level was, and so often times, so I would have to follow along and do the same thing, do a lei workshop…I like my mother to be remembered I like her as a teacher. Because she taught me all about leis. She taught me about kapa, she taught me about all the other things that I know how to do, you know I mean there are a few things that I didn’t learn from her, but the essentials. Or the stuff that makes life interesting. My mother taught me how to plant the first seeds, you know to, to make annuals to grow lettuce, and you know my mother showed me how to do that.

Hufford remembers her mother a skilled educator who prioritized sharing traditional Kānaka Maoli kapa and lei making techniques with the community.

As Hufford explains, she helped her mother against her will with the photos and drawings for her two well-known publications: “We went to ‘ūniki (graduation exercises, as for hālau hula), for some people my mother knew and my mother says, ‘take pictures of people with leis.’ So I walked up to her and took her picture! I didn’t know who she was. That’s Lokalia Montgomery, you know, very famous kumu hula!”

Beamer-Trapp and Yuen asked me to teach ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i to Redondo. Because she is living in South Korea, it was necessary to use VSee to work with her. After several weeks of virtual meetings and homework assignments, she was able to read ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i newspapers. Yuen has also mentored Redondo in a similar way; they exchange videos so that Redondo can learn new material and Yuen can offer critique.
Mentoring in Long-term Groups

The majority of these mentoring relationships with long-term groups take the form of kumu teaching their hālau, Roen working with a class of students, or Roen working with the women interested in beating kapa. Participants find these relationships meaningful even though they are less common than working with a single apprentice.

In her own words, Roen describes her idea for the school garden as a long term project for the students:

All three of my children had helped with the garden when they were in middle school. And I think that that’s an activity that it is not only appropriate, but important for young people to develop a relationship with plants and growing things--not just for food. It’s called mala‘ai (taro patch or food garden), and so it’s a food, it’s a culinary garden. But it has a whole bunch of things, and it has a cultural link to the families here that go to Waimea Middle School. I’ve been a supporter all along, so they, I was on the board at its inception, and one of the things, it wasn’t my idea, it was my friend’s idea, and I put it to the board.

This program was very successful, as Hufford continues:

Every kid at Waimea knows how to make a lei, a ti leaf lei. They make kaula (cordage), and they make kaula with kukui nut. A bracelet. They know how to make salad dressing...They know how to, they have chickens, I don’t eat eggs or chickens or anything like that, but they know how to take care of the chickens, and they can make an omelet out of what’s in the garden and the eggs and the chickens. So they have made meals that have been, that went on Hōkūle‘a.

Through sharing practical applications of Kānaka Maoli farming, Hufford empowered Kānaka Maoli youth over several years of mentoring.

Hufford also describes her passion for sharing kapa making. While lei making workshops are frequently offered, other Kānaka Maoli traditions such as kapa tend to get neglected. Roen explains that she chooses to teach fewer lei making classes and more kapa workshops because most people do not have the opportunity to learn the kapa, but it is equally important as the lei and worth perpetuating. Though she does not get paid, she sets aside time twice a week to
mentor anyone who is interested. Though Hufford engages in many kinds of cultural sharing, she expresses, “there is value,” in her work with the kapa group. She describes these sessions and her ambitions for the group:

So for the ladies who have asked me to do, a lot of times they ask me but a lot of times I ask them, do you want to learn how to do this, and they come over, a lot of times, everybody comes with different expectations, I have one lady who, she not sure about what’s going to happen with this, but she’s going to do it because she’s never done anything like this before. So, okay. And then we’re going to do a show. I managed to get us a show. And they wanted a show of kapa, I said it will be my stuff too, but I’m going to ask other kapa makers. That left it really open. I want all my students to contribute something to it.

During hula practice at Hālau LeiManu, I observed how Yuen adjusted the pace of the class so that it was manageable for all the students, who are of varied ages and abilities. Yuen commented to me that she had decided to repeat lei making lessons so that the skill could be retained. The hālau meets for practices, hosts community cultural activities, and celebrates members’ birthdays.

*Sharing Through Community Events*

All participants describe some form of sharing through community events. From the interviews, two SSTs of community events become apparent: community sponsored events and workshops. The reason for drawing this distinction is because they represent two different flows of energy. The first is when a community hosts a celebration or festival attended by the public. The second is when a single practitioner decides to host a workshop at a purposeful location, such as a school.
Community Sponsored Events

Several community members described participating in Lei Day over the years. Randy L. recalled his past three years of demonstrating at the event. Hufford remembers when her cousin was crowned as a lei queen, and how she is now one of the judges at lei making contests. Many stories were centered on preparations for Lei Day and other festivals. Hufford described childhood memories of participating in lei making contests with her cousins, which were opportunities for children to show off their skills as lei makers. They had to bring all their supplies, determine what kind of lei to make, and explain it in order to win. Roen Hufford describes her memories:

So [my mother] was working in the lei contest. Working too, as part of her job organizing the lei contest, she couldn’t enter herself, but she could, uh mentor other people. But um, my uncle was class of ‘47 Kamehameha Schools. And so his class would get together and they’d all make leis, and you know, enter the lei making contest…So there was a lot of camaraderie going on, and a little bit of competition you know—what’s happening at my house, what’s happening at their house, Ray Wong’s house, and you sending spies and that kind of thing, see what they’ve got over there—you know, interesting plant materials!

These events were a cause for the neighborhood and school communities to gather for friendly competitions:

So there was one lady who she always wanted to win the blue lei contest, you know. Sister Mary Glennie Tagupa, but she would also, (laughing) she would always go it, and we knew she was going to go and do every year. She would go and buy all the blue bachelors’ buttons she could find in Honolulu. She spent all this money, you know, on flowers. So she was gonna get blue. You know (laughing) I don’t recall if she ever won, but you know, she would do stuff, people would do stuff like that, you know, search out for the nicest materials, so the result was, my friends, and I, and my mom, and my cousins, we’d drive through the neighborhood looking in everybody’s yards!

While some participants in the lei making contests would order their plant materials well in advance, Hufford and her family sought lei plants growing within their neighborhood:

I was you know, 11, 12 years old. And of course, I wanted to do all these things. That’s what you do. I mean, I recall running round the neighborhood before Lei Day.
(O‘ahu) picking plumerias, breaking all the branches, you know, and running away (dissolves into laughter). But you know, people had plumeria trees, that was kind of par for the course. You just make another plumeria tree, right?...

Some lei makers would even enter off-island contests:

But Mrs. Lekelesa, she made beautiful leis. Mrs. Lekelesa, she would just—a lot of the people in this community were associated with the Ranches. So, they made leis for all the ranch events. And she would put them on the airplane and send them to the lei making contests. But they would put them on, and somebody would pick them up in Honolulu, take them, right, take them and enter them before the 10 o’clock deadline, or the 9 o’clock deadline. But they would put them on, and somebody would pick them up in Honolulu, take them, right, take them and enter them before the 10 o’clock deadline, or the 9 o’clock deadline.

Lei making contests were a beloved part of Hufford’s childhood. She and her cousins participated in keiki competitions where they had to demonstrate lei making skills without adult assistance:

And the younger cousins, they really, they really value that because they remember when they were children, that as a family we did this, we made leis together. Some of the other ones, they have a children’s lei contest in Honolulu. And that’s even more rigorous than the adult lei contest, because the children have to sit there and make a lei in front of the judges, and the judges will ask them, “What’s this? What are you doing?” You know, “Tell me about this lei. How did you decide on these flowers? Did somebody help you?” Make conversation. So, the child, the entrants have to be able to talk about, they have to know what they’re doing. The reason they did that, they established this children’s lei, was they killed two birds with one stone. They had a demonstration, and the children could participate. And I know because I was around when they made those decisions. So, my cousins, you know my cousins were at that age where they had different age groups, and they had all the kids lined up, all the six and seven year olds, all the eight and nine year olds, and the 10 and 11 year olds, and the...I mean, it’s like you’re on the Waikīkī Shell, you know the bandstand? And they had the...right on the stage there...And you know they’re there all in a line, and everybody’s looking at what everyone else got, and it was really stressful, but those kids really came across!

You brought your own, you had to bring your own. You had to decide how you were going to make your lei, and a kui lei was just as, you didn’t have to make a wili lei, you know, you could do a kui lei. So, but you had to sit there and you didn’t have your mother, or aunty or your grandma sitting next to you, you had to sit dere and do it yourself. It was really, there’s a picture in Ka Lei.

...So, what they did if you participated, you competed for lei queen, and then some became members of her court and followed her around. The other girls just became lei models. So, you stood there during the lei contest, next to all the leis, wearing the leis
of the different islands. So, you had to, you had to,—this is a voluntary position, but you would stand there and people would ask to take your picture and questions about your lei and blahblahblah and stuff. Yeah, I got a lot of those, pictures of those.

These contests encouraged keiki to learn about the complete process of lei making, from gathering materials, to a finished product. They were a chance for the keiki to be proud of the skills they had learned from their ‘ohana.

For fourteen years, Yuen has organized the Hilo Lei Day festival. Hosting such an event requires months of preparation. I attended planning meetings alongside her and assisted with the process. Several international video submissions were received for the lei making competitions. During talanoa with Yuen, while some community members and I were assisting her as she harvested the lei making materials from her garden, we reviewed these applicants and Yuen selected a winner. I observed Yuen coaching the hula performers at additional rehearsal sessions as the day of the festival approached. She fitted Redondo with one of her own holokū, patterned with red and black to represent Hawai‘i Island. Another performer was outfitted to represent Ni‘ihau and Kaua‘i in purple and silver.

Workshops

All but one participant described hosting a lei making workshop. Hahn has hosted several sessions in the past. She describes the event, “I’ve done that at a couple of different places. I’ve done a couple different workshops, when I was broke. I did, like the paint and sip, it was a haku class kinda thing.” Randy L. describes the workshop he regularly hosts for kama‘āina (locals) and malihini (guests) at Volcano Art Center, “Well, my day over here has been, how should I say, the second Friday each month for the last five years. All this time, I’ve been doing it the last five years up at the Gallery in the Park.” Hufford recalls learning at her mother’s side about
hosting lei making classes, and describes one of her first workshops she hosted with her friends in college:

She often times would take, if she was teaching a workshop, I would go and I would assist her… I had to know what I was doing to help her, to help people to learn how to make leis. And then it turned out that if my mother couldn’t do a lecture or presentation, that I would do it…I would do it with my friends, when I was at UH Mānoa. I don’t know if it was Lei Day or whatever, but the associative students of the University of Hawai‘i UH put this big tent up on campus, and all kinds of things were happening. I guess they asked me and my friends to do a lei making workshop, and have all this stuff, and anybody who passed by could make a lei. I think they gave us a couple hundred dollars, said, “Sure, we’ll do it!” You know. So, we just got all the stuff together, and in between our classes, we just hung out in the tent, and anybody who wanted to make lei, came in and we would show them how to make a lei. We would go to the mountains and pick ferns, we would go in our yards and pick all this stuff. And so, people would just sit down and learn how to make leis.

When Hufford was younger, she assisted her mother with workshops. Later as a student, Hufford began to host her own lei making classes.

In a lei making class at Hālau LeiManu, I observed Yuen explaining the significance of kupukupu. This sword fern is representative of the dancer: kupukupu unfurls from a tight curl, as a hula dancer advances in skill over time. It is referenced in “Ho‘i ē, Ho‘i Nō,” a ho‘i (a parting chant to which hula dancers dance as they leave the audience) used in Hālau LeiManu:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ho‘i ē, ho‘i nō</th>
<th>Return, return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ho‘i i ka ‘ohu ē</td>
<td>Return through the mists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ka uka lehua</td>
<td>In the uplands of lehua,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A‘o kula manu ē</td>
<td>Dwelling place of birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onaona i ke ‘ala</td>
<td>Sweet is the fragrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau o ke kupukupu</td>
<td>Of the leaves of the fern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kupu a‘e ke aloha</td>
<td>Where love was sprouted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noho pono i ka ni‘o</td>
<td>They dwell in righteousness in the heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ae, ‘ae, ‘ae</td>
<td>Yes indeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning by Doing

Learning by doing is used as a tool to teach an apprentice, or even oneself a new skill.

Hahn’s learning process relied on her experimentation and willingness to take on new materials:

So, I tried a couple of times just making a haku here and there but never really pursued it that much until recently. So, I just started playing around with it, and it’s been a couple years since now...I always knew the basic technique, which I’ll start and I’ll show you now. Basically, you wrap—this is raffia that I buy at Walmart. So, some people there’s a lot of different ways to do it, and because I’ve never really, I haven’t ever been shown other than Paul, but to me, you wanna try and make, first I would just sort of tie things together, I didn’t know how to start it, I didn’t know how to finish it, it was all ugly. So, I just tried different techniques, to get it to look nice on the ends. And so, this is what I have developed.

This is more than enough to go around your head. So, I start with 5-6 of ‘um. And this is only just in the last dozen that I’ve made I’ve kind of adapted. Well, yeah, I would love to learn different styles and like I just learned to make the pāpale niu, the coconut hat.

Without only a little formal instruction, Hahn mastered the haku lei through trial and error. A lei maker at the Maku’u Market observed Hahn struggling to finish her haku lei, but refused to teach her the steps:

I just went to this Aloha Hui festival, it was at the Maku’u Market a few months ago, it was free. Someone was doing haku lei making...for the kids, all kinds...I sat down, with the lady, and she could see that I was crafty and that I could figure it out, so she didn’t really--this is such a pain in the butt because it braids it up. (talking about long raffia string ends) Yeah. But yeah so when it came down to finishing it, she only showed me once, and I was like, “Oh I get it,” and then I was like, “How do I finish it?” She wouldn’t show me because she saw that I was trying to figure it out. “Your brain’s working…” Fine! (scoffs) And then you know there were other people that were not quite getting it and she was helping them.

So, I started, just little tricks, using the thick end first. Because the beginning is where you need that structure, whereas by the end, the other stuff is all piled up. That took me a while to figure out. And I’ve made the mistake before of thinking, “Oh that’s too big,” and cutting it, right at the end, but then once I continue on, once I get to the cut, it just kinks over and folds right there cuz you need to have that consistent bone I guess of base...I’ve had a few people like, “Oh how’d you learn to do that?” My uncle, which he was like my step dad for 10 years, and I just kind of adapted it.

After Hahn refined her haku lei skills, others turned to her for advice.
Yuen describes the first lei she ever made. She remembers experimenting with lantana to make a lei for her doll and her mother offering guidance:

Well, the lei is a beautiful adornment and...so I, the first lei that I remember making, you know, as a small child...you aren’t always aware of what’s inside of something, you just see the outside of it at first, and...so the first lei I remember making was from lantana. This was at the house in Alameda in California. And, lantana, the individual blossoms, are tubes. They have little tube shapes. And so, if you, so you can push the tube of one into the blosso...of another and make like a little chain. Of course, it doesn’t hang together, there’s nothing holding it together, but it looks like a lei when you push it together like that. And that is what I did. So, I made this little lei and put it on my doll and it promptly fell apart. I was quite distraught over that. And my mother came to see what was going on. I showed her and told her about it, “How do they make the flowers stick together? How do you make the flowers stick together to make the lei?” and my mother said, “Well, you have to put it on a string.” “Oh.” Where are you going to find a string small enough to hang lantana? My mother had glorious long, hip length golden hair. She was a platinum blond. And when the sun... To my eye, when I was a girl, my mother’s hair...if you take blonde honey, not the deep amber, but blonde honey, and you hold it up to the sun...The place where the sun is brightest through the honey was the color of my mother’s hair.

As a young child, Yuen experimented to make her first lei. When she became frustrated, her mother stepped in to help.

Throughout Hufford’s life, she can recall learning about lei with the help of her mother, Marie McDonald. She had the opportunity to learn about photography, art, cultural documentation, the flower business, and teaching:

And so [my mother] would say, “Okay, you’re going to make this lei. You’re gonna make a green lei, it’s gonna have ‘ōleil and it’s gonna have pala’a, and he said, “Okay!” And so, she put this stuff in front of me and I’d make the lei and I won a prize.

Not just that I learned from my mom, but I learned from being in, in the flower shop. Before that, before kapa, there was leis, and the flower business, and in between there was the growing vegetables, that’s what we did here. People learn a lot about the plants, when they do this, you know. But we’re learning about the plants, you know, and she always had an interest in growing things, and so the rest of my life happened, and here we are.

...So, I think that’s happened to a lot of people who start by making leis, they say, “Well can I use this, can I use that?” …There’s a picture in Ka Lei... Yeah so, she forced me to do all these drawings for her. (pointing to the book again) Yeah, this is George Holokai, he was a kumu hula. And there’s Lokalia Montgomery, we went to ‘uniki for some people my mother knew and my mother says, “Take pictures of people with leis.” So, I walked up to her and took her picture! I didn’t know who she was. That’s Lokalia
Montgomery, you know, very famous kumu hula! Oh, I just walked up with my camera and stuff.

I often times got put in a situation where she’d take me to like a ‘ūniki of a hālau and say, “Take pictures.” So, I would walk around, and I would stick the camera in somebody’s face and take pictures. Somebody who I thought was interesting, who had all kinds of leis on. So, there’s a picture in there of Lokalia Montgomery who was a very famous old time (inaudible). And I didn’t know who she was at the time, and that was probably very helpful in my being able to take the picture, cuz I just walked up and took a picture, said, “Thank you!” And walked away (laughing). So, it turned out to be nice pictures so we put them in the book. So that’s how I got involved in it, by simply being my mother’s daughter, I didn’t complain, I enjoyed doing that. And that’s been the story of my life. I enjoyed doing them, and my mother always insisted that we do it well. So, I excelled at it. She often times would take, if she was teaching a workshop, I would go and I would assist her, and so I would have to make like...I had to know what I was doing to help her, to help people to learn how to make leis. And then it turned out that if my mother couldn’t do a lecture or presentation, that I would do it. Or, I would do it with my friends, when I was at UH Mānoa.

Yeah, so I was lucky to help with this book and, the other book to even though I didn’t want to help with that one. I got to, I had to, the photographer couldn’t go to some places, you know, so I got to go to Kalaupapa and take some pictures there, and go to a couple other places, um Kaua’i as well as on O’ahu when he couldn’t go.

Hufford learned a variety of skills because her mother was constantly placing her into unfamiliar situations. Hufford also describes how she in turn guided her mentee and students to “learn by doing” just as Hufford’s mother had guided her:

She would be making bunches of dahlias for the market, she was in heaven. And I allowed her, she said, “How about that?” I said, “That’s fine.” We make all these different bunches, I said three this, I just put a number to them and we just assigned a price to them, all the bunches at $5 right? People would come and they buy all of hers, and she’d say, “See? I told you they were going to buy those! They were really nice, that was a nice dahlia.” She would get so joyous about the fact that somebody else saw the beauty that she saw in that bunch of flowers. And that she was allowed to make all these different combinations. They didn’t have to look alike; they could be every one different! I allowed her to do that. There was never, “You’re gonna waste it. Don’t waste it!” And her beating is so beautiful, and so she said, “Do you see this hole here?” “Yeah.” “You know how you fix that?” “How do you fix that?” “You beat a little bit on this side, you beat a little bit on this side, and then it’s fixed.” I said, “How did you figure that out?” She said, “been watching how this thing works.” So, I have accomplished everything, she’s paying attention to what she’s doing, she’s able to handle the plant material and get what she wants out of it.

So, it’s the same thing with the leis, you know. I make leis with my niece. She’s in her forties now, but I’d say, “Okay, we need forty of ‘em” Not a whole lei, but just a little cluster. They’re gonna go on a pū’olo and they’re gonna wrap a salad in it. So, we just make them all. So that to me is satisfying, when Annika comes, or the other ladies come,
and they get it, they get it. “Oh wow! I know how I’m going to do it.” they tell me. Or they want to know about dyes. I said, “Well try it out, let’s see what happens!” That’s how I learned.

Hufford allowed her protege Annika to discover for herself how to arrange flowers and make mistakes along the way. A trend among all the participants is that those who oversee the education of lei makers, or any other skill, allow the experimentation of the student, but know when to step in to support them.

At Hilo Lei Day 2018, there were stations of volunteers from the community who were teaching how to make different kinds of lei. The most popular station was the lei kui, but there was also a station where people could strip the bark from hao to dry and braid into a lei. A third station had supplies to make a lei from ornamental hibiscus stalks. The volunteer manning the station was wearing one such lei on her shoulders. I had never used this technique before, and so the community member gave me the tools and basic instructions, then left me to my devices to figure out the process. I chose several pieces of the hibiscus from a pile, and she offered commentary on which would work best. Once my pieces were selected, she gestured towards the stone wall surrounding the park, upon which were several small pōhaku for pounding. It took several attempts for me to understand how to handle the pōhaku and beat the ʻili (soft bark) until it was ready to peel off the iwi (inner stalk). Once I had finished one, I thought I was done, but the community member gestured to the pile again and encouraged me to grab more hibiscus stalks so that my lei would be full. After peeling the ʻili, I discarded the stalk. The community member helped me manage several long strips of bark that I had prepared, and together we wound them into a lei kā wili. In this particular style, the strands were lightly intertwined. After combining all the strands, she draped the lei around my shoulders. This lei is worn open in the front.
Sharing with Guests

All participants describe sharing culture with guests, which makes this a very important idea to explore. Sharing lei making traditions with guests can be a burden. There are two SSTs that emerge from the interviews: sentiments of frustration and how tourism is a burden on the lei maker and the plant supply.

Sentiments of Frustration

Practitioners express feeling underpaid, under-appreciated, and misunderstood when working with tourism. Hahn describes her aversion to O‘ahu, “Yeah O‘ahu sucks. Haha. It’s fun to visit, but there’s people and traffic and ick. Frickin’ tourists and… It’s like Kona on steroids.” Hufford explains her dissatisfaction with making lei for tourism:

A friend of mine said that some people were organizing this big convention. The convention was aimed at new entrepreneurs and how to market Hawai‘i, and they wanted to do for part—you know how these conventions goes. It’s for local people as well as mainlanders, so they wanted to have a lei making workshop for a particular time period. I guess, there [Duane] Kurisu, he was part of the KTA guys, he’s building homeless shelters on O‘ahu. ‘Kay yeah, so he wanted to do a couple of lei making workshop for, oh, 25 people or so, I was like, “Ugh (sighing heavily),” (laughing) you know, and I could just… How much would it cost, what would it entail, and finally I said to my friend, I don’t want to do it. I don’t want to do it. Cause, this is why. It’s the craft activity that you fit in between all the different… See that’s my gripe with the whole tourism thing. It’s just a craft activity that we do to fill a space of time. Maybe I’m sounding pretty um…but you know, yeah. They’ll fill this space of time so they can wear their lei to the cocktail party afterwards. And then how much would I charge them to do that? You bring all the materials. You drive all the way down to the Four Seasons, and you know, do this thing for them. I…you can’t pay me enough anymore.

Teaching lei making workshops is labor intensive and involves preparation and transportation of plant materials. For Hufford, it can be a thankless task, but she is willing to do it within certain parameters:

[Lei] are a symbol that tells you, you know, everybody has a story about a lei. You know, and if you were a visitor, you know when you received your first lei, and how
you received it. “It was at a convention and it was, a bunch of shells. (makes face)” You know. Maybe that colors your attitude towards it. Mmm. If you’re going to give somebody a lei, then give them a good lei. That’s...you know, they give shell leis, and I guess, that’s okay (scoffing). I give Job’s tears leis. I guess that’s okay, but...(shaking head). But you know I ran the Honolulu marathon and they threw ēhoa lei on me at the end of the race. It was like “Okay...”

Sometimes Hufford is frustrated by the poor quality of mass produced lei offered at events and conventions.

While most participants expressed feeling frustrated by tourism, Yuen and Randy L. welcome travelers to their workshops. Hufford describes her recent decision to cease holding lei making classes for guests, but for many years she worked regularly with tourists. In a conversation with Kekaualua, her sentiments were similar to Yuen and Randy L. In summary, while the participants experience frustration with certain circumstances in tourism, most are still interested in sharing culture with guests.

**Burden on the Lei Maker and the Plant Material Supply**

Two participants shared manaʻo regarding the exploitation of the lei and the lei makers through cultural sharing with guests. As they explain, tourism is taxing on the lei maker and on the natural supply of plant materials used to create lei. These women describe how they cope with these unrealistic expectations that do not consider environmental and personal well-being.

Hahn shares her attempts to consciously conserve materials in instances where a large number of lei was required. She describes trying to emulate a friend’s style that used less supplies, and compares it to a lei poʻo Hahn made for me to wear at the Pāʻina Pani Kau (End of Semester Party) at Ka Haka ʻUla o Keʻelikolani. Because she had only made one lei on that occasion, she was not worried about conserving materials. She recounts a time when she needed to make large quantities of lei and the tricks that she tried to maximize her materials:
I’m trying to make as many as I can...My friend Sara, you met her at the party... So, she’s made these as well. And she just busted them out so quickly. And that’s what I’m trying to do now is just kind of lay them so they’re faster. Like she kind of placed them, she didn’t make them as tight as I usually do, so I’m trying to do that now, in an effort to get more done, more you know. So, this is actually I’m trying to do it more her style. Which is, see how the back is not as tight, normally I try to make it really tight and add more stuff, but I’m trying to make a lot of them, and I’m not selling them for very much. So...I wanna try and make them, It’s not going to be all huge and full like yours.

For special occasions, such as gifting a lei to a friend on their birthday, Hahn thoughtfully crafts full, colorful lei with flair. However, when she needs to make many at one time, she expedites the process.

Feather or shell lei can be quite intricate. Unfortunately, tourist hotels do not always understand the time and effort needed to make these lei. One of Hufford’s moʻolelo demonstrates how kūpuna lei makers were expected to work in a dim and windy space:

I’m driving Tsugi Kaima, who is a world renowned feather lei maker. She’s in her eighties. My mom’s in her eighties. We’re driving down to the Mauna Lani, they’re having dinner for some group, and they want activities before, during the cocktail hour. They gotta set it up in this place, where the light—you can’t see! It’s dim. Tsugi is making feather leis! In the wind! Right? She’s supposed to be demonstrating. You’re asking this eighty-year-old woman to sit there and demonstrate in the dark! So, we’re making leis in the dark! It’s dark! So, they set these things up with no concept...It’s just a filler.

Hufford and the kūpuna lei makers were frustrated with the Mauna Lani hotel, which was insensitive to their needs and ignorant of the process of feather lei making. The hotel’s interest was only in entertaining its guests, rather than being culturally aware. Hufford expresses her exasperation when hotels or conventions order large quantities of lei and how some other lei materials were used to meet these market demands:

And then there was silk flowers... That were made into leis to help meet the needs, you know the marketing needs. You know if you have a convention of a thousand people, you need a thousand leis. You know, you could have a fake one, you know. Now it’s kukui nuts, which are processed in the Philippines maybe. And then they take them—they take the leis apart, and they restring them with mock orange leaves in between. Or they put sea grape— you know sea grapes?—in between, you know. I mean, so or they
use, aralia (schefflera actinophylla), you know the octopus tree, a red. So, I mean, or we made ti leaf leis, so Hawaiians and local people, I don’t want to say just Hawaiians, it’s all kine people, they’ve been very inventive. You know they make a lot of leis out of leaves now, because there are more leaves available.

But...is so taxing on the supply...and it’s taxing on the lei makers. I mean, we can make all kinds of leis, but when they want, they all gotta be the same, they gotta be the same color, you gotta have 500 of them! Why do you that to people?

Hufford continues by suggesting some alternatives to the way that tourism interacts with lei makers. She asserts that the parties purchasing the lei are ignorant of what it takes to meet the orders. Because of this, Hufford claims that they want to buy lei for unfair prices. As a potential remedy to this situation, Hufford suggests that rather than asking for lei of flowers, which may or may not be in season, that lei could be made out of different parts of the plant. She posits how this would be much less of a burden on the supply of lei plants:

Just all different! And they could be made out of, they could be made out of leaves. They make allowances for that! You would compensate the lei makers appropriately. You know, they want a lei for two dollars! You can’t make a lei for 2 dollars! Of course, you know, sometimes we would give it to them, right? Cuz in my day, I sold a crown flower lei for two dollars and fifty cents a strand...I started make for $25 now, but if somebody is really...maybe I’ll make it for $35, it just depends, if it’s “It has to have this and it has to have that,” you know. If I have to travel all over the place, then it’s gonna be more...But we are doing [kapa] this time of year because it’s the harvest time and the plant material is available for us. Parts of the year you can’t harvest it; it doesn’t come off the stick. So, the same thing with leis.

Hufford advocates for a more responsible use of lei plant materials.

I assisted Noe Noe Kekaualua during lei making workshops hosted by Destination Hilo, which tourists and local community members attend. She explained how she decided to use carnations and babies’ breath, which are common on the mainland. Her intention is two-fold: first, to show the visitors that they can make lei with familiar plants from their own backyards; and second, by using haole plants, she is reducing the strain on native species.
Community (N=187)

The practice of lei making is tied to the inner-workings of community. Common to all interview participants, the lei appears as a function for creating, sustaining, protecting, and celebrating these relationships. I identified four STs within community: lei as a means for community expression, the kuleana to support the community, the desire to document traditions, and community building. The element of community is the fourth largest of the five main themes. The size of this theme speaks to Yuen’s description that the lei binds people together. This practice is rarely done in isolation; the nature of the lei is that it is usually given to another.

*Lei as a Means of Community Expression*

Whether lei are given by ancestors, received by a prom date, or worn as an accessory, they are a sign of expression within the community. The lei is used to express a wide variety of sentiments. Thus, this ST is further divided into six SSTs: honoring someone, community pride, self-adornment, loss, sovereignty, and remembrance.

*Honoring Someone*

Lei are most often described as being used to elevate, distinguish, or honor someone. All participants discuss this SST. Lei are used as gifts of welcome to friends and practically to distinguish leaders. Yuen recalls her ‘ohana making lei to honor guests in their home:

I’ve always been...Let’s see, I studied with my grandmother just informally. You know. She just taught me and there was no escape. And whenever there were parties and things we would dance, and make leis. We would make leis for any guest we would have. When someone was having a party, we had leis for them to get. It was nice.

Hahn also shares a moʻolelo in which she shows aloha and welcome to friend who traveled to meet her:
Rosa came and cruised with me and Sierra up at the Airbnb, I picked up my friends from the airport, and I thought, “Oh they’re coming to Hawai‘i, let’s make them some leis.” Her and I were basically just cruising, foraging on the North Shore. We made a bunch of plumeria leis, and then the tiare, and like all kinds of stuff.

Yuen describes a very practical use of the lei: to identify the leader of a group:

My great grand uncle in Kaua‘i always wore the lei lā‘ī when he would do the hukilau (a method of fishing in which a large number of persons drive the fish into a net by means of ropes hung with leaves). And among other things, not just for protection, but him wearing the full lei lā‘ī showed that he was leading the hukilau for that day. So, you could kind of, people who weren’t from your area say, “Oh the guy in the lei. Watch what he does.” So, it was also kind of like a, badge of authority kind of thing. Made him easy to spot out of everybody else. Lei are still used to distinguish or honor the leader of a group or guest speaker.

Two participants share memories about lei used to identify and honor the leader of a family. Randy L. is honored to wear his ‘ohana’s lei niho palaoa:

It’s not a horn, it’s a lei niho palaoa whale tooth. But this is orca, from Waipi‘o. I don’t know why my cousins decided that...it’s a passed down thing, okay? It’s handed down to me. So, they told me it was my turn to wear it. I said why? (laughing) Is it my age? My grandfather married into ali‘i Hawaiian ali‘i. Umm, I mean my grandfather supposedly Chinese, married Hawaiian in Waipi‘o, where the but I’m related to the Father of Kamehameha, which is Liloa. Okay that’s where my line comes from.

Hufford had an opportunity to photograph such a lei for her mother’s book:

This is interesting, you see this, this lei was a lei, this is real human hair, this is a real lei. And this lei was in her family, that was passed to the oldest woman in her family. This lei was owned by Johnny Spencer, he was a famous musician. Have you seen the name Don Mitchell? He wrote the book on Hawaiian games. This is his wife.

As Hufford continues, she describes how relationships are built and sustained with lei:

So, my mom planted the vireyas—to come back to that— because you could put it on a string, it was a lei that could be made quickly, it wasn’t intended to last forever, it was just for that moment that you needed to honor somebody, so you had something, that didn’t cost an arm and a leg, was lovely to look at, and the person know, that you made it! So as long as that part is there, that people want to do that, I think my mother may have written it in one of her books!

But you know, giving a lei is as much for the giver as for the receiver. So, it’s important for the person who made the lei—or even bought the lei, it’s important for them. There’s a relationship there. So, as long as we want, as that relationship is important, there will be lei makers. You know they’ll make it out of something. It won’t look like the leis that were made when I was a child.
Hufford views lei as a tangible expression of a relationship.

When my mother was expected to arrive on a visit, I asked Yuen if she would help me to make a lei that would honor her arrival. Yuen supervised me as I harvested kupukupu and ‘iwa‘iwa from her garden and braided them into a haku style. She offered no guidance at first, but encouraged me to experiment and learn the lei by trying. Eventually, she assisted me and helped shape the braid into a lei po‘o that I offered to my mother when she arrived at the airport.

Community Pride

Three participants describe how certain communities are represented by lei. Randy L.’s family lei niho palaoa is representative of his “culture and bloodline.” He is proud of this distinction. Hufford shared mo‘olelo about the local lei makers preparing for graduation:

Mrs. Lekelesa, she would just—a lot of the people in this community were associated with the Ranches. So, they made leis for all the ranch events, and um, so they knew all the places up mauka to get ‘a‘ali‘i and all these wonderful native plants. And so, she would make leis. And the colors of those plant materials were just gorgeous, you know. So, Mrs. ...she won a lot of prizes. So, at graduation time, because HPA is the largest— their colors are red and white, so she always makes sure she has red and white mini carnations. Honoka‘a is yellow and green, I don’t know what Parker School is. But she gets red and white mini carnations, and she has buckets of them, and they’re all in warm water and they’re harvesting the flowers every day. So, to make leis out of them.

Graduation season requires lei makers to prepare for the huge influx of orders. Hahn plans ahead for this time of year, when she is sure to have several orders, “I had an order for one for a graduation lei a couple weeks ago. It was for Waiākea High School, which is my Alma Mater. And they are blue and white. So, I bought those hydrangea bushes out there.”

Hahn shares a mo‘olelo about her paddling group who made leis for each other to wear at the State Championship:

In 2016, we were paddling, and we went to States on O‘ahu. I met my friend Rosa through the Club. She actually was in Kainani’s class...She grew up here. Anyway, so we were over there paddling, and we were on the same crew together in O‘ahu. She had
brought some stuff from here on our Island. So anyway, she had brought that with her from Hilo on the plane, and some raffia, and just wanted to make leis for our crew after we raced for States, the six of us. Actually, I think there were two open women’s crews, and a couple people raced twice, so I think there were nine of us or whatever. So anyway, we were sitting there on the beach in O‘ahu Ke‘ehi Lagoon and she was like, “Here, make these leis.” So, everybody was like “Oh, I’ll make one.” So, they all kind of made them for each other.

The members of Hahn’s paddling group honored each other with gifts of lei before competition.

At the 2018 Merrie Monarch Festival Royal Parade, I observed how pā‘ū riders (horseback riders wearing traditional riding skirts) represented their respective islands. Each princess and even her horse donned sets of lei made from the plant associated with each island. Colored satin in her community’s hue is draped about each princess forming a pā‘ū covering her legs in a fashion that historically protected clothing from dust and travel. For example, yellow satin and ‘ilima are worn by the O‘ahu pā‘ū rider; the princess representing Maui wears pink and lei made from lokelani.

Remembrance

Three participants shared memories of their family and childhood as associated with lei. Yuen offered a nostalgic mo‘olelo about her mother showing her how to make a lantana lei. Randy L. expresses his pride to wear his family’s lei niho palaoa, a precious family heirloom made from the carved tooth of a whale that has been handed down through the generations of his family. Finally, Josiah shares a fond memory of his ‘ohana gathered around the lei:

You know, you were talking about the lei…the lei was, for us, was kind of like a tie, the bridge between generations, because depending on the circumstances that you were making the lei, you could learn so much about your ‘ohana, it was like, you know if you were making leis for a funeral, for example. You know, obviously, a lot of the stories, as people are sitting around making leis, a lot of the stories go back to what this person’s life was like, what were some of the kolohe things they did, or how they met their wife or husband. or kids they had, you learn so much and then on a different level, say you’re making leis for graduation, and you’re sitting around and you’re talking, and your listening…and you
listen to, you know when your tūtūkāne was in school and how kolohe he was. You hear all these things and if you’re smart enough, you just sit and listen, and not try to, um, not try to interject. You just sit. And you know that’s where I got a lot from my mom, is, is cuz she did a lot of lei making and crafting things, and she would sit and talk, but after a while she would just ramble, and talk about anything that came to her mind.

Josiah’s ‘ohana shared cherished memories as they shared the labor of making lei.

**Beauty, Pride, Self-Adornment**

Four participants shared stories about adorning oneself with lei for pride, beauty, or pleasure. These stories were told with enthusiasm and fond reflection. Hahn remembers a special day at the beach with her daughter and her friend:

And so, I basically walked in with a bag and a handful of raffia and gathered whatever was there along the way. We ended up with some pretty sweet, mostly all greenery, but we ended up with some pretty sweet leis at the end. We sat there on the beach, she played with my kid, and I sat there and made us leis.

For some individuals, the lei is more than a gift that is given away. It is also connected to sexuality, confidence, mortality and identity. Hufford reflects on her memories of the plants in her mother’s garden and the pride felt when wearing a lei:

The making of the lei—when you give a lei, you honor somebody. You tell them how you feel about them. You tell them, “I love you. I love you enough to spend some time”—and it might even be some money—” on them.” Or you wear it yourself, and you say, “Look at me. I’m great. Draw attention to me. These are my jewels, and they’re only going to last this long, so you have to enjoy it with me in this short time.” That’s important.

And it’s interesting, just study what lei means, how did the Hawaiians use that term in their society, in the days of old? They called their children ku’u lei, or lei makamae. You know, they referred to the children as their lei, their grandchildren as their lei. Their progeny, right? Something that you are proud of. So, my friend always says, he was in the tourist business. He said, “Your lei is your grandchild with its arms around your neck.” So, you know, you picture that…

Hufford attributes further significances to the lei, comparing it to a beloved child.

Hufford also described the joy her apprentices and students felt when they completed a lei:
She would get so joyous about the fact that somebody else saw the beauty that she saw in that bunch of flowers. And that she was allowed to make all these different combinations. They didn’t have to look alike; they could be every one different!

They had to put part of themselves in it. I mean outside of plumeria leis and tuberose leis, but if you did wili lei or haku lei, they would all look different. And that happened last week. All the ladies’ looked different! And I could say, “Okay you’re gonna, when you put the flowers in, this is as wide as your lei is gonna be.” But they come out that wide, (showing a wider span with her fingers) but they put in on their head and they still feel beautiful.

Hufford sees the beauty in how lei are representative of the person that made them. Even if two lei are made of identical materials, they will reflect that person’s style.

Yuen recalls a story of her grandmother getting ready for parties and adorning herself with pua (flowers):

So, there’s that um, and just sitting there making the lei, she would tell stories about like one time, we were sitting there making lei pīkake, stringing lei pīkake. She was telling me how when she and my grandfather would go to parties back in the heyday, she had long red hair. She had waist length red hair, and she would put it up in this bun, so even if she wasn’t going to wear a lei, she would take a handful of pīkake and wind it up in her hair so her hair would have the fragrance of pīkake. And, so she didn’t really wear perfume, she would wear, she would tuck flowers in her hair, and so she was surrounded with the fragrance of the flower.

Yuen’s childhood memories of her grandmother show how flowers were a part of her party attire.

During a talanoa session with Yuen, I used her iPhone to record a demonstration video her harvesting kupukupu and ‘iwa‘iwa, which she used to braid into a lei po‘o. Upon its completion, she said that she would not be able to enjoy the lei before it wilted, and therefore I should wear it myself. She helped refine the shape to better frame my face, and I returned to my class afterwards, wearing the lei.
**Loss**

Though these mentions are few, they are accompanied by vivid, emotional moʻolelo that visibly affected the narrators. Four participants mentioned loss in their interviews. Hufford tells a moʻolelo of someone sending a mile-long lei lāʻī hilo to honor the victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting. She also describes how a lei was her mother’s first choice to bring when someone passed away. Randy L. recalls his childhood association of puamelia leis with loss, “Growing up...kids you know the...plumeria leis...we all made puamelia leis. And I remember from Kindergarten, every time the veterans sing...the punchbowl, 24 inches on the tombs. Like this.”

Hufford detailed a story about one of her friends coping with the loss of her parents through the lei:

It reminds...every time she makes a lei...She’s a couple years younger than me, four years younger than me. It reminds her of her parents. And she misses them so much. So, she planted a red hala in the front, cuz her father used to make red hala lei, and they have you know, plants that I gave em, and all her, so I said, she wanted to know where to get the seeds for her flowers, so I turned her on to a seed company so she could grow, get her annuals from. And uh, cuz she’ll be making leis all the time cuz that’s what she loves to do. So, on Facebook she always, she’ll post something that reminds her of her parents. And so, the cousins who knew her parents growing up were, you know when you’re growing up. I guess they’re in their 50s now, 40s and 50s. It helps for them to remember those members of our family who have passed, you know, so she’s really good at that.

Hufford’s friend associates red hala (which also symbolizes loss) with her deceased parents because her father used to make lei hala. Planting the tree and making lei hala help her to feel connected to her late father.

**Sovereignty**

Sovereignty is a theme of ongoing importance in the broader Kānaka Maoli community. These examples alluded to sovereignty because they indicate that community members maintain reverence for the aliʻi even more than a century after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian
Kingdom. The Kamehameha and Kalākaua dynasties are entombed at Mauna ‘Ala (fragrant hill), the Hawaiian Royal Mausoleum State Monument on O‘ahu (Dean 2009). Hufford recalls lei contest participants offering their lei at this site:

After the lei contest, all the leis that were entered in the contest were taken up the next day up to the Royal Mausoleum in Nu‘uanu. They’re taken up, and they decorate the Royal Mausoleum. They were sitting in boxes, in this picture. (pointing to image in Ka Lei 1986).

In a similar example, I observed Yuen honoring the King Kalākaua statue with lei at Hilo Lei Day 2018. This was one of the first activities of Lei Day, ensuring that homage was paid to the ali‘i before any further activities commenced. Hālau LeiManu also made lei kukui and lā‘i to adorn the statue of King Kamehameha in Piʻopiʻo in Hilo.

*The Desire to Document Traditions*

Participants describe their endeavors or desires to perpetuate cultural data. This was approached in a number of ways, including publishing books, taking photos, recording audio, and developing exhibits. Yuen and Hufford are especially passionate in this pursuit.

**Publishing Books**

Several participants have published books on lei making. As Hufford notes, most people who write books on lei making were merely observers. Hufford comments on the oral nature of these traditions, which are rarely written down. However, it is very valuable when the lei maker herself writes or otherwise documents the practice. Hufford shares many moʻolelo about working with her mother, Marie McDonald to publish *Ka Lei* (1985) and *Nā Lei Makamae* (2003), which document traditional lei making. The books are known for their colorful images of Hawaiians.
dripping with lei. The ‘āina where each lei originated serves as the background for these photos.

It is a very striking effect. Hufford acted as her mother’s assistant throughout the process:

And so, as part of her job, [my mother] would do that. And so, because she was showing people how to make leis and talking about it, she did a whole collection of slides, showing all the different leis, and lei making materials, both native and non-native. She amassed this whole--we call it a database now--she had this whole, all this information that she collected. And people would say, “You should put it in a book.”

Okay, so that’s how she started writing her book. So, when she, the concept, if you’ve seen Ka Lei?...Kay the parts that’s in italics, yeah, is her personal stories about leis and her life. And anybody who’s grown up here, or even visited here, has had that kind of little story about a lei in their life, or leis in their life. That’s why she wrote it that way. You got the botanical, and cultural information, about particular leis, and then you got her personal stories why leis are important.

McDonald was inclined to sharing lei making information she had gathered over the years. She felt that the lei is as related to botanical information as it is to personal stories. While McDonald was passionate about publishing her research, her daughter Hufford was initially resistant to support her:

Yeah that I didn’t want to learn how to do. But when my mother was really active researching and lei making, I kind of you know, gave you a little tip on how she got started. I was you know, 11, 12 years old. And of course, I wanted to do all these things. That’s what you do.

Which was really interesting because she learned a lot of—at that point she was doing a lot of research about leis and she had accumulated a whole slide collection and insisted I take all these pictures for her first book. So that was kind of fun. Yeah so, she forced me to do all these drawings for her. (pointing to the book again). So, at the time that she was, she started collecting all this information when I was in high school, maybe even before that. Well, I was lucky. I was lucky. With my mother’s publication, there were some other small publications at the same time. You could probably research them.

When I was in college [my mother] insisted that I help her with this book and take all the photographs for it. So, I am not, I was forced to do that. She brought the camera for me to do that. And so, I would go everywhere she needed pictures taken for various things. So, it was kind of interesting, on one occasion, we had to go to a concert, and there were all these old time guys, you don’t even know their names, who were going to be performing. But at that performance was a hālau from Hilo. And it was Mrs. uh, Kanakaʻole and her daughters came. And they, one of the first times that they were introduced to Honolulu society, they came and did an event there so, there are some, there is a picture in Ka Lei that I took of Nalei Kanakaʻole and Pualani Kanakaʻole. They were both dancers then, at that performance.
Over time, Hufford became accustomed to helping her mother document lei making. She became skilled at drawings and photography:

Yeah, so I was lucky to help with this book and, the other book to even though I didn’t want to help with that one. I got to, I had to, the photographer couldn’t go to some places, you know, so I got to go to Kalaupapa and take some pictures there, and go to a couple other places, um Kaua‘i as well as on O‘ahu when he couldn’t go.

So, the interesting thing about this book is it’s like a picture album. There’s, there’s their tag. This is my cousin Jamie. She is, I’m 68, she’s 58 now. That’s cousin Jamie. Yeah, she um, and the reason she um, this is like a photo album of sorts, because sometimes my cousins were the only ones, I needed to take a picture of the leis. I had the leis, I took the picture of the plant materials. I took the picture of the lei, that was the way we were going to put this together. And then I had to have a picture of somebody wearing it. So, my mother wasn’t here, So I took this (pointing to the flower pictures) and I took this (pointing to the other image), my cousin was the only one here, and I said, my cousin, she was home, so I said, “Get over here I’m gonna take a picture of you.” She was a little cautious cuz she had just gotten her braces off. (laughing) Yeah, so you know she was wanting it to be a certain way you know and I think, she hadn’t gotten her braces here (points to another photo) so she was a little self-conscious, but…

While helping out with the book, Hufford met important figures in the Kānaka Maoli community:

Yeah, so you know I remember these things, like this lady, she lives here in Waimea, this is Didi Bertelemen. She was married to Clayton, so Clayton passed, so she’s like…but this was like 1973? And she happened to be here and we needed a picture of that lei. And this is my friend Marilyn, she lives up in the Volcano now. She’s only two years younger than me, so she’s 66. So, a lot of these people, they were either family or friends, they were here! This lady, my, my mom was there. You know, the idea was to get the puakenikeni as well as the, we don’t see the—, we very rarely see this. That’s why when that guy, that policeman who died, he was wearing a vanda lei in that picture that they showed. Like, wow where did he get that vanda lei? And either you could drive here, you could drive here in the 70s, you could drive along Hāmākua and you could see the vanda farms. I don’t know why people don’t grow vandas anymore. So easy. In a small space, you can grow lots of vandas. And you pick ‘em every day, you got plenty of leis! Yeah, cuz vandas grow like this, they grow straight up and down. Right? So, and then you just pick the flowers every day that are blooming, and you just save them.

You know who this is right? (pointing to picture) That’s ‘Iolani Luahine. I happened to be at, that was ‘Iolani Luahine, and that was her, her student, her haumāna, was Hoakalei, uh, Hoakalei Kamau’ū. I think she’s already passed too.

Eventually, photography became second nature to Hufford and she began to enjoy herself. On occasion, her friends would pose wearing lei or help her gather plant materials:
My friends all, we’d all go, so I’d take a picture of them, take a picture, take a picture. Also, at that time, when I was in college, I was doing a lot of hiking. So, she would send us off to the mountains, my friends and I, or I had a lot of friends who were in botany, they were entomologists, or botanists, and so we would, when we’d go hiking we’d be looking for all kinds of stuff that she needed so, you know to gather to photograph for her book.

McDonald was encouraged by Paul Weissich to publish her lei making knowledge:

So, Mr. Weissich passed recently. But he worked with my mom on a number of different projects, or she worked with him on a number of different projects. Cuz he was the director of Honolulu Botanical Gardens. And so, he would um, get her involved in all kinds of stuff. He says, “Oh okay, Marie, you gotta write a book on kapa.” She says, “No way!” (imitating voices, laughing) You know, so yeah. They were plant people, so. I think, I don’t know if he published it already, but he wrote a book on ‘ōhi‘a. That was his, I know he was working on it a few years ago. Paul Weissich, so. If it actually got published, or is in process of being published. But he would come up here because we have so many beautiful ones in Waimea, in a close place (laughing), he’d just stand there, and there were all these different ‘ōhi‘as! So that’s what he did.

So, this is my sister, that’s my cousin. You know, they happened to be there, and I needed to take the picture, so…This is my friend, her name was ‘Ulupainapāikamakaninahenahe, we were both trying to aloha this guy (pointing) we didn’t get him. Either of us! (laughing)

Pictures for the book were taken in various places across the islands:

So, this one was at a cattle branding here in Waimea. So, my mother made these leis and we took ‘em, they invited us to the cattle branding. And so, they, they had leis, so we could take a picture. And this one we went, I think it’s July fourth, Yeah July fourth weekend at, in Na‘alehu, they always have a big parade, and so these were taken there. This one was at a Kamehameha Day parade on Kaua‘i. Yeah. So, these are my friends, they were both lei makers. This is at a graduation. (page turning) Yea so here, ʻōkoa.

Reflecting on these images brings back Hufford’s memories of her adolescence:

And this is my friend, who died in a car accident, a hiker. Yeah, yeah. (page turning) And, that was on Kaua‘i. There’s this other picture—this is my cousin, Malia, she was three. Malia must be forty something now. And uh, she was a little shy cuz she didn’t have her shirt on.

This is George Holokai, he was a kumu hula. And there’s Lokalia Montgomery, we went to ʻūniki for some people my mother knew and my mother says, “take pictures of people with leis.” So, I walked up to her and took her picture! I didn’t know who she was. That’s Lokalia Montgomery, you know, very famous kumu hula!

This is my mother—no those [hands] are somebody else’s, but I can’t remember who…Who are these ladies? This is Nalani Kanaka‘ole, and this is Pualani Kanahele, when they were only ʻōlapa. Their mother was still, their mother had taken the whole
hālau to Honolulu, and they were doing something at McKinley High School, and I went backstage and I snapped their picture. This is Nalani.

So, you stood there during the lei contest, next to all the leis, wearing the leis of the different islands. So, you had to, you had to,—this is a voluntary position, but you would stand there and people would ask to take your picture and questions about your lei and blahblahblah and stuff. Yeah, I got a lot of those, pictures of those.

This is my friend Heather who lives in Oregon now. And my cousin, Johnny Jean, so, and this, who is this, this is Kawena Pūkuʻi, this is Mary Kawena Pūkuʻi. Okay so, this is my dad. And this is here on the farm, where she took, yeah, the same idea as a paʻinīu, and she plaited it to make this lei. And so, they were um taking, tryin’ to use proteas.

Working as her mother’s apprentice brought Hufford in close contact with respected kumu and scholars.

Yuen has published several articles that bring Hawaiian tradition to a broader audience (Yuen 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2018a, 2018b). In addition, she uses the platform of the hālau’s website to share and perpetuate lei making knowledge. She expressed that she wants to keep her publications free or reasonably inexpensive so that cultural practitioners can access them.

Photos

Lei makers have been using photos for many years to document their work. However, the development of the smart phone allows for production of unprecedented amounts of images that can be shared immediately with a global audience. Cultural practitioners like Yuen are taking advantage of these abilities. Yuen makes regular updates to the hālau Facebook page and online classes. She uses her iPhone to document cultural events, and encourages others to do the same (Figure 7). Yuen outlines her plans to document these activities sponsored by the grant:

I need to do 50 lei making workshops before the end of the year. Five zero. One a week. And…they need to be documented. I’d like to do still photos and video. You know, these days you can easily, well you’ve always been able to easily take a video, and extract a still photo from a video, so, that’s not a problem. So, the video is more critical because it’s harder to get, and we can always extract stills from that.
Social media sometimes serves a publishing platform for these photos. Hufford observes how Facebook has been used to share lei and traditional practices:

So, I was posting this picture because the vireya was really beautiful. So, before I harvested them all. I took this picture... That’s why my cousin who just, she and her husband were living on Lāna‘i, her husband still goes back and forth and works Lāna‘i, but they purchased a house in Kalapana side. And, it’s like one acre flat. So, she’s starting here lei garden. All raised beds, cuz it’s kind of just red cinder. So, I said, “Oh God,” so nothing grows on that. So, I said, “You just hafta bring in lots of compost in, and compost your weeds, you know,” and so she starts her little lei garden. And every time she makes a lei she takes a picture of it. Cuz she gifts them to people. It reminds... every time she makes a lei... She’s a couple years younger than me, four years younger than me. It reminds her of her parents. And she misses them so much. So, she planted a red hala in the front, cuz her father used to make red hala lei, and they have you know, plants that I gave ‘em, and all her, so I said, she wanted to know where to get the seeds for her flowers, so I turned her on to a seed company so she could grow, get her annuals from.

And so, you know we communicate differently now, right? Before we’d call each other up or we go to their house, but they lived close, right? Now, everybody’s spread out on all the different islands, on the mainland. So, on Facebook she always, she’ll post...
something that reminds her of her parents. And so, the cousins who knew her parents growing up were, you know when you’re growing up. I guess they’re in their 50s now, 40s and 50s. It helps for them to remember those members of our family who have passed, you know, so she’s real good at that. You know, and she’ll say, “I’ve been pulling weeds,” or, “I’ve been soaking in my ‘auwai.” And you know that kind of stuff.

Social media is a more direct way for lei makers to share their day to day activities, such as tending to their gardens.

Yuen trained me how to take photos and videos that document tradition in a meaningful way to the community. She explained how in the past, she has worked with a professional team that was supposed to document her harvesting and making lei. However, she explained that when she was chanting an oli and harvesting, they zoomed in close on her face, neglecting her hands. She was very frustrated because this was contrary to the intention of the videos. Thus, she trained me how to frame the shots so that the subject’s head and arms form “box that’s telling a story.” She also encouraged me to keep a wider frame if I am ever in doubt, because images can always be zoomed in later.

**Exhibit**

While most lei makers are using photo and video to document traditions, Roen Hufford describes an exhibit she is putting together to showcase the work of her kapa students. She seeks her mother’s advice to design an effective way to display the kapa that will show its intricate lace-like patterns:

And then we’re going to do a show. I managed to get us a show. And they wanted a show of kapa, I said it will be my stuff too, but I’m going to ask other kapa makers. That left it really open. I want all my students to contribute something to it. I wanted my students not to have to worry about the size of [their product], you don’t have to make kihei (shawl or cape worn over the shoulder), or “I gotta make a kihei!” So, I had a whole bunch of mats, so I said why don’t you think about it fitting in a frame so you have a certain amount of format here. I said the matte can be plain, or the matte can have kapa on it, and the kapa on the inside, we talk about watermarks that are beaten into the kapa, so, does it come
across in your picture? I’ve got to figure out how to display this so people can see the light all the time.
Yeah, I’ve, so besides big pieces, so this is the light idea (shows me a box of framed kapa, around a light source, like a paper lantern). [My mother] said, “You need to put a light behind the kapa.” So, I’m putting a light behind the kapa. So, I take all those over there and I show her. “Okay, I’m going to put a light behind the kapa. I’m going to mount this in a box and I’m going to put a light source in it, and it’s going to sit on the wall or on the table.” I said, “You said to put a light behind it. So, does it work?” She goes, “Yes, it works.”

Hufford attempts to minimize the pressure on her kapa making students, who may have otherwise felt obligated to contribute large traditional pieces to the exhibit. Instead, Hufford encourages them to make pieces that are less intimidating, but allow for their creativity to show.

McDonald advises Hufford on artistic elements of the kapa exhibition.

Audio

Two participants note an interest in documenting traditions through audio recordings.

First, Hufford shares her intention to incorporate audio into the kapa exhibit. “So like, some people I have a couple that are going to do a video of the sound of the beating of kapa in the forest.” Second, Manu Josiah expresses his regret for not recording oral traditions of his ʻohana:

Those stories are the kind of stories that get passed down. Cuz you’re smart enough you listen and then you run someplace and write it all down, record it or whatever. I never, and I regret this because I never took the opportunity to set a recorder down on the table when all the kūpuna were around talking stories or whatever. I just had to remember them and try to regurgitate them or whatever on paper, but…

While oral tradition is a resilient form of passing information from one generation to the next, it is an unfortunate inevitability that some stories will be forgotten. These participants are working to minimize that possibility.
Participants describe using lei to support the community by strengthening existing relationships. Lei are used to show approval and friendship. They are also used to support struggling members of the community. Though three participants mention this kuleana, Roen Hufford provided extensive elaboration. Hufford tells how she supported her fellow students during her time at the university by putting together presentations and workshops where everyone could learn about the lei:

The associative students of the University of Hawai‘i put this big tent up on campus, and all kinds of things were happening. I guess they asked me and my friends to do a lei making workshop, and have all this stuff, and anybody who passed by could make a lei. I think they gave us a couple hundred dollars, said, “Sure, we’ll do it!” And I think for one of my classes, it was an ethnobotany class, I forget what number it was, botany something or another. Everybody, it was for non-majors. Anybody who attended the class had to do some kind of project. About some plant, or plants that were important to the Hawaiians for their existence. So, I went in and talked to Beatrice Krauss, I said, “I can do a project on leis,” I told her. Cuz I knew about it. She said great, you can give the lecture, she told me. So yeah, so at that point I was a junior, and I said okay, I got a slide, I can do a slide presentation. And she said okay you can do it to all the different (I guess there was three or four classes that she had) and she said, “You do it for all four classes, and that will be your project.” Anything that meant I didn’t have to write a paper was fine with me.

Starting in her college years, Hufford has participated in countless workshops to benefit the community. She hosts opportunities for people to learn traditional Kānaka Maoli art forms:

[The workshop is] for local people as well as mainlanders, so they wanted to have a lei making workshop for a particular time period. I guess, there Duane Kurisu, he was part of the KTA guys, he’s building homeless shelters on O‘ahu. ‘Kay yeah, so he wanted to do a couple of lei making workshop for, oh, 25 people…

My current thing is to beat kapa and to help people learn how to do that. Cuz there are a lot of people who want to learn how to do that. I did a workshop, but when I do it in workshop format where you have a condensed amount of time, and I have to take all the tools, all the raw materials, and they want a success experience, but they want to come away with something that they made… So, what I do now is on Mondays and Thursdays I don’t have a vegetable harvest, I’m not required to do anything, except maybe clean my house, cook the…that’s my kind of thing, so at least that’s my, the time I can devote, at least the afternoon hours. People come over, and we work out here. We harvest the
wauke and we beat it. In a sense I’m still doing, leading a workshop or teaching, but this is what we come away with, the beginnings of larger pieces. This is what I’ve been spending a lot of my time on is this…

Workshops are an investment in the community. Even though they are a burden to prepare,

Hufford feels compelled by kuleana to make these classes available.

Hufford remembers many moments when her family acted to support the community.

She assisted her mother with workshops and mentoring members of the community who wanted to be better lei makers. Marie McDonald employed local people to work odd jobs for her, and allowed them to plant in her garden. Hufford recalls her mother supporting one woman in her ambition to enter a lei contest:

Yeah, some people’s hands are hot! I told this story the other day, one of my friends, she was so demoralized, “I make leis every year, I never win a prize, ehhh!” And I said, “Okay. We’ll make leis together.” And she says, “Yeah please, tell me what I’m doing wrong!” (crying voice) So we’re making the leis, and—we’re making wili leis, she put the flower in there and then she did this, pressed it down like this, then she tied the string, and she tied another knot, and she put the next flower in and she pinched it, push it around. I said, “Stop touching your flowers! Put it in the place, wrap it with the string, leave it alone!” I said, “You are bruising your flowers every time you do that!” And then you know she pushed it down like this, you know (gesturing roughly, laughing) I said, “You’re putting bruises all over it, no wonder, and you’re pushing it and you’re squeezing it just decide where you’re going to put it, and put it there and wrap it place!” I mean I slapped her hand a couple times. She won a prize!

Individuals sought McDonald’s guidance which helped them identify bad lei making habits.

Hufford recalls how McDonald also supported immigrants and low-income workers:

But we had um, we had a—she had a whole series of Japanese and Filipino gardeners that would you know come and, they had other jobs during the week, but on the weekend, they would come and work for her. So, they said you know “Oh Mrs.! M-make plenty, pretty flower!” I was--my mom says, “Okay.” She says, they said, “No, I plant pretty flower for you.” She said, “What did you plant?” Cuz she would have always lots of flowers. And, “No, no, no. You…so many days, you see pretty flower coming up.” When the seed germinated she said, “He planted corn!” You know so (laughing together) so then he could, cuz he wanted corn, right? So, so in all the spaces he would plant corn seeds so that they would come up. And he was right, it did have a pretty flower. It made nice fruit too. But she would have that relationship with her yard men. They’d say, “Oh Mrs. I plant
pretty flower for you.” Or, “I come hanahana” I come work for you, you know, and they’d take care of her flowers.

During hurricane Iniki, the first one, we were traveling. And so, my manager worked, her husband was a marine, and so they had lost all power, so she said she lived in my flower shop while, cuz you know they had power in the shop, so she lived there for a while. You know they cooked their meals there, kept their food there until they got power.

McDonald was generous with what she had; she ensured her employees were well cared for.

Sometimes Hufford spoke of times when the community had shown support for her family’s hard work. She tells excitedly about a very special lei that came to them:

Okay this picture’s very interesting. Cuz this is Hawaiian, this is Tongan, and that’s Samoan. Samoan would have been fresh, but I didn’t, we just, but the way they strung it together--this one through the seed, this one they took the skin off the hala fruit and then um stitched it to a leaf. And then these flowers in the middle had a very strong fragrance. And this came from the Queen of Tonga. It came to us.

When Yuen hosts a cultural class at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station, members of Hālau LeiManu often come to support her. Hālau members assist in unloading Yuen’s car and setting up for the class. During the class, they help teach the visitors how to make lei lāʻī hilo.

Yuen encourages each person to teach another once they understand the technique.

Community Building

Community grows through the formulation of new relationships. The students Hufford mentors connect to a larger community by preparing food from their garden that is featured at local restaurants and even served on Hōkūle‘a. Hufford’s says of her mother, Marie McDonald:

And in her position there, she had to do in-service training for the playground director so they could do the lei contest, so they knew what they were doing. So, they could encourage people who came to the playground to learn how to make leis, if they didn’t already know.

Two narrators shared about their flower and lei businesses growing through making connections. Hufford recalls meeting one of her key suppliers:
There was one young woman who came in; she was a mother, and her husband worked as a baker at Kāne‘ohe Bakery. I grew up in Kāne‘ohe, so those are my stomping grounds. And she said, “I’m a Cobb-Adams.” And you know the Cobb-Adams brought all the puakenikeni to Hawai‘i. And I said, “Yes, I know that, my Uncle was married to a Cobb-Adams. They were blahblah blah, and I went to school with Cob-Adams.” And, she said, “Well, that was my inheritance, to have all the puakenikeni, so I can provide you with all the puakenikeni leis that you want.” I said, “I’ll take ‘em all.”

Making these introductions was pivotal in Hufford’s flower business.

Hufford tells a moʻolelo from her childhood about harvesting flowers from neighbor’s yards:

And [my mother] got to meet, this is what we would do. We would be driving to school, and my mother would be looking in everyone’s yards to see what there was to make leis out of. And often times, we were late because she would be rubbernecking, that kind of thing. And when it came time to make leis, she often met people who had interesting things in their yard, because she would stop and ask if she could make leis out of them. And that’s how she met a lot of people. And that’s how you got to meet people because you would have to stop and, say, “Can I have some of your flowers? I’m going to make a lei.” And then, they’d want to know all about what you are doing, and then they’d end up at your house while you make the lei, and you know, that kind of thing, and there was a big buffet, and you stayed up all night long. So, I don’t think people do that too much anymore.

Looking to harvest flowers from neighbors’ yards fostered a sense of fellowship. Neighbors became friends interested in supporting Hufford’s lei making endeavors.

Yuen shares her thoughts on the metaphor of the lei as binding together community:

You can take the same exact type of lei and it will tell different stories for different people. You know, for me, the lei haku symbolizes binding together many diverse people, or cultures, or environmental threads, into a unified whole so that each item retains its individuality. But unless they’re bound together, you don’t have a lei. You have a whole bunch of different flowers, or leaves, or ferns, or whatever you’ve got. It’s that binding them together that creates the lei.

Kekauualua uses lei making to build and sustain community at Destination Hilo. The cultural demonstrations are attended by tourists and a group of local community members who come regularly. While everyone’s hands are busy making lei, conversations begin between these two groups. The locals ask where the travelers are from, and what kind of flowers they have in
their gardens; the guests ask how long the locals have lived in Hawai‘i and seek advice about where to spend their time on Hawai‘i Island. In this way, the lei forms a bridge between these two communities who otherwise would only have brief encounters with each other.

Agency (N=111)

Through the grounded theory analysis, I recognized that the theme of agency was a motivation for some cultural practitioners. Based on my discussion of agency and alternative action as described by Silva (2004), Kahn (2011), Imada (2012), Tamaira (2015), and Williams (2015), I view agency as an individual or group acting on their own behalf, for their own benefit. I recognize five STs in this category: connection to cultural beliefs, active decision-making on cultural sharing, inventing new or non-traditional styles, personal enjoyment, and empowerment. This is the smallest of the five main themes; however, the theme of agency is still present in the motivation of lei makers.

Connection to Cultural Beliefs

Participants described lei making and other cultural practices in connection to cultural beliefs. Lei makers are empowered through their assertion of these relationships. I have catalogued them into mana, pono, and burials.

Mana

The concept of mana can be understood as sacred, spiritual power, or authority (Strathern et al. 2017:137–138; Arista 2018). Handy and Pūku‘i (1998:132) describe mana as something that can empower ʻuhane (spirits), that can be received through worship or prayer. Mana can also
be received through ‘aumakua (personal or family gods). It is also described as being able to inhabit objects, such as a fishhook fashioned from the iwi (bone) of a human being, or dwelling in the teeth of a dog that had a special relationship with a child (Handy and Pūkuʻi 1998:89,152). It is described as residing in names of people and places, as well as in the words that are spoken, which could physically impact the plant materials. Josiah chided those who wear lei made from dollar bills:

What is the story you’re trying to, trying to, what is the mana you are trying to bestow upon this person that you’ve covered with [a] money [lei]? How does that relate to our culture and who we are as people, what does that say about us? I just…you know it’s kind of an affront in a way, but…but then there are…who am I, who knows, maybe this lei will be used to pay for their college education, maybe that’s what they’re, maybe that’s the story. So, I…I would rather give [money] to somebody in an envelope than give it to somebody in a lei…but…that’s me.

For Josiah, money lei are moderately offensive. While Josiah emphasizes the importance of understanding the context for which the lei was intended, they can be interpreted to flaunt greed.

Hahn is the only non-Kānaka Maoli interlocutor. She does not currently base her designs on cultural significances of the plants, but chooses instead based on aesthetics. However, she does incorporate some Kānaka Maoli concepts including a sense of place, prioritizing the environment, and mana:

For me, I don’t really like to make [lei] for myself, because I feel like it’s something, like you make lei, and you give lei…You put your energy into it. You know, you don’t want to be in a [bad] mood when you make the lei. You don’t wanna be…thinking about how horrible things are. When you do this kind of thing, you definitely put your mana into it.

Even though Hahn is less traditional than the other lei makers in this study, she believes lei makers should be conscious of mana.

At Destination Hilo Hula Tuesdays, I observed Noe Noe Kekauualua collecting each piece of plant material after the lei making demonstration. She asked me to assist her by making sure even the small scraps were gathered together and placed in her bag, to be returned to the place
from which she harvested them. She explained that by harvesting and preparing the plant cuttings, her mana had been given to the pieces. She told me that one should always take all one’s mana back with them. This is also a practical way to return the nutrients to the soil of the plant that the material was harvested from.

**Pono**

Pono is the state of goodness, morality, and being correct and proper. It is difficult to pin a single definition in English, because it has many connotations in Hawaiian. Pono can be associated with being in the right state of mind, connecting to place and people, and simply being in functional order. Hufford links pono with lei that are made for tourists:

> Those stories, help with your memory of this place. And obviously, if we can help to provide the good memories for people, they will always think kindly of us. You know, cuz when you, when you give somebody with that, your intention is to, for them to have kind thoughts about you.

In the fall of 2017, I was a member of Kekauaulua’s hālau, until her family obligations made it necessary for her to cancel. One evening during practice, Kekauaulua shared a moʻolelo during a talk-story session with the haumāna in her hālau. She described how sometimes Western and indigenous beliefs were not always in alignment, which can lead to some dangerous circumstances. She explained how there are natural forces that exist, “whether you want to call them the ocean or Kanaloa.” Kekauaulua believes that such powerful forces require recognition and respect. Existing alongside them is a relationship that needs to be carefully managed. In the example Kekauaulua described, one of her haumāna was sent out in a canoe in Hilo Bay even though the surf was dangerously rough. While Kekauaulua recognized the situation, and determined that the water was unsafe, her friend was told to go into the water in the canoe despite the risk. Several yards into the water, a strong wave flipped the canoe, dumping the
paddlers into the surf, and slamming the canoe into them before they could react. Kekaualua expressed her frustration that her intuition was dismissed and the paddlers were sent out anyway. Luckily, the paddlers only sustained minor injuries. Kekaualua reserved a chair that night during practice for her haumāna who was covered with bruises from the incident. Kekaualua described how she had sought to restore a pono relationship with Kanaloa, by chanting an oli to the waves. As she explains, it is important to tell these forces “I see you. I respect you.” She described this action as to pale, which to her, means “covering something” so that it is safe. She compared this to the pale that is used as a carrying case for hula pā`ū skirts, and is used to protect them from negative spiritual elements.

**Burials**

Lei were mentioned in context with burials. Randy L. remembers puamelia lei draped upon gravestones. Hufford explains what happens to the lei after the lei making contests are completed:

After the lei contest, all the leis that were entered in the contest were taken up the next day up to the Royal Mausoleum in Nuʻu-anu. And they decorate. They’re taken up, and they decorate, yeah, the Royal Mausoleum. They were sitting in boxes, in this picture…Yeah you don’t get the leis back, they go up to the Royal Mausoleum.

Each lei entered in the Oʻahu Lei Day contests is worn proudly on May 1, but it ultimately destined to adorn the tombs of the aliʻi.

**Active Decision Making on Sharing**

This division of agency contains examples of lei makers making active decisions about cultural sharing. Randy L. explains that he only volunteers on Hawaiʻi Island, but he mentions traveling to Oʻahu and beyond to make as many as 90 lei for hālau. He makes the decision that
his free time and energy are precious, and not to be spent flippantly. Therefore, he chooses to reinvest them in his own home island.

Roen Hufford describes several instances where she determined whether or not sharing was appropriate: “So somebody says, ‘Do you give classes?’ And my answer was, ‘Rarely.’ Because it’s a lot of work! And I have to divvy out my time. You know, between eating and paying the bills, and beating kapa, you know!” Another day, she was approached by someone “and they wanted to make lei po‘o; they wanted to make a wili lei po‘o. So, fine. So, it was, I allowed it.” When asked if she sells lei at the Waimea Farmers Market, Hufford responds, “I’m sure if I put some leis out there, somebody would buy it, but that’s another chunk of my time that gets tied up. So now my thing is to beat kapa and to help people learn how to do that.” Hufford chooses to devote her time to kapa beating rather than lei making because it is something many people do not have an opportunity to learn. Hufford was approached about teaching printing:

Somebody else asked me recently, “Oh they’re going to have lots of kids who are going to be coming with their parents and everything, so how about we do ‘ohe kapala printing?” And I went, “No way. I’m not going to do this. They don’t understand what it means, it’s just a printing activity to them.” Yes, for us, it’s unique, we value it, we treasure it.

Hufford prioritizes respect for Kānaka Maoli tradition over appeasing those who ask her to host classes.

_Invention of New or Non-Traditional Styles_

Silverman (2004:339) refutes the notion that tourism “erodes the authenticity, autonomy, creativity, and power of local people,” and that the local community can only benefit financially. Instead, he asserts that for a Sepik River community in Papua New Guinea, tourism is a platform
for artistic expression of identity. Hahn is a lei maker who is experimental in her work. She
describes the kinds of lei she makes:

Usually if you go if you order one on Instagram, there’s all these people who do haku leis
and different, more decorative flower crown style rather than any kind of traditional-ness.
I don’t necessarily know all of the traditional stuff, so I’m just kinda…That’s what Ikaika
was saying, he was interested to see how the different stuff that I used, just because I
wasn’t trying to make whatever kind traditional. I just doing my thing! I just use what’s
pretty. If it’s pretty, I use it, that’s what I told Ikaika.

Hahn is an accomplished lei maker who creates fresh styles using a combination of indigenous
and non-indigenous plants.

Roen Hufford describes her kapa classes: “So it’s taking a traditional thing, the traditional
tools, the traditional plant material, the traditional techniques, and planted it in this time.”
Hufford uses non-traditional processes to produce her art. For example, she shows off piece of
kapa that she has quilted together to make something beautiful from scraps.

*Personal Enjoyment*

Some participants choose to make lei for the sheer enjoyment of it. Hahn describes her
motivation to make lei: “But it was so relaxing, it’s so fun to just sit on the beach for an hour and
make something. I am such a little flower child. It makes everything better.” Hufford explains
why she is no longer as active in lei making as she once was: “There was a time when I would
make lei just for the sheer joy of it, because it was something. But I’m not at that point now.”
Hufford demonstrates two kinds of agency here. First, making lei for pleasure, but second,
deciding when such an action is appropriate. Even though she did not initially choose to learn lei
making, Hufford came to enjoy the work:

So that’s how I got involved in it, by simply being my mother’s daughter, I didn’t
complain, I enjoyed doing that. And that’s been the story of my life. I enjoyed doing
them, and my mother always insisted that we do it well. So, I excelled at it…So that’s
how I got pulled into all of this. Cuz my mother said I had to. And because it was a lot of fun, yeah. That’s how I got started.

Empowerment

I define empowerment here as one using one’s own cultural knowledge to empower others, particularly those of a younger generation. Roen Hufford describes her relationship with the local school children whom she mentored to establish a garden, maintain it, and prepare meals from the harvest, “It’s important for young people to develop a relationship with growing things—not just for food.” Hufford remembers how she used the tradition of kapa making to support the local school and teaching the students lei making practices:

I thought, “Oh my God what I am gonna do as a full time farmer?” So, I helped with the auction, I’ve given lots of kapa to be auctioned off. And they’ve made money off of it, very, that’s why I did it. And that provides the money for the staff to do their job and help the students to…every kid at Waimea knows how to make a lei, a ti leaf lei. They make kaula, and they make kaula with kukui nut. A bracelet. They know how to make salad dressing.

Hufford also describes how she changed one of her adopted children’s names in order to help them thrive. She empowered her young apprentice who helped her bundle dahlias and eventually learn to beat kapa.

Lei Traditions and Associated Practices (N=530)

This theme was included in order to code and preserve the data for which the community expresses concern. This was not limited to specific details of lei making. In the participants’ memories, cultural practices which might seem unrelated are deeply connected. To describe a lei is to recall an ancestor and explain the meaning of her name through her life story and how that is remembered by the living community. In another example, lei making is tied to the traditions
of kapa and farming. To honor this interwoven nature of these practices, I designed this section to code and collect these manaʻo (ideas) and examples. This theme has 10 STs: lei, moʻolelo, gathering, kaona, kapa, farming, names, oral tradition, and printing. That this section is the largest of all speaks to the importance the participants place on sharing their cultural practices of lei making.

Lei

The lei is inherently tied to various Kānaka Maoli cultural practices and traditions. This ST is a reflection of that interwoven nature. I subdivide this ST further into lei styles, techniques, traditional significance, practical uses, and botanical information.

Techniques

All participants provide details of lei making techniques. Specific tricks and terminology may vary between each lei maker. Hufford describes the process of how she and her mother taught lei humupapa to fourth graders:

So, I’m looking at this hibiscus out here, you know the leaves have a nice shape, you know. But it, you need something to stitch on, you need the papa, and you need the needle, and the thread to humuhumu (sew), so it requires a little more infrastructure to make the lei, it’s not just, plaeting, or just a string and your needle. You need all three. You need something to stitch those things on to. But that’s all. There’s lots of stuff that you can stitch on. There’s lau hala, oh my God… Coconut leaflets! You know, you can make the needle out of the midrib of the coconut leaves, you don’t even need a steel needle…But you know there’s all kinds of ways to do it. It’s just, if somebody wants to do that, and if somebody wants to purchase that. But I could, I always thought, when my mom would have to give a workshop, I have this lei workshop and it’s for fourth graders I said, “Fourth graders? (sighing)…They’re just figuring out right from left, you know! And so, she says, “No, we’re going to do humupapa.” I said, “Humupapa?” She says, “Yes.” So, she would make, you know, a kit they would have the papa, you know which is basically a leaflet, and then a string, and a needle.
So, you would have your materials, you put the plant material down, and you stitch up, you stitch down, you put the needle down. Plant material. Stitch up. Stitch down. Put the needle down. And that’s how she taught them to make leis. And if they didn’t follow that procedure, she would get after them. It would be, “Put your plant material down, stitch up, stitch down, put your needle down.” You could hear them saying that! And the result was, they had a lei. Fast too!

McDonald adjusted the process of making lei humupapa so that the keiki could have a successful experience.

At one of Hālau LeiManu’s lei making classes, I observed Yuen demonstrating a trick for making sure a lei would hold up to the movement of the hula dancer. While some people tend to treat lei delicately, she explained that the has on occasion slapped the length of a lei on the ground to ensure it was adequately strong. That way, one can be sure that it will not unravel during a performance.

**Botanical Information**

Every narrator gave some botanical information associated with various lei plants.

Hufford emphasizes the importance of understanding this knowledge:

So, I think that’s happened to a lot of people who start by making leis, they say, “Well can I use this, can I use that?” And I say, “Well maybe you don’t want to use that one, that has thorns. There’s fine hairs all over the calyx.” “What’s a calyx?” I said, “You know the part that holds all the petals together? That’s a calyx. So, then you have to learn about the plant physiology. So maybe you don’t want to use that red jade; it has fine hairs all over it, and it’s going to be very uncomfortable, you know?

Using unfamiliar plant materials could have unpleasant consequences.

On the days when hālau members assist at Yuen’s cultural class at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station, Yuen also teaches them botanical information about native species and how to protect them. The day begins with a hike to Pu‘u Huluhulu, where Yuen points out various native species along the trail. Pu‘u Huluhulu is a kīpuka (an “island” of land left surrounded by
lava flow); it is named for all of the greenery and native species that thrive there. I observed Yuen teaching proper protocol for wiping shoes before entering and leaving the area so that invasive species are not spread. Later, I observed Yuen leading a short hike to see the silversword, which is an endangered species. She explains to hālau members and any visitors who are interested about the plant’s reflective properties and traditional uses.

**Traditional Significance**

Lei tell traditional moʻolelo and also symbolize new stories and relationships. They can be used to share the story of one’s huakaʻi (journey), as described previously by Yuen and Hufford. Josiah, supported by Yuen, recalls specific uses for ti leaf lei:

MJ: They would tie ti leaves to the back of their tanks but they would wear straps and things to hang their gear off of, and so you would hang ti leaves off them. And you would hear the stories of how the uncles would go in the water and pull out sharks and say, “Oh yeah, we have a relationship with sharks.” They allow us to take a few…they tell us these stories.

LY: “My great grand uncle in Kaua‘i always wore the lei lāʻī when he would do the hukilau. And among other things, not just for protection, but him wearing the full lei lāʻī showed that he was leading the hukilau for that day.”

Hufford explains how stories are attached to lei through memories, and how the lei symbolizes Hawaiʻi and its people:

But you know, just the fact that it is part of our vocabulary, and it’s a symbol of this place with us brown people. It’s a symbol that tells you, you know, everybody has a story about a lei...Maybe you went to a party, and they, crowned you with this garland that you, “I felt like I was a queen!” Kind of thing. Those stories, help with your memory of this place. And obviously, if we can help to provide the good memories for people, they will always think kindly of us. You know, cuz when you, when you give somebody with that, your intention is to, for them to have kind thoughts about you. It-it’s a selfish thing, too. You know, it’s not just a, you give it to them because you’re being generous. But you want them to think kindly of you.

Yuen shared the traditional significance of native plants during lei making classes at Hālau LeiManu. On one such occasion, she described how to make a lei made from ʻuala
(Hawaiian sweet potato). This lei ‘uala was worn traditionally to ensure a nursing mothers; the flow of the sap was believed to contribute to good milk flow.

**Styles**

In this SST, I catalogue all the different kinds of lei styles that are described. Randy L. lists a few varieties:

You know, a lot of the knowledge of making certain leis were all passed down, leis come in all forms, they come in shells, seeds, flowers, feathers, you know that kind of stuff, each, so many people, they don’t know all the leis, I can, but I’ve done it but, feather leis, shell leis, like these here, lei kūpe’e…

Other participants note that lei can be children, fragrances, and even kind gestures.

In one talanoa conversation, Yuen recalls her mother wearing the scent of pīkake as a lei. This led Yuen to describe the process of making lei pīkake. She explained how the lei maker has to gather the buds at dawn and sew them in a lei. If the lei maker is skilled and the lei is kept cool, the fragrant buds will bloom from the warmth of a dancer’s body.

**Practical Uses**

Four narrators describe the practical uses of lei. Yuen summarizes this SST succinctly:

“That just because something is functional doesn’t mean it can’t be beautiful.” Hufford shares mo’olelo about the lei’s uses:

Right, yeah. So just about every kid around here, knows how to make a ti leaf lei, even though it’s not really a lei, it’s a piece of str—it’s a rope!...My friends and I, when we were in college, some of my friends went into entomology, some of them went into botany, some went into Hawaiian studies, I was an art major. But we would take all the botany classes that had to do with plants in the Hawaiian environment, and we’d learn, how, you could look at a plant and say that’s from the such and such family. That’s a skill that we learned from going to the university, and we would learn how those plants were used, not only by Hawaiians, but especially people in the Pacific. And so that was really important, to know which plants were important to people’s existence. Not just what they
Yuen demonstrated the drawer. Such knowledge is important for teaching and recalling cultural knowledge:

Um, different families may have completely different stories for that, so the lei functions in that case of like a mnemonic device for helping you to retain those stories kind of like an abacus or the counting strings or a... an English tally. They... they carry that story within them. And so, you know she taught me you know, how to measure the string, and for the different lengths whether you want it here, you pull it to this point on your shoulder, or this point on your shoulder, put it around on the back of your neck and hold your arms straight out to measure your string. How to measure a muku and anana and all of that was passed on through the lei making. And... I guess you kind of learn other little lessons, like you take care of your stuff, cuz if you’re not careful with your lei needle you get a kink in it. You know those long, we used to use those long lei needles. And if you’re careless with them, you can bend them, and then you’ll tear the flowers while you’re sewing the lei.

Such imagery is helpful for retaining knowledge. Josiah continues along this thread. He describes how lei making with his ‘ohana informed him about his cultural identity:

There are, there are similarities in other cultures, but I found that that’s how I got to, I didn’t figure this out till later in life, but the method that I found out who I am, where I come from, wasn’t done by sitting down reading a book, and going through genealogy charts, it was by sitting down at these kinds of gatherings, at different occasions, funerals, weddings, baby lū‘aus, fishing trips, you know making the leis for putting on the boats, making the leis for putting on the back of the divers that go in the water... They would tie ti leaves to the back of their tanks but they would wear straps and things to hang their gear off of, and so you would hang ti leaves off them.

During a talanoa session with Yuen, she claimed ti leaves are the “Hawaiian top kitchen drawer.” She explained that the leaf can have additional uses beyond lei making. She demonstrated by wrapping left-over food with ti leaves, as one would use plastic cling wrap.

Yuen also has used ti to relieve headaches and as bandages.
Moʻolelo

Moʻolelo are used to convey a point in conversation by sharing a story that exemplifies it.

I include two below, however, the others may be found in the appendices. Yuen shares a moʻolelo about her grandmother to illustrate her point on mentoring:

When I was still a cute little kid, that was when my grandmother started teaching me stuff. She taught me to make the leis, different kinds of lei, and how to wear them. She’d have me put on a holokū and high heels and walk up and down the stairs. With my heels and a holokū on or a cocktail dress so that I could learn how to walk properly in them, and not be clumping along in my heels.

Randy L. describes his family history to illustrate the importance of his family’s lei niho palaoa:

I had Hawaiian, I had Chinese, and I’m part Russian, and my Russian part comes from the Czar of Russia so I was told by our family historian. That gave us this spiel when we did our family reunion…It doesn’t matter in my life, you just who you are now. Yeah. Well, I don’t wanna be a, since like, I tell the Chinese persons that come from China that my aunty or whatever was married to Mao, they go, “Oh, ooh!” Gross, haha. But my grandfather on my mom’s side, he I would say he stowed away when he was 16, he came in as like five or six brothers. And that time they were on a sandal wood boat trade back in the 1800s. Okay. And they decided to jump ship, and they all ended up in Waimanu Valley where their Uncle was, King Kamehameha was um, was he was given the kuleana responsibility, the konohiki of Waimanu. And my grandfather and his brothers got to say you know, they were settled there. And they all married into families from the next valley over, which is Waipiʻo.

Moʻolelo are incredibly valuable conveyers of knowledge.

Gathering

Lei makers recall stories of gathering. One of the more memorable moʻolelo is Randy L.’s story about harvesting kūpeʻe at Queen’s Bath (a former lava tube in Kalapana that filled with water, creating a natural pool; destroyed in 1987 by lava flow) the day it filled with lava:

These particular shells that I have on these are all from Kalapana. The one in the center here is from Kaimū, is now the beach is covered. The dark ones on the outside here were from the Queen’s Bath. These are not from inside the Queen’s Bath but from the ocean side, yeah. And these were picked the day the lava was filling Queen’s Bath, these two leis here. (Gestures to them on his hat)…So back in the days, we were allowed to go see
the flow, you know it crossed the road, no body barricaded you away from it, you know, and we got this close and the thing would be floating by (hahah). I had taken my kids, cuz we heard the Queen’s Bath was gonna go and we thought, “Oh, well, we can go for last swim,” but by the time we got there, the lava was already filling Queen’s Bath. So, I said, “Let’s go out to the ocean and take a dip, you know on the ocean side.” They used to have a nice big and the pond in the back where used to cross net and stuff but, so when we got out there, 12 in the afternoon, all of this goes out on the rocks (the shelled creatures). It was the height of the day; they were actually escaping the heat of the (lava). They were escaping so they were climbing on the rocks and everything. And so, we had our truck and our five-gallon bucket and “Look at all the küpe’e!” The kids, they “Oooh!” So, I said, “We’ll take ’em home and cook ’em up for your guys, and you know eat em.” So, I had them save all the shells actually you know the...And so I’ve had these...this I’ve had for about 20 years I’ve already had it made.

The concept of place is integral to gathering. It may be a reason why the idea of place is so central in Kānaka Maoli culture. Lei makers, just like canoe carvers, and farmers need to remember where they attained their resources. Yuen shares a mo’olelo about gathering pua lei (lei flowers) with her grandmother:

And...my grandmother taught me much more about making lei. So, we would go out--one of my favorite memories with her was going out by the light of a full moon and harvesting lei--harvesting plumerias to make lei...You could see. There’s no, there were...the only street lights on the island were in Hilo and Pāhoa at the time...You didn’t want them to wilt. You wanted to collect them when it was cool, and also during the day you wouldn’t stop your working. We had cattle and horses and chores and things and...And when you live in a beach house, people are always dropping in on you.

Gathering protocols dictate what time of day is ideal for harvesting each plant.

I observed Kekaulualua explaining to her hālau about the process of making hula garments. She intimated her desire that the class should practice by making their own practice pāʻū skirts. Kekaulualua used her own pāʻū to describe the processes of purchasing muslin and cordage, cutting, and sewing. She pointed out the different designs she has made from ‘ohe kapala printing onto her kihei and pāʻū. She encouraged her haumāna to gather their own ‘ohe (bamboo), and so she explained the protocols of gathering.
**Kaona**

Kaona refers to the multiple, layered meanings attributed to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. It was often described in association with names and lei variety, many of which are featured above. Yuen explains the manaʻo surrounding maile:

And maile, certainly it’s cherished, but my impression is that it wasn’t so much restricted to royalty as it was a lei that was preferred for specific activities. So, hula dancers would use a maile, because of its association with Hi‘iaka. Couples like maile because it’s associated with courtship. I would imagine that anybody who was courting would want to harvest maile and wear it and give it to their sweetheart’s mother or grandmother. And…you know, because it…has these meanings.

Hufford shares the kaona behind her Hawaiian name:

And I used to bemoan the fact that I didn’t have a lovely name like that, or like my sister’s name is Kapuheaalani, you know the forbidden heaven. I was like how come I don’t get a name like that, you know? Yeah…or, my aunt’s name was Napaeokainu‘ena‘ena, “the raging, the raging...the fires of the raging the pit,” our name is from Puna. And my aunt matched her name. Yeah, that’s pretty cool, so. And I got Kahalewai. You know, but then I learned, what wai means. What is the wai, where is it, how do, how do we perceive it? The wai is important. It’s in the clouds, it’s in the mist, you know it trickles down in the streams and through the mosses and the rivers and it makes it way to the sea. The wai is important. I thought, “Hō, I like my name.” It’s like, the essence of life. Right? It’s all around you. You don’t make.

The names of Hufford’s family members all have cultural references. Hufford notes that each name was given with deep forethought and consideration, and seems to resonate with the possessor.

**Kapa**

Kapa, fabric made from harvesting the skin of the wauke (paper mulberry), was used to fashion the clothing, burial clothes, and sleeping mats of ancient Kānaka Maoli (Kamakau 1976). Kapa can be dyed and stamped with intricate patterns and textures; it can even be scented with oils (Kamakau 1961:34). However, no one alive knew the art of kapa by the year 1870.
(Wianecki 2014). It would be a hundred years later before kapa would re-emerge in the Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1970s (Wianecki 2014). Marie McDonald spent much of her life trying to reawaken this ancient craft. Eventually, McDonald collaborated with a team of kapa makers to create the pieces worn by the Hālau o Kekuhi at the 2011 Merrie Monarch Festival, where for the first time in more hundred years, kapa was worn onstage by ʻōlapa (dancers) (Wianecki 2014).

Hufford, McDonald’s daughter, shares a time that she donated her kapa to be sold at an auction to support the local school children learning how to make leis and maintain a garden. In this way, the traditions are still interconnected, and one supported the practice of the other. Hufford continues,

So now my current thing is to beat kapa and to help people learn how to do that. Cuz there’s a lot of people who want to learn how to do that. I did a workshop, but when I do it in workshop format where you have condensed amount of time, and I have to take all the tools, all the raw materials, and they want a success experience, but they want to come away with something they made…So what I do now is Mondays and Thursdays…people come over and we work out here. We harvest the wauke and we beat it. In a sense I’m still doing, leading a workshop or teaching, but this is what we come away with, the beginnings of larger pieces. This is what I’ve been spending a lot of my time on is this.

Kapa and lei making rely on traditional technique and botanical knowledge. While lei making is a fairly common practice in the community, few have the opportunity to learn kapa making.

Farming

While farming may seem unrelated to lei making, it requires similar skills. Hufford describes becoming a farmer:

So, we were getting to know the plants, and getting to know all the people who made leis, and wore leis, and all that kind of stuff. But we’re learning about the plants, you know, and she always had an interest in growing things, and so the rest of my life happened, and here we are. I call myself a farmer; I wasn’t trained to be a farmer, but it happened that I became a farmer because of my interest in eating as well as my interest in growing plant material for various uses. So that’s a benefit overall.
Later, she uses these skills to mentor children in local schools and by taking on her apprentice who has learned farming, lei making, and kapa from Hufford.

Names

Names are mentioned throughout the interviews. Kāhili Hahn tells how she is named after the fragrant kāhili ginger that grows in Volcano. This is interesting, given that the kāhili ginger is actually an invasive species. The plant is named after the royal feather standard, which is a powerful symbol of Kānaka Mali elite. Thus, its invasive nature has been overlooked in favor of this association, even to the extent that Hahn is named after the invasive plant rather than the royal standard. In another example, Hufford tells a moʻolelo about the power of her mother’s name, and the power of re-naming children to help them thrive:

[My mother] was one of 11 children. Her twin was stillborn. So, she got the name Leilehua. Who are the lehua? The lehua are the soldiers, the warriors, the ones who had strength. [My mother] was the child that survived. That’s why she got her name. So, I have four children; they are adopted. One of my children, her name was… I’m trying to think of what her birth name was. Her name was Ricky Lee, Ricky Lee, um, I don’t know why I’m forgetting. Ricky Lee Lehuanani. A heavenly, a beautiful lehua, right? So, when we adopted her, we just, we dropped the Ricky Lee. And her legal name was Lehuanani. And then her family surname. And then our name after it. So, um, so the name is important… And I was just, I, one of my cousins, you know, changed one of his children, I don’t want to say he was having difficulty with him, but um… they weren’t, um surviving nicely. And so, he tweaked their name… And I thought, I always thought that was kind of, um interesting that he did that. I mean it’s still legally a certain name, but the name that they call her is different, it’s not the same as when she was born. And the same thing with her son. And so, the way he described it was, it was almost as if with the name change, they blossomed. So, I was reading recently that it was, I don’t know where I read it, but it’s acceptable to do that… Yeah… yeah. So, to help his children, he changed their names a little bit, just a little bit. Or just called them, instead of the first part of the name, you know, like “Kalehuamakanoeblahblablahblablah,” you know, instead of saying, he could get called “Kalehua,” or “Makanoe,” you know, just a part of it. Um, to kind of emphasize their strength.

Actually, one of my children was like that. The social worker asked her, “Do you want to be adopted?” We adopted children; they were either six or nine years old. So, these children, you know, they were housebroken already. You know they already had a set of behaviors in place. And we didn’t want to break them of that, but we wanted to
help them, move along in a complimentary way. But anyway so, not to say that we’ve been totally successful, (laughing) but everybody has their own issues. But you know we provided them with a safe home. Hopefully with a nurturing environment. But anyway, the social worker said, her name, she had a lovely name: Ihilani. And so, people would say, “Well do you know what your name means?” And you know, she looked up the dictionary meaning, you know, she says, “It means this because it says so in the dictionary.” And then the rest of her name was one for her father, and one for her mother. You know. So, um, she said, “I want to be called Victoria.” So that’s what we changed her name to.

Oh yeah stories, so that’s kind of the thing you know, so like, um, you were not born with your Hawaiian name, right? It was gifted to you. So, when I was going to school, I had a birth name that was Hawaiian. Um, and only my Hawaiian language teacher uses it. Cuz that’s what he learned, that’s what my name was in class, right? But my friend, haole girl, born and raised in Hawai‘i. Always thought she was Hawaiian, and was very disappointed when everybody said, “You’re not Hawaiian.” And she said, “Oh yes I am!” You know, but so she, she thought about what she wanted to be called. And she says…we had this older Hawaiian gentleman, and she said, “This is my name, what I want it to mean.” And he gave her the name. Ulupainupākamakanahenahe. The sound of that wind blowing through the ironwood trees. Yeah, so she’s known, from the Hawaiian language teacher as Ulupaina (laughs). But uh, then you have, you have people who have the name Noelani, which is kind of misty right? And you have to be careful with a Noelani because they can be very moody you know?

So, all these things, yeah, they’re connected, you know the leis are in that you know too. I was, there’s some really powerful names in my family. My mother’s name is pretty powerful. You know it’s pretty cool that she was named Leilehua. And that leis became one of her passions, you know, and that she had so much strength that she, acco-- being one of 10 children, she’s the only one that has a college degree. She went to school during WWII during college. And so, her family with 10 children, my grandfather too. Managed to do that. Send her away to the mainland to Texas. Yeah, so, um, it’s all part of her name, that she had that strength to pass it on.

Names can be given during certain times of struggle or identity crisis, as with Hufford’s adopted children who were trying to adjust to their new life. Hufford recognizes the power of names.

Thus she allowed one of her adopted daughters to be known by a name she had chosen for herself. This helped Victoria to thrive.

Oral Tradition

Most oral traditions have previously been discussed in other sections of this chapter.

They include Randy L.’s lei niho palaoa from Waipiʻo, and stories about his family. Hufford
describes a lei niho palaoa similar to Randy L.’s. Yuen and Josiah share their oral traditions from their respective ‘ohana, who used lei to identify the leader at the hukilau (a fishing method requiring several people to drive fish into a net) and to tie to the diving gear. Yuen and Josiah try to recall specific oral traditions from Josiah’s family:

So, although I cannot remember the word my grandfather used to use, not anuanu, well that if you’re cold, but um the word for “the food is getting cold” [maʻalili] I can’t think of what it is. There was a…there was a phrase actually that if you’re, if you’re not coming to the table in an expeditious fashion, it would be announced that the food was getting cold. But I couldn’t remember how it was phrased, but there was a specific phrase for that. Just like in Manu’s family there is a specific phrase for “the evening has come” and the last glimmer of light, or the last rays of the sun on the horizon, on the ocean or something…? Your grandpa used to talk about the green flash…

Discussing lei with the practitioners had a tendency to draw out oral traditions like these. This emphasizes the interrelated nature of Kānaka Maoli traditions.

*Printing*

Printing requires an understanding of native plants and kapa making skills. When Hufford is approached by a friend, she asserts that printing is not a children’s activity:

Somebody else asked me recently, “Oh, they’re going to have lots of kids who are going to be coming with their parents and everything, so how about we do ‘ohe kapala printing?” And I went, no way, I’m not gonna do this. They don’t understand what it means, it’s just a printing activity to them. Yes, for us, it’s unique, we value it, we treasure it. But I said, “No, I’m not interested.”

Hufford has also made her own contribution to the kapa tradition:

I’ll show you, I’ll show you where it came from. You beat these shapes into it. (goes outside) These started as printers, you know, printing the design. I was looking at it yesterday… What is that? It’s a thick bamboo…Right! It’s been split, and instead of carving, you take away the skin and you carve across the fibers like this, this on you carve into the fibers, it’s actually easier to carve. So anyway, that’s my thing. That’s not a traditional thing, that’s my thing. You know anyway, so, like that, (demonstrating) I beat it in, as well as printing it in, but anyway that’s one of my favorite ones, cuz that reminds me of leilehua. It looks like lehua blossoms coming up. But anyway, that’s my current thing.
Kekaualua described the process of printing in detail during a hula practice. During these practices, some nights Kekaualua would talk-story instead of teaching hula. On such occasions, she brought out each of her kihei to show the students. Spreading each piece on the floor, she told the story behind the printed designs, and their significance to her. She explained how each design represented a season in her life. For example, one kihei she made during her time as a student at UHH, and so she wears it whenever she is doing a school-related activity. Another Kekaualua associates with Maunakea and Hui Aloha ‘Āina.

Summary

Overall, contemporary lei makers whose lives intersect with the annual Lei Day in Hilo describe how they are balancing between challenges and opportunities tourism provides, and their commitment to documenting traditional knowledge while prioritizing the environment. Lei making has undergone a series of changes including the professionalization of lei making, the endangerment of native species, the eruption of Kīlauea, and the constant presence of tourism. Yet, while some styles may have changed, and some species, like ‘ōhi’a lehua, cannot currently be used, the tradition of lei making continues through the development of new techniques and materials. Yuen demonstrated this when she substituted a red feather boa for lehua blossoms in the lei of Kiriko Redondo, who represented Hawai‘i Island at Hilo Lei Day 2018. Participants demonstrate agency by choosing to engage with the opportunities provided by tourism and other modes of cultural sharing that perpetuate traditions. Agency is also present in the desire of the community to record lei making knowledge on its own terms (including the use of iPhones) for the purpose of perpetuation. The full potential of technology to assist in the documentation of tradition has yet to be realized. Lei makers could be involved in an elaboration of the cultural
renaissance facilitated by the efforts of those who strive to perpetuate this cultural knowledge through documentation, including Marie McDonald and the participants in this thesis.
MOKUNA 5: PANINA MANAʻO (CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS)

As Trask (1999), Thaman (1993), Taum (2010), Gonzalez (2015), and the interlocutors describe, tourism poses ambiguities for lei makers engaging in cultural sharing. This project explores the meanings of lei making within the context of tourism for the lei makers whose lives intersect with the Hilo Lei Day festival. Through a grounded theory analysis of qualitative data gathered from interviews, talanoa, and participant observation, I reach a conclusion that the individuals in this community are responding to the challenges of tourism by enacting agency through balance while emphasizing cultural sharing and documentation of traditions. This includes balancing cultural education with tourist entertainment, Capitalism with reciprocity, cultural practice with cultural appropriation, and authenticity with mass production.

I identify balance as a common theme throughout this thesis. It resonates with Estrella’s (2013) documentation of balance as an indigenous response to mitigate harmful effects of tourism. This relates back to the original Kānaka Maoli voice in this process, Noe Noe Kekaulua. While Kekaulua believes that not all Kānaka Maoli are called to engage in cultural sharing, she describes herself as a “balancing force” within tourism. She believes it is her kuleana to set boundaries, correct misleading narratives, and sometimes say “no.” She has been known to correct improper pronunciation of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and insist on the use of Kānaka Maoli place names at Destination Hilo. The theme of balance as expressed by Kekaulua is present in several iterations across the transcripts. First, Yuen and the Hilo Lei Day community divide their time and energy between engaging tourists and community efforts to perpetuate traditions, which include weekly classes, online learning modules for Hālau LeiManu, and documenting kūpuna stories and lei making techniques. Second, Randy L. demonstrates how the theme of balance carries over into gathering protocols. He believes harvesting should be a self-aware process that
takes into account both the needs of fragile ecosystems and the demand for lei. Roen Hufford hosts classes for tourists, but prioritizes mentoring her own community members. Hufford also explains how a community member can determine appropriate circumstances for cultural sharing, and refuse to engage in settings that fall short of these expectations. For example, kūpuna Marie McDonald and Tsugi Kaiama refused to return to a hotel where they were expected to make feather lei in dark, windy conditions. In each of these instances, Kānaka Maoli community members’ energies are divided between inward investment and outward sharing. These examples indicate that balance is an indigenous response to the impacts of tourism.

The Hilo Lei Day community is an example of small scale, sustainable, community-managed tourism that helps the community to balance their priorities. Similar to how the Chalalan Ecolodge (2016) prioritizes environmentally conscious tourism and advises tourists how to plan low-impact travels, Yuen upholds a zero waste policy at all community events. She uses reusable plastic plates in place of styrofoam or paper, and helps the guests sort through waste, compost, and recycling. Small scale might be the key to revolutionizing tourism. In Hawai‘i, there is no overarching Kānaka Maoli group or authority (except the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which is not universally recognized as representing Kānaka interests), which makes large scale cooperation challenging. As a relatively small group specific to Hilo, the Lei Day community members can more easily tailor decision-making to the members’ needs. As Tashi, the Director of the National Museum of Bhutan, observed, “We can preserve our culture with less tourism” (Estrella 2013). Likewise, Mamani, Co-Founder of the Chalalan Ecolodge, noted, “Tourism, when you can control it, is a very good industry. But if it gets out of one’s control is when you can see the difference” (Estrella 2013). In the transcripts, Kānaka Maoli
interlocutors enact balance as a way to prioritize cultural perpetuation, community enrichment, financial needs, and the environment over the demands of tourism.

ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi has several words describing this idea of balance. After consultation with Kalani Stoleson, an archival researcher for Ka Haka ʻUla O Keʻelikolani who has collaborated with Larry Kimura, I recognize “hoʻokaulike” as the term which most relates to the idea of balancing between various kuleana. I also considered “hoʻokaualewa,” however, after discussion with Stoleson, the connotations of this term are more technical, describing the action of measuring two things to make them equal. Thus, this term was more likely to be interpreted literally, while “hoʻokaulike” can be a metaphor. The title of this thesis, “He Kuleana Hoʻokaulike” describes “a responsibility to seek balance” between tourism and cultural perpetuation. This encapsulates the central theme that emerges from this thesis: how lei makers whose lives intersect with the Hilo Lei Day festival balance the roles of perpetuating cultural knowledge with the opportunities and difficulties that come with tourism.

In the results, agency appears to be the smallest theme, yet agency might exist in tourism to a greater extent that this project captures. That is why I decided to dedicate more in depth exploration of this theme. As a researcher, I did not directly ask interview participants if they engage in agency because agency is difficult to express, and it is most likely not discussed in everyday language. In addition, participants tended to be humble and understated their own achievements. It was more comfortable for them to discuss actual lei traditions. Agency might be more significant because it was exemplified in the transcripts even though it is a difficult idea to express.

In the results, two specific ST of agency resonate with certain scholars’ interpretations of agency. Kahn (2011:31) describes how the French have colonized Tahitian indigenous space,
imposing environmental destruction and heavy development to support tourism. The ST of connection to cultural beliefs resonates with Kahn’s (2011:183) conclusion that Tahitians create colonial counter-spaces and reassert their cultural identities through significant gestures. Such demonstrations, including traditional foods, clothing, language, or dance create a sense of community and comfort among Tahitians, while drawing attention to indigenous history and sense of place that colonialism has attempted to silence through development, mapping, and re-naming places (Kahn 2011:181). Similarly, Kānaka Maoli in the Hilo Lei Day community use the lei as a counter space for the assertion of cultural values including mana, pono, and honoring ali‘i. Lei making is a traditional activity that brings Kānaka Maoli together, creating a space of resistance and community. Next, the ST of active decision-making on cultural sharing relates to Williams (2015), who describes how Kānaka Maoli use art to push against typical tropes deployed in tourism. By participating in tourism, the lei makers promote meaningful narratives that more accurately represent Kānaka Maoli culture. For example, Yuen shared her concerns that some non-Kānaka Maoli tourism workers told inaccurate stories relating to the lei pīkake, which were played off as Kānaka Maoli traditions. Yuen recalls, “Some tour guide was telling people that a girl can tell how much a guy likes her by how many strands of pīkake he gives her...Does that mean only rich people can love, if you check the price of pīkake?” In response to such misinterpretations, Yuen uses the lei as a medium for storytelling. She shares her ‘ohana’s mo‘olelo and provides historical context to ground each tradition and discrediting fictitious versions circulated in tourism.

The agency through balance that I see demonstrated in this project is unique from the agency and alternative action described by previous scholars. Imada (2012) describes how the hula dancers on tour in the US were balancing between providing a good performance and
asserting their political will through the subtext of kaona. While the members of the Hilo Lei Day community demonstrate a similar act of balancing between engaging with tourism and investing within their own community, they do not describe kaona as a means of taking political action as in Imada (2012). The kind of agency in my results resonates to an extent with Tamaira (2015), who interviewed the artists themselves about the meanings of their work, as I have done with the lei. Tamaira (2015) concluded that kaona can be a vehicle of indigenous agency in colonial spaces, such as tourism at Disney’s Aulani resort. While the interlocutors in the Hilo Lei Day community describe kaona in names and specific lei, they do not mention kaona within colonial contexts. This is an unexpected result given that I structured part of the interviews to elicit ideas of kaona used to assert political will based on Tamaira (2015) and Imada (2012).

An explanation for these results could be that Tamaira (2015) and Imada (2012) were exploring Kānaka Maoli agency within settings with a more extreme colonial presence, which merited more overt and specific responses. For example, Imada (2012) studied hula performers who were touring the US during the tumultuous period following the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, while Tamaira (2015) worked with the Kānaka Maoli contemporary artists at Aulani. Disney’s resort is one of the most colonized spaces in Hawaiʻi, because it deals with the post colonial legacy of tourism in a luxury resort owned by a monster corporation with a reputation of appropriating indigenous cultures. Both of these contexts may have warranted more direct agency than that demonstrated by the Hilo Lei Day community. Kahn (2011:183) recognized that indigenous resistance may consist of high or low risk actions, depending on the circumstances that inspire the demonstration. I believe that in the Hilo Lei Day lei makers express their agency in more low risk, less specific forms which manifest as general tensions, or in the desire to bolster the community’s traditional knowledge and improve its relationship to
tourism. Passing on lei making knowledge to the next generation is a low-risk form of resistance that ensures Kānaka Maoli traditions will be perpetuated in spite of tourism, and even to some extent through tourism.

I believe that there is much potential in the study of agency within tourism, and that it can have broader implications for tourism in Hawai‘i, the broader Pacific region, and beyond. Previously, the relationship between Pacific Islanders and tourism has been narrated by frustrated voices such as Trask (1999) and Thaman (1993). These Pacific islanders may have found satisfaction in realizing their mutual suffering and exasperation with tourism’s colonial legacy. They challenged the status quo and insigated an important conversation. However, encouraging such heated rhetoric as Trask (1999) within tourism today, especially in diverse host communities like Hawai‘i, ultimately perpetuates problems by inhibiting communication and cooperation between the hospitality industry and the local community. It also discourages collaborative relationships between people of different backgrounds within a community. There are alternatives to “walking out” on tourism, actively disparaging the very idea of visitors, and condemning those who choose to engage with tourism as scapegoats and cultural sell-outs. Agency offers a way for Pacific Islanders and diverse communities to productively and positively engage in tourism. Tamaira (2016) found there is a way for the community to co-exist with tourism that does not require submission to colonial constructs. Silverman (2013) recognized the potential for a community to use tourism for its own benefit; I argue that this has been realized in the Hilo Lei Day community, which uses tourism as an opportunity to celebrate their cultural identity and document lei making traditions. As Hufford demonstrates, it is possible to draw a line between exploitation and participation in tourism. In the beginning of this project, I posed a question about how Kānaka Maoli determine who can share, what can be
shared, with whom, and under what circumstances within tourism. From Hufford’s stories, she exemplifies how a lei maker can determine these answers for herself. She engages various modes of cultural sharing without compromising her boundaries. If lei makers choose to emulate her example, demanding the same respect, they may raise up themselves and others who work with tourism.

This thesis resonates with larger trends of decolonizing heritage management throughout the Pacific. In June of 2020, twenty-eight Pacific nations will send delegations to Honolulu for the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (2018). This event, which occurs every four years, has never before been hosted by Hawai‘i (Hawai‘i News Now 2019). It is expected to bring thousands of tourists (Hawai‘i News Now 2019). The festival goal is to, “halt the erosion of traditional practices through ongoing exchange and to strengthen relationships between the nations of Oceania” (The Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture 2019). The free festival will feature a village where each nation can showcase their cultural practices in a hale (The Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture 2019). Among the many events will be welcoming the wa‘a (canoes), choral performances, the Parade of Nations, performing and visual art, oli, oral tradition, storytelling, and a film festival (The Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture 2019). There will be cultural demonstrations of traditional crafts, such as weaving and floral art (The Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture 2019). Each delegation will represent their nation to the international convention and to visitors from around the world. Such a high representation of Pacific nations indicates broader interest in decolonizing heritage management. This gathering is an example of community driven heritage management as described by Mills and Kawelu (2013:130). While some government officials will be attending, the festival places the skills of the cultural practitioners at its center. Each nation recognizes these practitioners as masters in their trade.
Although these cultural practitioners will showcase their culture in a quasi-tourist setting, they will also be performing for each other and other Pacific communities. Sharing their cultural practices is a way for them to be perpetuated. Participating in the festival raises awareness about Pacific nations most could not find on a map. The Pacific nations renew their sense of greater community with each other, and take a leading role in the perpetuation of their cultures through sharing.

This thesis raises certain questions that could be explored in future research. An interesting observation from the transcripts is that interlocutors do not mention lei making in direct context with colonialism. This raises the question of why the community is not talking about this topic. This could be for a number of reasons. Just as agency is not discussed in everyday conversation, colonialism could be an unspoken reality. However, interlocutors do voice their lived experiences and frustration with tourism, which is a colonial legacy. Thus they could be discussing colonialism by proxy. However, in this project, the participants seem more interested in describing their efforts to document and perpetuate traditions, prioritize the environment, and how they engage with tourism. Just as the lei makers are engaging in agency but not discussing it, they are describing their frustrations with tourism without openly talking about its larger colonial context.

A future project could explore how far this idea of balance extends across the Hawaiian Islands, and even the broader Pacific Region. While Noe Noe Kekaualua and the participants in this project prioritize balance in tourism and the environment, this value may not be common to all lei makers. For example, responsible harvesting was not a priority for the hālau mentioned by Randy L.; he recounted how their unsustainable gathering caused the death of a maile vine that Randy L. had been using carefully for decades. Hufford described how making large quantities
of identical lei has negative impacts on the plant supply. Therefore, a future study could explore whether balance and carefully measured harvesting are priorities for lei sellers at the Hilo airport or on O‘ahu. The concept of balance need not be limited to Hilo, or even Hawai‘i Island. However, because this island receives less tourist traffic than O‘ahu, perhaps it is easier for practices such as agency and balance to emerge in an environment that is less overwhelming. If this is the case, then this project could serve as a model for other lei makers who regularly engage in cultural sharing with large amounts of tourists on O‘ahu or other islands. In such places, where greater amounts of plant material must be converted into lei, it is even more important to observe the practice of balance. Perhaps in those high-traffic settings, Hufford’s suggestion of making non-identical lei which utilize the other parts of the plant besides the flower could be incorporated.

Another project could expand methodologically. For instance, it could examine the potential to extend the use of the iPhone and other contemporary technology to document traditions. Yuen has expressed interest in working with future students to create additional videos that document community members’ knowledge. She expressed her hope that such training experience would prepare the students to document cultural knowledge within their own families.

This was the Hilo Lei Day community’s pilot study with the Kūkūlu Ola grant sponsored by the HTA. It provided funding to document 12 video sessions with lei makers and undergraduate assistants, although scheduling was an issue. If the community expresses interest, the program could be repeated another year building from the foundations of this first attempt.

Co-developing a research design with community members comes with certain opportunities and entanglements. In the preparation for this research, I was inspired to consider
how the metaphor of the “lei” might be used in this project as a methodology or writing style. Vaughan’s (2015) technique incorporates the importance of place, the people who inhabit it, and their caring connection with the ʻāina (land). She incorporates alternative writing styles, including moʻolelo and poetry. Suggesting Vaughan’s (2015) lei metaphor was an attempt to situate the research design within a Hawaiian epistemology, as Mills and Kawelu (2013) argue for, a particular way of knowing that would enact the metaphor of the lei. I thought that if the project was based in Hawaiian tradition that the Kānaka Maoli in the Hilo Lei Day community might feel more connected to it. I presented this notion to Yuen. However, the idea did not seem to resonate with her. I decided not to utilize this particular methodology based on this reaction. This instance illustrates how community-based anthropology is a back-and-forth process.

As previously described, the Heritage Management program prioritizes reciprocity and giving back to the communities. In addition to Yuen’s request for documentation of lei makers to capture moʻolelo, oli, and huaʻōlelo, Yuen has encouraged me to produce an eventual translation of this thesis into ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. While this would take additional time beyond what is afforded to me in this MA program, an ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi translation resonates with the community’s drive to perpetuate and revitalize Hawaiian tradition. The Ritz Carlton’s Clifford Naeʻole, an interlocutor from a previous Maui-based project, has expressed interest in my thesis and presentations could be a valuable teaching tool or used to help raise awareness about Kānaka Maoli culture as it intersects with tourism.

Working with community was a valuable experience for me. It requires communication, patience, and additional time. Flexibility was necessary to work with community schedules; some individuals travel to other islands for lei making festivals and hōʻike hula. For example, Randy L. traveled to Maui in order to make lei for the Hula o Nā Keiki (Children’s Hula). I was
required to travel on several occasions to the homes of participants for interviews. Some participants do not use phones or email and it was necessary to seek them in person in order to make clarifications in their transcript. One or two expressed hesitancy to participate in research, which is unsurprising given its controversial history with local communities and indigenous populations. However, once these individuals were made aware of the scope of this project and their rights to withdraw and edit transcripts, they were more accepting of participation. It is not always appropriate to draw the lines of community rigidly. The definition of this community as the lei makers whose lives intersect with Hilo Lei Day allowed me to connect with individuals who were knowledgeable in different kinds of lei making and cultural sharing. Working with a community rather than a single individual illuminates a broader spectrum of the experience of lei makers.

This was an opportunistic time to conduct this fieldwork, given the historical events of summer 2018 with the eruption of the Lower East Rift Zone. Every lei maker was affected by this natural disaster, whether through concern for supply, hoping for the destruction of invasive species by lava, or organizing donations to support the evacuated residents. They were also affected directly and indirectly by poor air quality due to volcanic emissions, earthquakes, and by the tourists who cancelled their vacations. Cruise ship voyages were the most affected. In May 2018, the HTA (2018) reported that three of the four planned cruise ship voyages to Kona and Hilo were cancelled due to the volcanic activity, resulting in a 42.9% decline in cruise ship travelers to Hawai‘i Island. By July, the total number of visitors to Hawai‘i Island was still down by 12.7% from 2017 (HTA 2018). It gives me satisfaction that in spite of these difficulties, the attitude of each participant was a spirit of aloha, unity, and respect for the power of natural forces.
I recognize that by participating in this project, the interview participants and community members have given me more than valuable information about lei making and other Hawaiian traditions. They have also shared pieces of their personal moʻolelo. As McDonald (1978) and Yuen have expressed, the lei is inextricably interconnected to people’s stories, their grief, laughter, and moments of learning. These are the precious memories in their own lei that they have collected, treasured, and decided to share with me. I respect this relationship. I am humbled to have been able to receive these manaʻo, and to weave them together into another metaphorical lei that continues the story of this island. As with any academic endeavor, it is not possible to capture all that went into this process, but I believe that I have accurately represented the journey.
APPENDICIES

Appendix A Consent Form

University of Hawai‘i
Consent to Participate in Research Project:
A Study of Lei Making in Hilo, Hawai‘i

Researcher: Nicole Schuler
I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (UHH) in the Department of Anthropology. I am asking you, as a member of the tourism host community in Hilo, to participate in a research project on the history of tourism in Hilo. The information you share will help the community’s efforts to improve tourism in Hilo.

What will you be asked to do if you join this study?
If you participate in this project, I will meet with you for an interview. One interview will consist of about 5 questions in relation to tourism in Hilo and will last about 1-2 hours. An additional interview may be desired. With your permission, I may interview you and several other community members at the same time, take notes during the interview, take photographs, audio-record the interview, and video-record the interview. Examples of questions include: What would you like to see in the future of the organization? How do you interact with tourism in Hilo? How has tourism in Hilo changed since you became a part of Destination Hilo?

Will anything happen to you that may make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. You may become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions during the interview. If this happens you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop the interview or you can withdraw from the project altogether. There is also the potential for a breach in confidentiality. I outline below several steps that I will take to minimize the loss of your privacy and any resulting unanticipated social consequences.

Who will be given information about you?
You will be given copies of all notes, transcriptions, and audio-taped interviews in which you are involved. I will keep all information in a safe place for possible use in the future. For subsequent use of the interview material beyond this project I will need to obtain your consent again. Only I will have access to the information, although the University of Hawai‘i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study. Your name will be kept confidential in all notes, recordings and publications, unless you want me to list your name. Anything written about you, whether or not you are named, will first be shown to you before being made public. You will have the right to edit or remove any written or visual information about you, and to have destroyed any notes, recorded interviews, or transcripts about you.

What will happen to pictures or videos of me?
Photographs and videos may be used for presentation at an academic conference. I will keep all information in a safe place for possible use in the future. For subsequent use of the interview material beyond this project I will need to obtain your consent again.

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Do you have to be in this study?
Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, or to decline to participate in any particular interview or activity.

Will you receive compensation for being in this study?
There is no compensation for being a part of this study.

How do you get your questions answered?
If you have any questions about the study you can contact me, Nicole Schuler, anytime by emailing me at nschuler@hawaii.edu or nicolelschuler@gmail.com. You may reach Dr. Joe Genz at (808) 932-7267 or by sending an email to genz@hawaii.edu. You may also contact the UH Human Studies Program at (808) 956-5007 or by e-mail at uhirb@hawaii.edu to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit: https://www.hawaii.edu/researchcompliance/information-research-participants for more information on your rights as a research participant.

Signature for Consent:
I have read and understand the information provided to me about being in the research project, *A Study of Tourism in Hilo, Hawai‘i*

My check below indicates whether I allow my real name to be used:

Yes    No

My check below indicates whether I agree to be photographed, audio-recorded and/or video-recorded:

Photographed    Yes    No
Audio-recorded    Yes    No
Video-recorded    Yes    No

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this research project.

Printed name: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.
Interview Guide

**Kaona:**
Q: Some Hawaiian artists embed kaona meanings within their artwork. Does your lei making involve a similar idea of using kaona? If so, can you elaborate on those meanings and what you are trying to convey?
Q: What aspects of Hawaiian culture influence your work?
Q: How does your lei making relate to your desire for cultural/political sovereignty?

*Change over time: (general, also fragmentation, compression, maybe tourism)*
Q: Can you share some of your childhood memories of lei making?
Q: In what ways do you think lei making may have changed since your childhood?
Q: Why do you think lei making has changed?
Q: To what extent do you feel lei making today is geared toward visiting tourists, locals, or other groups of people?
Q: How common is lei making today? and how does this compare to your childhood?
Q: Could you reflect on the variety of lei making practices today and how this may have changed from your childhood?

**General**
Q: For what kinds of occasions do you make lei?
   Q: How has that changed from when you were a child?
Q: Can you share a special memory of a particular lei you made?
Q: What communities or organizations do you work with?

**Gathering practices:**
Q: Which flowers are chosen and why?
Q: Seasonality?
Q: Impact of ROD?
Q: Where can materials be gathered?
Q: What special practices surround the gathering of lei making materials?
   the construction of lei?

**Hilo Community/Identity**
Q: How important is it for Hilo (or Hilo Lei Day Festival) to have its own identity?
Q: To what extent should Hilo Lei Day be similar to the Waikīkī festival?
Q: What do you think the lei means to the Hilo community?
Q: How do you see the lei used in Hilo?

**Tourism/Non-tourism**
Q: Do you think visitors view the lei differently than locals/Kānaka Maoli?
Q: To what extent do you think visitors appreciate the value/significance of the lei?
Q: In your opinion, does the tourism industry use the lei respectfully? Would you make any recommendations?

Family and Genealogy
Q: Who taught you to make lei?
Q: Could you please explain your lei making “genealogy?”
Q: What stories does your family tell about lei?
Q: Do you or your family have a special relationship with a lei?
Q: Do you have any concerns about lei making knowledge being passed down to the next generation? If so, can you describe these concerns?
Q: Do you feel any specific kuleana related to lei making?

Agency
Q: What motivates you in the lei making process?
Appendix C Transcript Release Form

A Study of Tourism in Hilo, Hawai‘i

Transcript Release Form

Your interview has been represented as a written transcript. Please review the transcript for accuracy. You can edit or remove any of the information.

Regarding the possible inclusion of your name, you can choose to not have your name associated with your story. In this case, a fake name (pseudonym) may be used. You can also choose to have either your full name, first name only, or initials be associated with your story.

You can also opt out of the study, and your transcript will be destroyed.

Signature for Release: Written Transcript

My signature below indicates that I agree with the transcript representation of my interview and I give my consent to use either my real name (either full name, first name, or initials), or a pseudonym. I understand that after signing this release, there is no way to revoke consent in the future.

My check below indicates how I would like my name to appear

Full name
First name
Initials

My check below indicates that I do not want my name associated with the story, and that a pseudonym may be used

Pseudonym

Printed name: ______________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Signature for Release: Use of Photographs, Video and/or Audio in Presentations

My signature below indicates that photographs, video-recordings and/or audio-recordings of the interview may be used in future presentations, such as at academic conferences and public talks. I understand that after signing this release, there is no way to revoke consent in the future.

My check below confirms whether I agree to the use my photographs, audio-recording and/or video-recording in future presentations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photographs</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>Audio-recordings</td>
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<td>Video-recordings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Printed name: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

You will be given a copy of this release form for your records.
Appendix D Transcriptions

Interview with Leilehua Yuen and Manu Josiah

Date of Interview: 12 June 2018

Interviewer: Nicole “Kapawa” Schuler

Duration of Interview: 1.5 hours

Interview with Leilehua Yuen and her husband Manu Josiah at their home in Hilo, on Pu’u Hāla’i. Evening, Manu arrives home from work, and joins in, sharing his family memories.

LY: Ask your question again.

NKS: Essentially, I am wondering, based on what you said, what lei mean to you? What is the most important thing about them for you? Is it the opportunity for storytelling, or is there something more? And then you were saying that there was something more.

LY: Story telling is a very important component of the lei. It’s what sets the lei above the level of crafting. When you just focus on the mechanics of creating a specific style of lei, then it’s a craft. When you incorporate the story as well into the lei, that’s when it becomes an art. When I was a kid, my dad actually—I asked my dad, no I wasn’t a kid, I was already a working artist—my father, “What’s the difference between art and craft?” And he said, “Art tells a story.” Both art and craft can be functional, both art and craft can be beautiful, but art is intrinsically story telling. And so, the lei tells…it can tell a lot of different stories. You can take the same exact type of lei and it will tell different stories for different people. You know, for me, the lei haku symbolizes binding together many diverse people, or cultures, or environmental threads, into a unified whole so that each item retains its individuality. But unless they’re bound together, you don’t have a lei. You have a whole bunch of different flowers, or leaves, or ferns, or whatever you’ve got. It’s that binding them together that creates the lei.

Um, different families may have completely different stories for that, so the lei functions in that case of like a mnemonic device for helping you to retain those stories kind of like an abacus or the counting strings or a…an English tally. They…they carry that story within them. And…It’s also important to know the moʻolelo and the kaona of the lei. One of the classic examples that was taught to me when I was young, a classic example of why it’s important to know the moʻolelo behind the lei, is there’s a beautiful song, uh…that this man writes…about…I think his sweetheart is a beautiful lei hala, and he is like a lei lehua, and the two are wili…wili ‘ia together. And…So if you understand these two lei, you know that the heavy weight of the hala is going to crush the lehua. So, it’s a really beautiful song, and the poetry sounds lovely, but what it’s really saying is, “You’re crushing the life out of me.” So, it’s important to know that, and then knowing the different meanings of say, hala. Did he choose hala because it can mean loss? And so, despite the pain that this relationship gives him, did he choose to express her as hala because it is very painful to lose her even though there are these problems? But then you
can’t just have that one meaning of hala as that ‘eha kind of loss, that tearing apart of what could have been a viable relationship, because you can also give the lei hala at a funeral, to give the encouragement to release the pain of this person, of losing this person. So, are they really focusing on that release, but release of pain?

And then of course if you’re in Puna, then it can take on a completely different meaning because it’s so emblematic of Hi’iaka, and you know, her love of Puna, Puna—Paia—what is it…Puna paia ‘ala i ka hala? And you know, Puna fragrant with the pandanus. And there’s that story where she takes the hala keys from the lei she’s wearing and she casts it down to the wahine mu’umumu. And as the Beamers tell that story, the fragrance of the hala is what allows the woman to release the pain, that she was in, of having um, having her lima and her wāwae removed. (plane passes),

So, so knowing the back story on these lei is really important to a full appreciation of the…

Manu: (enters) Hello!

LY: Hey sweetie! (kiss) There’s good lychee in the kitchen. How are you?

Manu: Okay. How are you guys doing?

LY: Good. (good) We are doing an interview on the lei, why don’t you share your mana’o on the lei?…This is informal. (scoots out chair)

Manu: Okay. Am I interrupting something?

LY: No.

NKS: No! Not at all.

LY: Share your mana’o on the lei.

Manu: What about it?

LY: We were just talking about um, the lei as, without the mana’o it’s a craft, not an art. It only becomes art when you have the mo’olelo woven into it. There are all these airplanes going over now!

Manu: Oh…Are you recording?

LY: Yeah.

Manu: Alright.

LY: (Chuckles) So your mom had some stories about lei and then you have some family stories about lei.
Manu: I have to switch gears, I’m sorry.

LY: (chuckles) We can continue on, and then let you kind of segue in, instead of throwing this at you bare bones. (to me) Okay. So, another question.

NKS: Hmm. Would you see the lei as something that kind of, you know how you were talking about how the lei binds together all sorts of different things? And you mentioned like, you know, the environment, culture, and other various aspects that are bound together, do you think that it also kind of helps—what I was expressing before we turned the recorder on—do you think also kind of helps bond together multiple generations, and give them a chance to have a conversation about culture? Or maybe stories? Is it something that gives this opportunity?

LY: I think so, yeah, most of my, I learned, all my early lei making I learned from my grandmother. Although the very first lei I made when I was about three years old with my mom.

NKS: Lantana?

LY: In California. With the little lantana for my doll. Strung on one of my mom’s hairs that she pulled out of her comb.

NKS: One of her golden hairs?

LY: Yeah. So, there’s that but as far as really sitting down and making a lei, you know, consciously telling a story, the first lei that I made were lei kui plumeria down at Kehena. And my Nana and I would go out on moonlit nights and harvest the plumeria, cuz they’re nice and crisp then. But we’d also harvest during the day time if we wanted to get lei made. And so, you know she taught me you know, how to measure the string, and for the different lengths whether you want it here, you pull it to this point on your shoulder, or this point on your shoulder, put it around on the back of your neck and hold your arms straight out to measure your string. How to measure a muku and anana and all of that was passed on through the lei making. And…I guess you kind of learn other little lessons, like you take care of your stuff, cuz if you’re not careful with your lei needle you get a kink in it. You know those long, we used to use those long lei needles. And if you’re careless with them, you can bend them, and then you’ll tear the flowers while you’re sewing the lei.

NKS: Hmm.

LY: So, there’s that um, and just sitting there making the lei, she would tell stories about like one time, we were sitting there making lei pīkake, stringing lei pīkake. She was telling me how when she and my grandfather would go to parties back in the heyday, she had long red hair. She had waist length red hair, and she would put it up in this bun, so even if she wasn’t going to wear a lei, she would take a handful of pīkake and wind it up in her hair so her hair would have the fragrance of pīkake. And, so she didn’t really wear perfume, she would wear, she would tuck flowers in her hair, and so she was surrounded with the fragrance of the flower.

So, one time we were sitting making lei maile. This was with…was years later with Aunty Nona Beamer, we were making maile with her. And she was smelling it and, “Oh this
smells so lovely darling!’” She said, “You know, one day when I was a little girl, we were over at, we were at…” Where, where they? Maybe they were at Mission House, they were somewhere over on O‘ahu. And, “‘Iolani Luahine was out sitting on the lanai. She was smoking her cigarette. And when she saw me coming, she put out the cigarette. Because I was a child!” Aunty Nona is telling a story, and, “I stopped, and I looked at her and I said, I smell maile, but I don’t see maile growing, and I don’t see you wearing a lei maile, but I smell maile. And ‘Iolani Luahine reached into her pahu top, reached down, and pulled out several maile leaves and showed them to me. And then put them back in.” So that… I guess that’s kind of a tradition, which is, wearing the flowers, so that you’re surrounded by that fragrance, which is also a kind of lei.

You, you, you kau lei, you place a lei on somebody so you can kau lei with a song, and um you’re just doing something nice for somebody can be a kind of lei.

(pause, lots of coqui frogs and birds)
I used to make lei out of all kind of stuff. There’s, um, a sedge that grows down by the beach, it’s got this real fluffy star shape top, it looks like a firework, kind of like a sparkler end.

NKS: Ohh.

LY: So, I would pick those, they, it’s used in rope making actually, people would harvest the long strands and make rope out of it. But I would keep the flower heads on it, just hili it together to make a lei. Those are pretty.

NKS: So, you used the phrase kau lei?

LY: Kau lei?

NKS: Yeah, for placing a lei, Are you familiar with the term “ho‘olei?”

LY: Ho‘olei? I think I’ve heard it, but it’s not one that I have used.

NKS: I was just curious if it was more recent.

LY: Possibly.

NKS: Or maybe just difference in families.

LY: Remember, my grandfather was from Kaua‘i.

NKS: Mmm.

LY: And from the Hanapepe side, which has almost the same dialogue as Ni‘ihau. So… Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau have a much different dialect than this island. And… so… my… what little formal education in Hawaiian I have, it UH driven, but my keiki time language is from my grandfather. So, there may be some differences there, or it could be a bad memory.
To me, the feeling of hoʻolei, is kind of like, “get over here, I’m gonna put a lei on you!” It’s harsh sounding to me. Where kau lei is like, the lei is sort of drifting up and settling down on the person.

NKS: Yeah hoʻolei sounds…

LY: It sounds almost like a place name to me. Hoʻolei.

NKS: Yeah it kinda does. It sounds kind of like something that was created if kau lei was an old, hoʻolei sounds more modern to me.

LY: It sounds modern to me. Yeah um, I can’t—I cannot actually recall, although the memories are quite dim, I was a small child when my grandfather, my dad, and other families have told me I used to speak Hawaiian fluently, but at the level of a toddler. And…but even, even eavesdropping in on the grownups, my grandfather, Aunty Lei Pavao and those people, talking. I really don’t remember “hoʻo”. That sound doesn’t really sound familiar, that familiar to me. But it could, because they were native speakers and they would tend to speak quickly, especially if little ears were listening, they may have slurred it, like today people say “Hoʻonaunau” for the…but growing up we always said Hōnaunau.

NKS: Hmm. Today I, well you know, people who are studying the language, if they didn’t grow up with it, they don’t always have as broad a vocabulary, or realize that there might already be a word out there. For example, you might want to say, well there’s a word specifically to say “the food cooled down”, (maʻalili) the food went from being hot to being cold. There is a word for that for food. But somebody might not realize that, and they might try to say “huʻi ka meaʻai” which is I guess fine, but they don’t realize that there is something else out there.

LY: Right. Yeah. And to me, anuanu ka meaʻai would be like, it’s been in the freezer and if I pick it up it’s cold.

NKS: Yeah, so you think it’s pe—

LY: So, although I cannot remember the word my grandfather used to use, not anuanu, well that if you’re cold, but um the word for “the food is getting cold” I can’t think of what it is. There was a…there was a phrase actually that if you’re, if you’re not coming to the table in an expeditious fashion, it would be announced that the food was getting cold. But I couldn’t remember how it was phrased, but there was a specific phrase for that. Just like in Manu’s family there is a specific phrase for “the evening has come” and the last glimmer of light, or the last rays of the sun on the horizon, on the ocean or something..? (to Manu) (Manu: Hmmm) Your grandpa used to talk about the…

Manu: The flash.

LY: Oh, the green flash. Yeah.

Manu: God I... I had…. I had forgotten.
LY: So, it’s not um, …

NKS: It’s kind of the opposite of “ua moku ka pawa.”

LY: Yeah. Well, well you know the green flash that little…

Manu: …O ka lā…um...something something…

LY: But it, it’s not like something hinuhinu ‘ōma‘o, or anything like that, which I have heard people try and create that. Kind of like Kamehameha Nui. That just grates on my ears. Because there is a Kamehamehanui, and this guy ain’t it. You know, he’s Pai‘ea Kamehameha, and to me it’s appropriate to say Kamehameha keali‘i‘aimokuohawai‘i or Pai‘ea Kamehamehakealiʻinui, but to say Kamehamehanui that is the proper name of a specific individual of Maui. Not, um, of this guy. And…so I kind of wish people would go find the original Hawaiian name rather than taking the English name and back-translating into something new. It’s like people call this Mokunui now. They call this island Mokunui. (hisses)

NKS: That’s a pet peeve of Kaliko’s too, he’s always, cuz they always try to do, and at least that one was translated to Hawaiian…but He’s on the committee for Hawaiian lexicon where they make Hawaiian words. And what people seem to want to do is take an English word, put Hawaiian letters in it, and call it good.

LY: (gags)

NKS: And it’s horrible, and you get these really, cheap sounding words to me.

Manu: The poetry is gone.

LY and NKS: (agree)

NKS: Yeah, and there could be an older way to say it that might already exist.

LY and Manu: Uuhh.

NKS: It’s just not the same

LY: I like to call a laptop “ku‘u lolouila i ka lima” The little electric brain I can put in my hand. Although actually the kelepona has become that.

NKS: Mm.

LY: And so, this, we need to find another name, but I like one of the old names for motor cycle. I think nowadays people say something like “mokakaira” I don’t even know, I refuse to say it. But it’s just a transliteration, where I like liohaoliʻi.
NKS: Oh, that’s cool.

LY: I remember reading a novel years and years ago about Native Americans, Navajo in this novel, the Navajo people were talking about the exact same issues. And this Navajo guy was like, “I am not going to call this stuff (referencing coffee cup in her hand) ‘kopi!’” (bird screeching) And I can’t, I have no idea how to pronounce the Navajo word for it, but it’s small split round things.

NKS: I like it. That’s what coffee is.

LY: It’s much more poetic, like Manu said. When you just translate, you lose all the poetry. The same thing happens with names. One of my very favorite names that I translated for somebody was this girl named Marleen. Or Marlina. This German girl. Her name was Marlina. And she was very blonde, you know that golden, bright yellow-golden blonde. So, I named her Mālena. Which I was quite pleased with myself.

NKS: And what is the meaning?

LY: Mālena? Becoming golden, becoming yellow.

NKS: Mmm. Okay, I get it.

LY: I like to maintain the story, or continue the story of somebody’s name, and I think we should do that, not just call it what is the current term? A kamapuka or something like that?

NKS: You don’t have to force it.

LY: There’s an old name for a telephone that I’m trying to remember, it’s in a song. I had to learn it for competition years ago.

Manu: We don’t have thing burning out here, I was wondering why there were mosquitos.

NKS: Yeah, they’re visiting us.

LY: Ka leo honihoni…

NKS: Ka leo honihoni…?

LY: It roughly would translate as the device that brings the sweet voice from afar… is telephone. Something like that.

NKS: Well that would just be the…

LY: That’s just part of the name.

NKS: Oh, okay cuz—
LY: Maybe it’s hone? Hone would be like honey. (typing, looking up online)

NKS: Mīkini would be machine.

LY: (ehh)

NKS: Ka mīkini lawe mai ka leo honihoni?

LY: No that doesn’t sound right. I love wehewehe.org...Melodious. Honehone is melodious. Okay, honihoni is…honehone must have been, it must have been honehone, melodious. What would be “from afar?”

NKS: Mmmm. Somehow, I would use mai, but I don’t know how to say “far”…

LY: This is starting to sound closer. Ka leo honehone mōaho.

NKS: Mōaho?

LY: Mōaho. Very far away. Mōahoaho (or mōwahowaho)

NKS: Mkay, that could be something.

LY: Anyway, it roughly translated as the sweet voice from far away.

NKS: That’s cool.

LY: I think it’s much better than kelepona.

NKS: Or Kelepona pa’a lima? Yeah, It makes sense. Somebody else yesterday called it kelepona lawe lima. Because you carry it in your hand.

LY: Ehh.

NKS: And she said the same thing about her lolouila. Lolouila lawe lima.

LY: It’s like, lolouila li‘ili‘i.

NKS: Well, that’s more accurate these days, it’s not just a kelepona. Kelepona akamai maybe!

LY: (coughs) Sometimes it gets so smart I call it my smart-ass phone.

NKS: (laughing)

Manu: You know, you were talking about the lei…the lei was, for us, was kind of like a tie, the bridge between generations, because depending on the circumstances that you were making the
lei, you could learn so much about your ‘ohana, it was like, you know if you were making leis for a funeral, for example. You know, obviously, a lot of the stories, as people are sitting around making leis, a lot of the stories go back to what this person’s life was like, what were some of the kolohe things they did, or how they met their wife or husband, or kids they had, you learn so much and then on a different level, say you’re making leis for graduation, and you’re sitting around and you’re talking, and your listening…and you listen to, you know when your tūtūkāne was in school and how kolohe he was. You hear all these things and if you’re smart enough, you just sit and listen, and not try to, um, not try to interject. You just sit. And you know that’s where I got a lot from my mom, is, is cuz she did a lot of lei making and crafting things, and she would sit and talk, but after a while she would just ramble, and talk about anything that came to her mind. So, you would hear certain things, like recipes to learn how to prepare certain kinds of foods, you would learn, you know, some of the dark secrets of the family that nobody talks about.

NKS: Wow.

Manu: Yeah, it, …and those stories are the kind of stories that get passed down. Cuz you’re smart enough you listen and then you run someplace and write it all down, record it or whatever. I never, and I regret this because I never took the opportunity to set a recorder down on the table when all the kūpuna were around talking stories or whatever. I just had to remember them and try to regurgitate them or whatever on paper, but…

The other interesting thing about the leis was that I grew up in an era where um, where Hawaiian language, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, was spoken only by certain few people, not everybody spoke it and not everybody wanted to speak it. So, the ones that did speak Hawaiian were the kūpuna because they were before the time when it was not acceptable and not... not looked at in positive life, so their everyday communication in language, one was Hawaiian language, and two was English. Whereas everybody else was one English and maybe a pidgin Hawaiian kind of thing. And so, the only times where you could hear the language being spoken would be during times like lei making, and storytelling during lei making. (rain begins)

In many cases, that was your only method of learning, not just Hawaiian language, but Hawaiian language as it pertained to your family and where you’re from. Cuz I would hear Hawaiian language from Kohala which is like, real country, and then I would hear Hawaiian language from Kāne‘ohe on O‘ahu, and were, we would flop back in forth…I think the wind’s gonna be blowing the rain now.

(moving inside)

NKS: Remember what you were saying though, this is wonderful.

LY: Come on the sofa.

NKS: You’re still recording, aren’t you? So, you were saying you go to learn?

Manu: Yeah, and for some of us like for me growing up, this was before immersion language, it was before, um, formal Hawaiian language, so the only way that you could pick up phraseology and certain words as they, as you know, as they pertain to Hawaiian language and Hawaiian
culture, was to sit in these groups and listen to the kūpuna talk, because they were the only ones speaking ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i. And if they really wanted to share stuff among themselves that they didn’t want other people to know about, they would just (snaps fingers) rattle it off a lot, just go and people couldn’t keep up. But if you were smart, you would just sit there, and as a kid, and just be quiet and listen. Because you would hear the stories over and over again if you did. And if one aunty would tell a story and you caught pieces of it, then a couple months or maybe even longer, she’d tell it again, and you’d hear it. And it would be in these gatherings where you’re doing things with your hands, and then you start getting not only just the story, but you start to understand what kaona is. Um in a real, in a real sense you start understanding what kaona is cuz that’s how they talk. You had to be perceptive enough to go beyond what was being told,— or what was being said, to pick up what was being told.

So that’s why I said to me, leis, they represent sort of a bridge gap for um, a lot of, a lot of the generational…and students to teacher, keiki to parents, and then you know to your grandparents, and it just bridges a lot of gaps for me. Um, it’s kind of like, I kind of equate it to the old guy sitting in the Appalachia, and he’s sitting on his rocking chair, and he’s whittling away on a stick. And the little grandson comes up and sits on his feet. And he says, “Let me tell you a story.” And he’s whittling away. To me, that is, that is you know, very similar to the kinds of gathering you have in, you know in lei making.

Unfortunately, today you know we have lei making for commercial. And I say unfortunately, I mean it’s a living for some people, but um, and so if you’re driven by money and not, you know making money, sometimes that whole aspect of working with your hands gets lost because you’re focused on production and not just sitting around using that as a tool to communicate with each other. So that’s how I picked up, a lot of, a lot of, um, my family history, that’s how I picked up a lot of the ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i that was specific to our family and the region we live in. And so, um you know, sometimes if we’d come down from Kohala, and make a trip in to Hilo, and it would be, we would use phrases that I can’t recall specific ones, we would use phrases that would get looked down upon, because it was a very country kind of way of speaking. People would equate it today to be like pidgin. Up until recently pidgin has been, the creole dialect has been looked down upon as being uneducated, when in actuality it’s just another dialect.

LY: Kind of like how Southerners or Oakie speak.

Manu: There are, there are similarities in other cultures, but I found that that’s how I got to, I didn’t figure this out till later in life, but the method that I found out who I am, where I come from, wasn’t done by sitting down reading a book, and going through genealogy charts, it was by sitting down at these kinds of gatherings, at different occasions, funerals, weddings, baby lū‘aus, fishing trips, you know making the leis for putting on the boats, making the leis for putting on the back of the divers that go in the water.

NKS: Oh wow.

Manu: They would tie ti leaves to the back of their tanks but they would wear straps and things to hang their gear off of, and so you would hang ti leaves off them. And you would hear the stories of how the uncles would go in the water and pull out sharks and say, “Oh yeah, we have a relationship with sharks.” They allow us to take a few (pause)...they tell us these stories. those
are kinds of things that you don’t hear unless you are in those kinds of environments. That’s, that’s, you know, and so, to me, the lei there’s a specific, a very personal and specific meaning of the lei, and then there’s a broader meaning of the lei, and um, I think that some meanings of the lei is different based on where you come from in the archipelago of Hawai‘i and what they represent but there is a general basic foundation of what the lei represents, but then I think it’s very specific to each region, each community each family each person.

LY: Stories evolve. And…

Manu: Just like the lei.

LY: Mhmm…You were talking about your uncles wore the, they put the lei lā‘ī on their dive gear before they go on in. My great grand uncle in Kaua‘i always wore the lei lā‘ī when he would do the hukilau. And among other things, not just for protection, but him wearing the full lei lā‘ī showed that he was leading the hukilau for that day. So, you could kind of, people who weren’t from your area say, “Oh the guy in the lei. Watch what he does.” So, it was also kind of like a, badge of authority kind of thing. Made him easy to spot out of everybody else.

NKS: So that was really very interesting, thank you for sharing that.

Manu: You’re welcome. Just kinda —(haha)

NKS: I do have a question as a follow up. So, how has the lei changed? Do you see those same practices going on in families as much? Or is that maybe why there is concern to write things down? So, I guess, how has it changed? Has it even changed?

Manu: I’m not a lei maker so I don’t know, but my perception is that it’s changed a lot. In the sense that you can, I think in, the good old days back when, you could ask someone what kind of lei they had on, and they could tell you. I would venture to guess that if you went downtown during…some kind of festival or whatever and people had leis on—I would venture to guess that more than half the people you ask, what kind of lei they have on, they wouldn’t be able to tell you. I think speaks kind of volumes about the, the “wrap n go society” that we’re in. If we, if we…when we were growing up, if you needed a lei, you made it. You didn’t run to Sack N Save and just grab one from the freezer, the refrigerator. You actually thought about it a couple days before you needed it, and you would go out and harvest it. Today we have ready-made leis that kind of take away from the poetry, I think that’s really important. The poetry that exists in things that you make, including the lei. Like when you don’t know how it was made, who made it, and why, you lose the, you lose a part of the meaning of that lei, the poetry, the essence. And um, I would venture to say that that’s pretty, that’s a pretty dramatic change that’s happened over the years, that’s I think pretty prevalent now.

LY: Kind of like food, I think. In that, you know, we now have the McDonald’s leis, where they come in little plastic boxes, and there’s not really a lot of mo’olelo to them, and… but we still to some degree have, you know, the chef-made lei for your wedding or something, you call, you know, you arrange it several months ahead and you have a professional lei maker who goes all out and takes it as an opportunity to showcase his or her skill in lei making for a special event,
you know your prom, your wedding, Lei Day, you know Lei Day Queens lei kind of thing. So, there’s that, then you have your home-cooked meals. So, and I think that’s what I see less and less of is the home cooked meal. We see less of the home-cooked meal in families. Some sociologists and psychologists say that’s led a lot to some of the issues we have with the breakdown of the family, and how young people are growing up really not feeling connected to their families, because we don’t sit around the dining room table and eat a home-cooked meal together anymore. And to me, lei making can kind of be seen that way. We’ve got the McDonald’s style leis in their little plastic boxes, we get all kinds of those, and if you can afford it you can hire a professional lei maker to make your event absolutely spectacular, but hardly see people sitting, down, you know the family going out and harvesting together, and sitting down together. When Manu and I were kids, it was still pretty common that the whole family would go pick leis, you know, the small kids go up the tree because they won’t break the branches cuz they’re light, and then you know the middle sized kids are running around picking up the flowers, putting them in the bags, and when you get home, Mom and Tūtū are sitting there with the long needles, and the kids are arranging and sorting the flowers, by size or color or whatever. You know, it was a whole family activity, like today you buy a sack of flowers and you have one person in the back room stringing them. (Pause) And then styles have really changed too. I don’t think anybody had ever heard of spray painting your orchids to get a certain color before.

Manu: What?

LY: Now if you’re, you know you can get orchids spray painted in whatever color you want. And some of the, some of the so-called traditions of the lei are really, we’re losing some of the real traditions—the old traditions—and some people are just, people not from the islands are just making up stuff. Like you know, “Oh in the old days, only the chief could wear ‘ilima! And maile, commoners would be executed for wearing that kind of lei.” Now that’s just you know, that’s just utterly ridiculous. In general, the lands people would not wear ‘ilima because it takes three hundred blossoms for one strand, and you know, what farmer, what fisherman is going to have the time to harvest three hundred blossoms per strand and make a set of lei? Only royalty have the leisure time to do that, you know to have their…, all the cousins, and brothers and sisters go around harvesting ‘ilima and sit around talking-story and making lei other people have to work. And maile, certainly it’s cherished, but my impression is that it wasn’t so much restricted to royalty as it was a lei that was preferred for specific activities. So, hula dancers would use a maile, because of its association with Hi‘iaka. Couples like maile because it’s associated with courtship. I would imagine that anybody who was courting would want to harvest maile and wear it and give it to their sweetheart’s mother or grandmother. And…you know, because it…has these meanings, and all of the stuff I’ve heard about being executed if you wore the wrong lei, I never heard any of those stories until I heard haole tour guides telling it after the mid 1990s. And I’ve never seen any of that recorded. There is one, there is one passage that talks about chiefs coming together… I forget who it was… was it Thrum? I’ll have to look it up. Chiefs coming together and tying maile together to end a war. I think that was bogus. I think somebody made that up to make the haole happy. It just…

Manu: You know the good news is, we still have lei. And we still have the basic tradition of lei. And that’s, you know, that’s good news, and there are people that are still around and they are teaching the mo’os how, how to do lei making in the correct way, how to learn the oli kāheas and
stuff when they’re harvesting, and all that kind of stuff. There are still, you know, and that’s the beautiful thing that the immersion programs have been um, been doing that’s been a positive in that regard, to lei making. In spite of all these distractions—

LY: Mmmm. Mhmm.

Manu: There are still roots in the ground that hold fast to the traditions of, of not just lei making but all crafting kinds of things, and that’s the good news. You know.

LY: Mhmm. But I think it’s important to sort out the chaff from the grain. Like there’s somebody was telling people, some tour guide was telling people that a girl can tell how much a guy likes her by how many strands of pikake he gives her. And, you know that’s just like (scoffs) what’s up with that? If, does that mean only rich people can love, if you check the price of pikake? You know, maybe some guy who’s unemployed or has a crummy job, his heart may be just totally filled for this girl, and all he can do is go to his aunty’s house and make one strand? Would he love any less than somebody who can afford a six-strand lei, like somebody who’s a trust fund kid, or happens to, you know, have a really good job? So, I think we have to weigh some of the stories with real discrimination. And look at them for…does the story fit within the context of Hawaiian tradition? So, I would…so there are new stories that I think are beautiful additions to the tradition because they fit what we know about Hawaiian thought and tradition. And they, if you wrote a song about that, it would match all of the other songs, where if you were to write a song about some of these other stories, they just, they’re so disharmonious with the basics of Hawaiian culture.

Manu: Yeah, I think it’s interesting with the different kinds of leis that you see nowadays, not just flower leis.

LY: Mhmm.

Manu: You know I think one of the…over the last twenty years or so, probably longer, 30 years, you see people wearing like money leis—

Ly: Mhm.

Manu: …You see people wearing condom leis. (oh yes) You see all kinds of different leis, and I guess the older I get, the more, um, the more um, …what’s the word I’m looking for, the more insulted I get when I see stuff like that.

LY: Mmm.

Manu: Um…When I was younger I didn’t care, (laughing) I thought, “Oh God, that guy’s got a money lei! How cool is that?!?” And now I think about, okay so what does that mean? What is the story you’re trying to, trying to, what is the mana you are trying to bestow upon this person that you’ve covered with money? How does that relate to our culture and who we are as people, what does that say about us? I just…you know it’s kind of an affront in a way, but…but then there are…who am I, who knows, maybe this lei will be used to pay for their college education, maybe
that’s what they’re, maybe that’s the story. So, I…I would rather give it to somebody in an envelope than give it to somebody in a lei…but…that’s me.

LY: Yeah. I think for me, I think something like a money lei which has that real kind of commercial connotation to it if to me, if you went and the hundred-dollar lei is real popular, like 100 dollar bills folded up.

Manu: Origami.

LY:… into flowers…that’s a very popular one. So, if you’re going to pay $150 to someone to make a $100 lei, and give it to your friend…(general laughter) I’m kind of conflicted, because it’s weird to me, but then on the other hand, maybe…that’s where we come to the moʻolelo behind it. What’s the moʻolelo, it’s the moʻolelo, you totally forgot it was your buddy’s, was your nephew’s graduation, so you run out, and you know throw money to go get a lei that everybody else is going to go “Wow.” Or, you know, or “Aunty so and so could really use and extra 50 bucks,” so…

Manu: Yeah, or somebody’s aunty, put a dollar in the bank every year that you were alive, cuz that’s all she could afford. And then she goes and takes money out, and weaves a lei out of it. Okay. That’s, that’s moʻolelo.

LY: Yeah, that moʻolelo brings tears to the eyes. So, so this is, getting back to the first question you asked at the very beginning of this hour-long tape, is how important is the moʻolelo?—That’s the importance of the moʻolelo. The moʻolelo informs the lei.

(pause, coquis)

LY: I think that’s a good ending point….
Interview with Roen Hufford

Date of Interview: 1 August 2018

Location: Hufford’s home Honopua, in Waimea, HI

Interviewer: Nicole Kapawaʻalihilani Schuler

Duration: 2.5 hours

Notes: Interview with Roen Hufford at her home on her farm, Honopua, in Waimea, Hawaiʻi. Partly cloudy, 2pm, cool breezes, can be heard on the recording. Some of her children were present outside the building, and her husband, Ken Hufford, makes an appearance. Her elderly dog was also vocal on occasion. The interview lasted 2.5 hours. Our first phone conversation is also attached.

RH: (To the dog) You, you please be quiet. (laughing) It was busy. (the Waimea Farmers’ Market)

NKS: Yeah?

RH: That’s how we earn our living principally besides Social Security. So. I’m at that age where, so, not to say that there isn’t great money in farming, but it um, was something we were passionate about at a younger age.

NKS: Mmm. (laughing)

RH: Cuz both my husband and I were in our mid age, I was 40 when we moved to the Big Island and started living in this place. Um, prior to that time, my mother got the lease in 1978. And it’s an agricultural lease from Hawaiian Homes.

NKS: Okay.

RH: So, the rules were such that you could not build a dwelling on that agricultural lease. Those rules were changed right around 1987, 1988... I wanna say. So, then she decided to sell a piece of property that she, and my dad held in fee. And moved to the farm, cuz they were doing most of their work here on the farm. At that point my mother was ready to retire from the DOE, as an art teacher, she’s an art educator, and um so... Just so I’m not irritated.

So, they decided to,—life you know kind of directed them in that direction that they could—the rules changed that they could build a principal dwelling plus a workers’ quarters. So, at that point, my husband and I--(to the dog) You go upstairs, or be quiet. Okay, we were living on Kaua‘i... we were living on O‘ahu when she first started in the flower business, and one of the reasons she helped me get started in the flower business even though I didn’t want to, I mean I had worked in florists before, you know, (dog whines) so I guess there was that deep-seated desire to have my own flower shop.
NKS: Ahhh.

RH: And so, she made it happen by loaning me some retirement money from her first profession, and we bought a friend’s flower shop, and part of the reason was so she could send me flowers and I could sell the flowers that she grew! Um, so we were all tied up in this together. But after uh, a few years, my husband and I decided we had a flower shop and we had a health foods store, cuz that was passion, and we decided that we’d had enough and we sold the businesses and moved to Kaua’i. And lived there and worked for the people, I was still in the flower business, I was working for my aunt in her flower shop. Cuz that’s something…it just kind of runs in the family, and um, if anybody knows anything about us, my mother was very generous in sharing her skills with everybody in the family in fact she insisted that, you should learn how to make leis, you know. Many of my cousins who are maybe 10 years and a little bit more than that younger than me, cuz I’m one of the older cousins, so they all learned how to make leis and…One of my cousins, was a lei queen…. (both laughing) So now, she judges the lei making contests...The current thing is kapa. That was the other thing that my mother, um taught me how to do.

NKS: It’s beautiful. I’d seen some of the pictures online but—

RH: Yeah to see it in person is interesting, but I could talk kapa all day long.

NKS: We might have to have another interview just for kapa!

RH: Yeah that I didn’t want to learn how to do. But when my mother was really active researching and lei making, I kind of you know…I gave you a little tip on how she got started. I was you know, 11, 12 years old (dog whines). And of course, I wanted to do all these things. That’s what you do. I mean, I recall running round the neighborhood before Lei Day (O’ahu) picking plumerias, breaking all the branches, you know, and running away (dissolves into laughter). But you know, people had plumeria trees, that was kind of par for the course. You just make another plumeria tree, right?

NKS: (laughing)

RH: But that’s how I grew up! And unfortunately kids today don’t have that experience. I don’t see that you know, they don’t…you know in Waimea, you know it’s too high to grow—(to husband) take him upstairs please.

Husband: Yeah, yeah.

RH: Mu’ō, come on!

NKS: (Ken Hufford) Hello!

KH: Knock knock.

RH: Yeah, she’s working on her Master’s degree, is that correct?
NKS: Yes ma’am.

RH: Yeah, this is my husband Ken, this is Kapawa.

NKS: Hi good to meet you.

KH: Hi…you too! You live, where do you live, here in Waimea?

RH: I’m going to send you away, okay.

NKS: I live in Hilo actually

KH: Oh!

NKS: I go to the university there.

KH: Oh okay, so you’re doing not a dissertation, but a…?

NKS: Master’s Thesis, yeah.

KH: About the history of the lei?

NKS: It’s not so much the history of the lei, as kind of looking at the way things stand now, and um, kind of discussing with different lei makers, their views on what the future of this is, any concerns they may have about the future of lei making, or any interesting ideas, um, any concerns that they have about preservation ideas, or stories, or anything like that that they feel should be passed down. So, it’s an opportunity to record, and to have it be published too. Just kind of getting to talk with you all about how this practice is significant in your lives and how has it changed over the years.

KH: Have you read her mother’s books?

NKS: Yes!

KH: Her two books, both of ‘um?

NKS: I’ve got them with me, actually.

KH: Oh, okay!

RH: So, you’re off to your meeting?

KH: About in an hour…in a half or so.

RH: Okay if you take him upstairs, close that door so he doesn’t bother us.
KH: Okay, I’ll call him from the other side.

RH: Okay.

KH: Nice meeting you, good luck with your thesis, yeah.

NKS: Thank you so much!

RH: Any way so, you know, that’s how I grew up. So, she was working in the lei contest. Working too as part of her job organizing the lei contest, she couldn’t enter herself, but she could, uh mentor other people.

NKS: Ahhh.

RH: And so, she would say, “Okay, you’re going to make this lei. You’re gonna make a green lei, it’s gonna have ʻūlei and it’s gonna have pala’a. and he said, “Okay!” And so, she put this stuff in front of me and, and I’d make the lei and I won a prize.

NKS: Nice.

RH: So, we got used to, the family used to get together with their—like my aunt and uncle the Pomroy, you may have come across their name. But they um, they’re both passed now. But um, my uncle was class of ‘47 Kamehameha Schools. And so, his class would get together and they’d all make leis, and you know, enter the lei making contest.

NKS: Wow.

RH: So, there was a lot of camaraderie going on, and a little bit of competition you know—what’s happening at my house, what’s happening at their house, Ray Wong’s house, and you sending spies and that kind of thing, see what they’ve got over there—you know, interesting plant materials! I saw it as a time when I was right in high school and just before college, and during college too, where…Um everybody was really interested in plant material, and what they could fashion a lei out of, and doing something that was just going to knock everybody’s socks off.

So, there was one lady who she always wanted to win the blue lei contest, you know. Sister, Tagupa, Mary Glennie Tagupa. But she would also, (laughing) she would always go it, and we knew she was going to go and do this every year. She would go and buy all the blue bachelors’ buttons she could find in Honolulu. She spent all this money, you know, on flowers. So, she was gonna get blue. You know (laughing) I don’t recall if she ever won, but you know, she would do stuff, people would do stuff like that, you know, search out for the nicest materials, so the result was, my friends, and I, and my mom, and my cousins, we’d drive through the neighborhood looking in everybody’s yards!

NKS: Yes, you said!
RH: And that’s how you got to meet people because you would have to stop and, say, “Can I have some of your flowers? I’m going to make a lei.” And then, they’d want to know all about what you are doing, and then they’d end up at your house while you make the lei, and you know, that kind of thing, and there was a big buffet, and you stayed up all night long. So, I don’t think people do that too much anymore.

At least, I don’t know of anybody who does that, but you know, I’m here in Waimea. I’m out of the loop, and the times that I have gone to Honolulu, (maybe more than 10 years ago, but I remember) I had a left over lei, and so I put it on my hat and I wore it, and some lady in Kahala Mall accosted me and said she wanted to buy one just like that, and I said, you know, “Look, I don’t live here.”

So. You know having been in the florist industry, that was my bread and butter was you know, single tuberose, single tuberose with orchids, single tuberose with roses, single tuberose with, you know, carnations, rose buds, you know, pīkake. You got to meet not only the vendors who made—not only the backyard growers who made things like ‘īlima and pīkake, or um, the lady down the street who grew lots of palai, so you wouldn’t have to you know go hiking for your fern—you got to meet them. And then you got to meet the people who wanted those particular items. And, in my flower shop, Mrs. Meyer would come in and it was like, “Mrs. Meyers is coming! Mrs. Meyers is coming! No bows!” You know, it was like, (imitating authoritative voice) “Mrs. Meyer doesn’t like bows on her leis.” So, you know, that kind of thing. So, you got to know what you customers liked, and you tried to have, you know especially in the spring time when the demand was great, you had to have the whole variety, a big inventory, you know, just everything available.

NKS: Yeah... wow.

RH: So, I let I got to meet a lot of backyard growers. There was one young woman who came in, I, she was a mother, and um, her husband, worked as a baker at Kāneʻohe Bakery. I grew up in Kāneʻohe, so those are my stomping grounds. And she said, “I’m a Cobb-Adams.” And you know the Cobb-Adams brought all the puakenikeni to Hawaiʻi. And I said, “Yes, I know that, my Uncle was married to a Cobb-Adams. They were blahblah blah, and I went to school with Cobb-Adams.” And, she said, “Well, that was my inheritance, to have all the puakenikeni, so I can provide you with all the puakenikeni leis that you want.” I said, “I’ll take ‘em all.”

NKS: Hmm!

RH: And so, I learned all about puakenikeni. From her, and how, you know, it was a great lei for shipping, because you know it didn’t require to be refrigerated, blahblahblah... and you know just the whole thing, learning how to take care of all the lei flowers. Not just that I learned from my mom, but I learned from being in, in the flower shop. I learned from my employees who worked for the lady who owned the flower shop before, and I learned from my customers who told me what they wanted, so...

NKS: And was the flower shop, was that on Kaua‘i?

RH: No, that was in Kailua in O‘ahu.
NKS: Okay, it was on O'ahu.

RH: I don’t think it’s still there, I know, I sold it to an employee, and she sold it to another employee, you know…

NKS: Yeah…

RH: And it was across the street from where Stars Super Market is. I think Stars Super Market is now a Big Box hardware store or something. But it was just a little, Star was over here, and I forget the name of the street there, and then across, a couple a cross streets, and then, it was right across the entrance the exit of out of the Stars Super Market. So, it was a great location because people could go shopping, and then just run across the street to get flowers. We got a lot of guys out of hot water. You know (laughing). And we got, we sold a lot of leis, you know, for canoe races on the weekend, cuz I opened on Sunday morning. I had a girl come in, and she knew how to sell. She would just sell everything out, so on Monday I wouldn’t have anything. You know I’d have to start new flowers.

NKS: It’s good to get everything cleared out.

RH: Yeah, so she was good at making deals with people, so she would sell all the leis to the canoe families. So, but one day, some elderly fellow mistook the accelerator for the brake.

NKS: (Gasp)

RH: And went straight out of the exit and into our building.

NKS: Oh…

RH: But…didn’t go into my flower shop. It went into the sandwich shop next door!

NKS: (laughing)

RH: And they had just gotten their bread delivered, there was bread all over the side walk. (both laughing). And then another night, um we had a call from the police that uh, we lived in Kahaluu', that somebody, you know there was a bar around the corner, that somebody had gotten into a fight, and some guy threw another guy through my plate glass window. So, there was, my store was a broken window. So...then there was a flood on Valentine’s Day.

NKS: Oh no!

RH: And then there was the hurricane, hurricane...

NKS: Iniki?

RH: It was hurricane Iniki, the first one. And um, we were traveling, and so um my manager worked, her husband was a marine, and so they had lost all power, so she said she lived in my
RH: So you know they had power in the shop, so she lived there for a while. You know they cooked their meals there, kept their food there until they got power.

NKS: That was lucky.

RH: It was a very intense kind of business, cuz you’re working with a perishable material on a timeline.

NKS: Mmm.

RH: I remember one graduation, the door to my walk-in was open constantly, so it was warmer in the walk in than it was in the shop. And so, the leis, we just had to get them out of there. And so that kind of thing. We were making carnation leis in the back parking lot.

I don’t know if they still do that, you know. Mainly because I know, one year we went to Denver for a health food convention, and we drove from Los Angeles to Michigan. And we dropped in, we came into Denver, and you could smell the carnations. But they don’t grow them anymore like that. The flower market has shifted to Central and South America. Okay, so my neighbors down the road have a flower shop, and they don’t even provide heads back in the eighties, you could still buy carnation heads. You could buy two cases, the box is as big as this table, and this deep. You could order two cases, it would come in mixed colors, and you could make all your double leis, all your single leis, all your mixed leis, you can make a lot of money off of those carnations if you got them made and into your refrigerator so they wouldn’t go to sleep. Cuz carnations, flowers give off, they’re very sensitive to ethylene gas. So, you never store fruits (which give off a whole lot of gas) and flowers together. You keep ‘um separate, because it will make the flowers fade.

NKS: I never knew that.

RH: So that’s something you learn, all the technical things, so you don’t store fruit and food with flowers because of the ethylene gas. Apples and bananas give off a lot of ethylene gas. So, you don’t put them together, if you want your flowers to last anyway!

NKS: That makes a lot of sense.

RH: In the flower business, you learn whose the flower wholesalers, what they’re bringing in, so on and so forth, you learn all the ins and outs, so.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: But like I said, the main thing that lei makers are faced with these days was the supply of materials.

NKS: Yes, you were saying.

RH: I am fortunate in that my mother planted a lot of things that we could make leis out of here. So maybe if people asked her to make a lei, she could just go outside and get it. Some of those
things are annuals, so they have to be replanted, but some of the things are perennial, like ferns, and uh, ‘ōhi’a lehua.

NKS: So those are still here from when your mom planted them?

RH: Oh yeah. I planted some.

NKS: Have you been able to keep up with the annuals?

RH: Um, Uh, I don’t grow lei flowers per se. I grow them, if I do decide to grow them, they’re mainly for a cut flower bunch, but I can still use them in a lei. Cuz I make a lot of wili leis. Yeah. Occasionally I haku. You know, that’s part, people up here, that’s what they do, they make haku leis, cuz they don’t have string. Fiber plants grow at sea level, right? Hau grows at sea level. Of course, raffia grows in Ben Franklin.

NKS: (laughing)

RH: You know, yeah yeah, that’s not the only fiber plant, fibers that are available to make leis, so people up here have lots of ferns, so that’s what they make their leis out of, they haku lei. But my mother taught me how to make a lei. If I was in any event, you know if you were down at the seashore, there’s stuff at the seashore. And that she learned from—by talking to the people who lived in those places. I remember she told me she met Nelson Doi, Nelson Doi used to be lieutenant governor of the state. He’s passed. He was a very important politician. But Nelson Doi was from this community, he grew up in Kawaihae. What do they have in Kawaihae? Kiawe trees. And so, they made their leis out of kiawe flowers. And so, she learned that from him. You know, Japanese family, just like any family, you used what you have around you, so that’s what they made their leis out of.

So, another lei maker that she met, she met these people before we moved up here, so when we moved up here, she’d already developed a relationship with them. Lady’s name was Hannah Lekelesa. Hannah has already passed too. Her daughters are about my age, might be a little older. But Mrs. Lekelesa, she made beautiful leis. And she would put them on the airplane and send them to the lei making contests. You know the flights were such that they could fly right out of Waimea, Hawaiian Airlines, Aloha Airlines, flew, I don’t know if Aloha did, but I know Hawaiian flew out of here.

NKS: Wow.

RH: My husband could tell us what plane flew out of here, cuz he knows airplanes. But they would put them on, and somebody would pick them up in Honolulu, take them, right, take them and enter them before the 10 o’clock deadline, or the 9 o’clock deadline. You know, the flight— it’s very different now, in the 60s, 70s, but Mrs. Lekelesa, she would just—a lot of the people in this community were associated with the Ranches. So, they made leis for all the ranch events, and um, so they knew all the places up mauka to get ‘a’ali‘i and all these wonderful native plants. And so, she would make leis. And the colors of those plant materials were just gorgeous, you know. So, Mrs....she won a lot of prizes.
And then there was another lady, I can’t remember her except I met her when my mom moved up here, she was um, she had pikake in her front yard, she lived in Puakō, and she grew pikake andʻilima. There are still some small people, so like my friend who has a flower shop down the street. She has her sources. So, she can get pikake, she can getʻilima, she can get pakalana in season, and…

NKS: So, it’s more from smaller places?

RH: Oh definitely, there’s no body who’s doing this (gestures to the surrounding farm). Every once in a while, they’ll be somebody who…I knew one who went to Civic Club, and I could be wrong if they’re Hawaiian Civic Club. But a group got together and got grant money to build a greenhouse in Honomū, it’s happening right now, where they’re growing maile.

NKS: Oh, that’s wonderful.

RH: And then, even back in the 80s and 90s there were people who started growing maile in Kaʻū, and down that area, and I think they still, maybe even in Mountain View. I don’t know all those people. And if I need maile, I just call my neighbor. She has some. But I think they get those mainly from guys who go out and gather,--is that wind, is it too windy for you?

NKS: No actually, it’s nice. I’m from St. Louis originally.

RH: Yeah, haha.

NKS: I miss the fall, it’s lovely up here.

RH: Yeah, so the, you know the supply of things is a big deal, but if you want to be in the florist business, you have to find your sources. And if you don’t, like my neighbor, was trying to grow to croton, tuberose. We have a fairly large flower grower on the other side of town and they grow most of the tuberose around here, but when I was in my flower shop on O‘ahu, I mean, you bought… You would make sure you had a standing order for tuberose whether you knew you could sell it or not!

You got you know your two bags of tuberose. It was about this big, brown paper bag, two bags twice a week, three times a week. You took it whether you needed it or not. So, when graduation came, you could say, “Can I double my order?” And of course, they wanted to sell as many flowers as they could, they didn’t want to hold back on anybody, but you know sometimes weather is a problem. Because most of those flowers are field grown. And so, a lot of the tuberose came from Waimānalo, there were two big growers in Waimānalo, they probably don’t exist anymore, since it’s been you know, 37 years since I’ve been over there. Then there were small orchid growers that would put up a shade house. And since land is such a premium on O‘ahu, especially, because there’s such, that’s where the population base is. It’s not here, it’s on O‘ahu. So, the competition for housing and flowers, you know they just don’t go together. So, I met some small growers of roses, so all the roses come from Central and South America. Carnations come from Colombia, and they don’t smell.

NKS: That’s what I’ve had people tell me.
RH: And what do we like, why do you want to have, what’s the first thing you do when you pick up a flower? You stick it in your nose! You want it to have fragrance. And that’s what the Hawaiians—they’re very sensory oriented people. The leis had to look good, they had to smell good, they had to move nicely, you know. So, many of the flowers are being bred to make lots of flowers, or to make flowers that last longer, or flowers that are wonderful colors, but they don’t smell. And they certainly don’t, they don’t… I don’t know about as far as the world market goes… They’re not gonna be selling, keeping heads to send to Hawai‘i, you know. So. What my neighbor does is she buys mini carnation stems, and she forces them, which means she puts them in warm water when she gets them. And she harvests the flowers every day, till all the buds bloom out. So, at graduation time, because HPA is the largest—their colors are red and white, so she always makes sure she has red and white mini carnations. Honoka‘a is yellow and green, I don’t know what Parker School is. But she gets red and white mini carnations, and she has buckets of them, and they’re all in warm water and they’re harvesting the flowers every day. So, to make leis out of them.

NKS: So, you’re saying you can make lots of flowers without breeding out the scent?

RH: Uh uh yeah, well I don’t know, some of those, the carnations, very few of them smell good. They don’t smell like anything.

NKS: I used to work for, I don’t know if you know Martha, she owns a business called Aloha Flower Ladies.

RH: No.

NKS: I sold leis all around town in Hilo, and um, so we sold—

RH: You would have a basket with a various assortment of leis.

NKS: Yeah!

RH: When we lived on Kaua‘i, there were a few girls who did that for their nighttime jobs. They would have stem roses, they’d have pīkake, and pakalana. And would have if they felt that they were going to make a good sale, we’d make them a lei po‘o you know that they could carry in their baskets.

NKS: It works well with school... Yeah. We did tuberose, puakenikeni, occasionally pīkake, carnations, but then I always had about 60 roses, but everybody always asked me, “Where did they come from?” And the first thing they do is smell it, and it doesn’t smell like anything. And my boss said, “Don’t tell them that it’s from South America.”

RH: But they don’t have choice. Just like orchid leis now come from Thailand. They come already made from Thailand!
NKS: Yeah.

RH: Okay, and with the loss of one of the largest orchid growers here, my neighbors is hurting. Because she said they would buy everything— they would buy stems, they would buy heads as well, they would buy everything. And they would even take, you know if the spray was faded, they would be plucking the flowers off to make leis. You know, they didn’t just, if the spray started to fade, they didn’t just throw the whole thing out, they’d save the flowers and make leis out of it.

NKS: So, they’ve been affected by the lava?

RH: Oh yeah, yeah, and unfortunately, and I know by asking them, when you—like a couple times my mom and I had to buy lots of flowers and would to take to Washington, DC to make leis. And that was a chore, because unless you had a, uh agreement with United Airlines, or one of the other airlines to put the flowers in chill, a lot of times the leis would sit on the tarmac, and they’d get hot. And there’s nothing like, you know, cooked tuberose. It’s horrible (laughing). But anyway, we could get a lot of white stuff; we could get a lot of lavender and purple orchids. I don’t think there—I don’t think the drobiums (dendrobiums) were as productive, it seems that they weren’t as productive. Of course, when you didn’t need purple, there were tons of purple, so. So, besides the, um, lack of resource, you have that flower growers are getting older, and their families may not want to continue the business. When I was growing up, the big eye on the wholesale market was Watanabe Floral. And Watanabe Floral, they had, they grew roses here in Waimea. For heads, for stems. They grew the baby roses on O‘ahu, near Mililani. They don’t—they got out of the business.

NKS: So, do you have any um—since you bring it up—do you have any concerns about lei making practices being passed on to the next generation?

RH: Um, yeah...but um, just somebody asked, I posted a picture on my Facebook page of some vireya, you know, tropical rhododendrons, Hilo’s got lots of them, right. And the vireya fanciers, they just bringing in all kinds really. And they’re nice tubular flowers, you can line them up on a string. There was a couple of them blooming right up my, right up the drive way.

NKS: Oh okay.

RH: And that’s the reason why my mother planted them here, because they could tolerate this elevation. They don’t generally have a good fragrance unless they are the white varieties, you know, but the colorful varieties, you know they almost look like, I don’t wanna say silk flowers, but before— there was plastic, and then there was this kind of um...it was like a fiber material, like a...I don’t know what it was. And then there was silk flowers.

NKS: Mkay.

RH: That were made into leis to help meet the needs, you know the marketing needs. You know if you have a convention of a thousand people, you need a thousand leis. You know, you could have a fake one, you know. Now it’s kukui nuts, which are processed in the Philippines maybe.
And then they take them—they take the leis apart, and they restring them with mock orange leaves in between. Or they put sea grape—you know sea grapes?—in between, you know. I mean, so or they use, aralia (Schefflera actinophylla), you know the octopus tree, a red. So, I mean, or we made ti leaf leis, so Hawaiians and local people, I don’t want to say just Hawaiians, it’s all kine people, they’ve been very inventive. You know they make a lot of leis out of leaves now, because there are more leaves available.

NKS: It’s true.

RH: Right, yeah. So just about every kid around here, knows how to make a ti leaf lei, even though it’s not really a lei, it’s a piece of str—it’s a rope!

NKS: Yeah.

RH: That’s what it is! It’s a piece of rope with stuff sticking out! But they know how to stick a few flowers in there if they have to. But now it becomes the symbol of Hawai‘i—you know we make this mile-long rope lei to send to Florida, to comfort the people in Florida I guess. And they’re thinking, “Oh we got this pile of rope,” you know?

But you know, giving a lei is as much for the giver as for the receiver. So, it’s important for the person who made the lei—or even bought the lei, it’s important for them. There’s a relationship there. So, as long as we want, as that relationship is important, there will be lei makers. You know they’ll make it out of something. It won’t look like the leis that were made when I was a child. Somebody said this to me the other day, “Can you make a haku lei with plumerias?” And I went, “Yeah, but why?” You can string plumerias. That’s the most direct way to treat plumerias is you put it on a string! You know, that’s what was attractive about it. So my mom planted the vireyas—to come back to that—because you could put it on a string, it was a lei that could be made quickly, it wasn’t intended to last forever, it was just for that moment that you needed to honor somebody, so you had something, that didn’t cost an arm and a leg, was lovely to look at, and the person know, that you made it! So as long as that part is there, that people want to do that, I think my mother may have written it in one of her books!

NKS: She did! I was about to say.

RH: The making of the lei—when you give a lei, you honor somebody. You tell them how you feel about them, you tell them, “I love you. I love you enough to spend some time.” And it might even be some money on them. Or you wear it yourself, and you say, “Look at me. I’m great. I think I’m hot stuff. Draw attention to me. These are my jewels, and they’re only going to last this long, so you have to enjoy it with me in this short time.” That’s important. So, somebody asked the other day when I posted a picture about vireya... Oh I said, “Harvesting vireya for lei making session.” And I did. I needed,— I got roped into teaching some people how to making leis with them.

NKS: You got roped into it.

RH: And they wanted to make lei po’o; they wanted to make a wili lei po’o. So, fine. So it was, I allowed it. The workshop to be auctioned off for a fundraiser for a garden. And so, the time came
around, and so I provided the materials, enough for 8.9 people. And I had lots of vireyas. So, I was positing this picture because the vireya was really beautiful. So, before I harvested them all. I took this picture, so somebody says, “Do you give classes?” And my answer was “Rarely.” Because, it’s a lot of work! And um, I have to divvy out my time. You know, between eating and paying the bills, and beating kapa, you know!

NKS: Yeah!

RH: (laughs) Yeah, so you know my interests, they changed a little bit. So.

NKS: And that’s okay.

RH: Yeah sure, exactly! Cuz before that, before kapa, there was leis, and the flower business, and in between there was the growing vegetables, that’s what we did here. People learn a lot about the plants, when they do this, you know. My friends and I, when we were in college, some of my friends went into entomology, some of them went into botany, some went into Hawaiian studies, I was an art major. But we would take all the botany classes that had to do with plants in the Hawaiian environment, and we’d learn, how, you could look at a plant and say that’s from the such and such family. That’s a skill that we learned from going to the university, and we would learn how those plants were used, not only by Hawaiians, but especially people in the Pacific. And so that was really important, to know which plants were important to people’s existence. Not just what they ate, but which had religious significance, or medicinal significance, or could be strung, and made into a lei. So, one, I would take all these lectures, and I would, my first two years, I was away at school in New York. So, when I transferred back home, I took all the classes I had missed. I took them as a junior at UH Mānoa. And um, so my mom, and I lived at home, so when we’d ride home, I would just regurgitate all the things I had learned, and so she went to college again with me, you know!

NKS: Aww…

RH: Which was really interesting because she learned a lot of—at that point she was doing a lot of research about leis and she had accumulated a whole slide collection and insisted I take all these pictures for her first book. So, we were getting to know the plants, and getting to know all the people who made leis, and wore leis, and all that kind of stuff. But we were learning about the plants, you know, and she always had an interest in growing things, and so the rest of my life happened, and here we are. I call myself a farmer; I wasn’t trained to be a farmer, but it happened that I became a farmer because of my interest in eating as well as my interest in growing plant material for various uses. So that’s a benefit overall. So, I think that’s happened to a lot of people who start by making leis, they say, “Well can I use this, can I use that?” And I say, “Well maybe you don’t want to use that one, that has thorns. There’s fine hairs all over the calyx.” “What’s a calyx?” I said, “You know the part that holds all the petals together? That’s a calyx. So, then you have to learn about the plant physiology. So maybe you don’t want to use that red jade; it has fine hairs all over it, and it’s going to be very uncomfortable, you know?

NKS: Ahh.
RH: It’s a wonderful looking lei, and you wonder why we don’t use it? It’s because there’s hair on it, and it’ll make you very itchy and irritate you. But the blue jade is different. And where in nature do you get that color? You think about it, and it changes color with the day. Puakenikeni changes, so first day you don’t put it in the refrigerator. Second day you don’t put it in the refrigerator. You leave it all at room temperature, you just make sure it’s damp, third day you can refrigerate it and extend it for another two days.

NKS: Ahh.

RH: You didn’t learn that from puakenikeni? Cuz you sold your leis right away! (laughing)

NKS: I think I had, like a cooler in the backseat of my car, and I had a spritzer, and I didn’t put those in the cooler, I know.

RH: Yeah. Yeah, puakenikeni, when it’s ivory colored, that’s the first day. So, you just damp paper towel, damp paper towel (sandwich) over it. My lady used to always carry it in an aluminum roadster. I said, “Well, a plastic bin with a lid so it doesn’t dry out, will work nice.” And then you kept it, just made sure it was damp, two days, if you didn’t sell it by then on the third day when it was orange, after that day you would put it in the refrigerator.

NKS: So, does it matter, do people prefer one color or the other?

RH: I think they like the second day where it’s kind of in between that ivory color and orange-orange. And you’ll know a good lei maker cuz there won’t be any bruises on there.

NKS: It’s hard.

RH: Yeah, hot hands, and you gotta learn how to...

NKS: Hot hands?

RH: Yeah, some people’s hands are hot! I told this story the other day, one of my friends, she was so demoralized, “I make leis every year, I never win a prize, ehhh!” And I said, “Okay. We’ll make leis together.” And she says, “Yeah please, tell me what I’m doing wrong!” (crying voice)
So, we’re making the leis, and—we’re making wili leis, she put the flower in there and then she did this, pressed it down like this, then she tied the string, and she tied another knot, and she put the next flower in and she pinched it, push it around. I said, “Stop touching your flowers! Put it in the place, wrap it with the string, leave it alone!” I said, “You are bruising your flowers every time you do that!” (dog whines) And then you know she pushed it down like this, you know (gesturing roughly, laughing) I said, “You’re putting bruises all over it, no wonder, and you’re pushing it and you’re squeezing it just decide where you’re going to put it, and put it there and wrap it place!” I mean I slapped her hand a couple times. She won a prize!

NKS: (laughing)
RH: I said, “You have what it takes; you have the vision, and the right combination of materials, but by the time you get it to enter into the contest, it’s just all brown! And it’s withered. You have to treat it, you know, lightly.” (both laughing) Anyway, so that’s another story.

NKS: I have a follow up question actually to something you were talking about when you mentioned the different, the silk flowers, and the plastic,—

RH: Mm.

NKS: One of the questions that I’m kind of curious about is how you might feel about how leis are used in the tourism industry, or even like you said, with those conferences, where there might be a lot of kukui leis for visitors, or they might do the silk flowers. How do you feel about that?

RH: I don’t like it!

NKS: You don’t like it?

RH: Mmm. If you’re going to give somebody a lei, then give them a good lei. That’s...you know, they give shell leis, and I guess, that’s okay (scoffing). I give Job’s tears leis. I guess that’s okay, but...(shaking head). But you know I ran the Honolulu marathon and they threw ēkoa lei on me at the end of the race. It was like “Okay...” (laughing) You know, it doesn’t matter, I’d rather have a big badge that says “You’ve finished!” You know, or you know, “I’ve been welcomed to Hawai‘i!” Or you know, have pineapple plate! Something. But...is so taxing on the supply...and it’s taxing on the lei makers. I mean, we can make all kinds of leis, but when they want, they all gotta be the same, they gotta be the same color, you gotta halve 500 of them! Why do you that to people?

NKS: Yeah.

RH: You know?

NKS: Wouldn’t it be fun if you got off the plane, and maybe someone got an orange, maybe you got a purple one...whatever!

RH: Just all different! And they could be made out of, they could be made out of leaves. They make allowances for that! You would compensate the lei makers appropriately. You know, they want a lei for two dollars! You can’t make a lei for two dollars! Of course, you know, sometimes we would give it to them, right? Cuz in my day, I sold a crown flower lei for two dollars and fifty cents a strand.

NKS: Wow.

RH: I know now that they probably sell for seven dollars and fifty cents a strand.

NKS: What year was that that it was—?

NKS: I think we sold ours for at least 10, 15.

RH: (gives a crazy look) It’s not worth it!

NKS: People at bars, you know!

RH: I know, I know, I know! And um, but, so like I make a lei poʻo for 25, but I used to make them like two years ago for twenty. My husband would just get after me, like “You gotta, you …” I said, “people are not gonna buy it for anymore! It’s too expensive!” And I can do it in 15 minutes! And I tell them, I make it out of whatever I want. You want a lei poʻo? I’ll make you a lei poʻo, but I’ll make it the way I want to make it.

NKS: And it probably would look better, cuz you know, you have the eye for it.

RH: Yeah yeah, that stuff is—my experience, yes.

NKS: If you just let the artist do what they feel—

RH: Yes, so yes. I started make for 25 now, but if somebody is really…maybe I’ll make it for 35, it just depends, if it’s, “It has to have this and it has to have that” you know. If I have to travel all over the place, then it’s gonna be more. And I don’t ship anymore. When I was in the florist business, I did ship, but you know, the airport was 20 minutes away.

NKS: So, do you have any other suggestions for improvement? Maybe you could charge more if you have to do large amounts of the same thing, maybe the more taxing it is on the environment?

RH: Sure sure, but that’s not how it works, marketing. That’s not how, those in the tourist industry, you know, they got their bottom line, you know, so yeah. We used to make koa seed leis, you know and all that kind of stuff. But most of them are purchased from the Philippines. They’re not hard to make. You just gotta take the pods apart, collect all the seeds, then you sit there and boil em and then you string em up. You know how to make ‘em don’t you?

NKS: I’ve never made one.

RH: Okay, so you take the koa pod, drop all the seeds in a pot of water. If you bring it to a boil, it softens them, and then you turn them off, you don’t cook em for a long time, just to soften the seeds so you can pierce them with a needle. Then you can start stringing them with different patterns, but you string them after you’ve cooked them. And that’s how you make it.

NKS: That’s pretty easy. So, you can do large quantities?

RH: They do in the Philippines. You know, but who’s gonna make those leis here? Immigrants, right? So, what the Micronesians and the Marshall—the Micronesians especially. What they did was they brought with them, was Micronesian style leis. Cuz you don’t need the whole flower.

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You can make it out of leaves, you can make it out of petals. You can tear that flower apart and make it out of the seed pod. It’s basically a woven lei. So, they brought that here, and that has been, you know people do that, you find ginger leis made like that.

NKS: Mhmm, yeah, those are fascinating.

RH: Yeah, I had a friend who lived in Guam for a long time, and she—this girl I worked with—she owned a flower shop too, and she did that. But um, they, we do them with two strands. But there’s an eight-stranded one, and a six-stranded one, and a ....where the thing that you’re plaiting this whole thing together, um, is just the yarn is just as important as whatever. We know that they’re from, they’re not Hawaiian style, but they’re acceptable.

Another kind of lei is to do humupapa a lot. Cuz you can use different kinds of leaves, different textures and colors of leaves, and if you make a humupapa lei, you know, they can be laid flat on each other! The storage is easy, you know. And you can make those well in advance.

NKS: Mmm.

RH: They’re not too good for wearing around the neck, but they’re good for putting on a hat, or wearing around the head.

NKS: Do they ship well?

RH: Oh yeah, because they’re leaves. One professor said, “Ohh.” Oh, he was talking about the family Nyctaginaceae, one of the characteristics of Nyctaginaceae, besides having a nice name, is that, they have colorful bracts, the flowers have these colorful bracts, which, we call them petals, but they’re not really petals, they are modified leaves. The flower of the bougainvillea is that little white thing, in between those colorful bracts,

NKS: Okay, okay so--

RH: What is the last thing to go if you remove the parts of the plant from the plant itself, you know, you cut it. The last thing to go, to fade, are the leaves! Then he looked at me and he said, “That’s why bougainvillea is good for making leis.” Okay, he knows that I make leis! This is a professor, when I was at UH, I was always, I was always right here in the front row, looking at him. And eating, eating up the lectures. I enjoyed the lecture, so that’s what he says, “So that’s why bougainvillea is good for making leis.” And I went “Okay.”

NKS: Good to know!

RH: Yeah! So, I’m looking at this hibiscus out here, you know the leaves have a nice shape, you know. But it, you need something to stitch on, you need the papa, and you need the needle, and the thread to humuhumo, so it requires a little more infrastructure to make the lei, it’s not just, plaiting, or just a string and your needle. You need all three. You need something to stitch those things on to. Buts that’s all. There’s lots of stuff that you can stitch on. There’s lau hala, oh my God…coconut leaflets! You know, you can make the needle out of the midrib of the coconut leaves, you don’t even need a steel needle.

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NKS: Yeah.

RH: But you know there’s all kinds of ways to do it. It’s just, if somebody wants to do that, and if somebody wants to purchase that. But I could, I always thought, when my mom would have to give a workshop, I have this lei workshop and it’s for fourth graders I said, “Fourth graders?(sighing)”

NKS: (laughing)

RH: They’re just figuring out right from left, you know! And so, she says, “No, we’re going to do humupapa.” I said, “Humupapa!” She says “Yes.” So, she would make, you know, a kit they would have the papa, you know which is basically a leaflet, and then a string, and a needle.

NKS: You gave fourth graders needles?

RH: Yep. My mother’s brave!

NKS: I used to teach fourth graders…

RH: So, you would have your materials, you put the plant material down, and you stitch up, you stitch down, you put the needle down. Plant material. Stitch up. Stitch down. Put the needle down. And that’s how she taught them to make leis. And if they didn’t follow that procedure, she would get after them. It would be, “Put your plant material down, stitch up, stitch down, put your needle down.” You could hear them saying that! And the result was, they had a lei. Fast too!

NKS: Mhm!

RH: So, it has to do with the teacher, who’s the leader. Yeah, my mother was good, oh my mother knew what she was doing. Yeah so, and she was able to recognize, what your skill level was, and so often times, so I would have to follow along and do the same thing, do a lei workshop, do a wreath workshop, oh gosh a wreath workshop (exasperated) …Gotta make Christmas wreaths, and this was the time in Honolulu where I didn’t have a car; I rode a bicycle around. So, you know I would collect all these trash bags. (to carry her supplies) (laughing) but I managed to get to this workshop with all my ukana and stuff. And people brought all their stuff too, so I lookin’ at what they brought, oh great, great, you know. A lot of stuff is rubbish, but, we’re gonna make a wreath out of it! You know, so.

NKS: Right!

RH: Yeah, we’re gonna make wreathes, so a lot of them would be teachers. This one Japanese guy—and he was a minister on top of it. He was like the vice principal or something. And I said, okay, you’re going to have to envision three circles on this wreath base, the inside circle, the outside circle, and then the top circle, cuz your wreath goes from here, all the way back to this, so we’re gonna put the first, the inside circle, we’re gonna do the outside circle, and we’re gonna do it like a lei, you gonna put one material here, you’re gonna pin it in place. Then you’re gonna
put the next material right over that pin, and pin it in place. Just like you do in lei. You start at one end, and you work your way down. I said, “You will not go from here, to here, to here, to here.” He did exactly that!

NKS:(laughs) Teaching teachers…

RH: And then I said, I let him stumble on, I said, okay, “Stop. You gotta take this apart.” “I gotta take this apart?” I said, “You’re doing it wrong. The procedure was, you start here, and you go along, you follow along in a line.” He didn’t want to take it off. I said, “Okay. It’s- you’re not gonna have a success experience. I’m here to help you have a success experience. And you have to follow the way that I told you to do it.” (chuckles) You know, it was just a battle. It was just a battle. And at the same time, there was a lady in the workshop, all she had was kukui leaves—massive amounts! (hands showing height of piles) She trimmed her kukui tree. I said, “Okay so you take the leaf, and you just crimp it, make a little pleat in it, and you pin it down.” And out of all the kukui leaves she got this, you know, the base was like 12 inches, she got this massive wreath and she goes “Woah!” I said, “I told you you could do it.” I said, “This wreath is gonna dry nicely too, it’s gonna dry yellowy-chartreusey,” yellow you know. But you put them, you used everything you had, and you made it nice and close. It’s nice and full. I said, “It does look like a cake, but...(Laughing together)...You lost your hole.”

NKS: She lost her hole.

RH: And, and you know she was able to use what she had. So, so if we can figure out how people can string up stuff from the environment, and use—they can make leis out of anything. Cuz Hawaiians did that. They made a lei when they traveled from one place to another, to show you that they had been there! I came from Hāmākua and I went through Waipi’o, and then I went, I went mauka, and then I made another lei when I got higher up, you know. And unfortunately, with Rapid ‘Ōhi’a Death, you know, they took away you know, the staple, of our leis, especially for this island.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: I mean, I made a lei with ‘ōhi’a all the time. You know, if it was blooming—yeah! Let’s put some— you know, I mean, I don’t, I didn’t go to the mountains. It’s all growing here, because we put it here. But you know, I have this plant down there, the liko is like going nuts, you know, and I can’t use it! I said, “If you’re going to use it in town, I’ll use it, I’ll put it in a lei. But if you’re going to give it to somebody and it’s going to leave this place, I can’t, you know, I gotta use something else. And I will. I mean...

NKS: Randy Lee was talking about how, um, he said, and I don’t know how he verified this, but he said that the Rapid ‘Ōhi’a Death was gone because of the lava. That it was, and I don’t know if he meant all together, or just in that area—

RH: I would love to hear that. And I thought about that when the volcano was starting to really—it’s burning up the coquis and the Rapid ‘Ōhi’a Death!
NKS: And he said that you know, the native ones, they’re coming back, but you know all the rubber trees, and the albizia, and you know whatever, now it’s all gone. He was optimistic about that.

RH: I hope so. But you know, a lot of forests on dis, the uh, West side, you know. As a matter of fact, it’s sure, I think, if you go through Pu‘uanahulu, they lost a lot through Pu‘uanahulu. Cuz I remember the forests were very much thicker.

NKS: Mm...yeah. That is so sad, really.

RH: So, um...that’s, that’s too bad. So, we use other things, and you know, but, but that was kind of...it wasn’t a, the flowers were seasonal, but the leaves were not. See, whereas, ‘ōhi—‘a‘ali‘i, it’s seasonal, you know, you can’t, if we can get in, if we get it in May, you know, we’re pushing it.

NKS: Hmm.

RH: Maybe up in Kona side you could get it earlier, it just depends on the elevation. Or maybe even an ocean view. They might have ‘a‘ali‘i up at the top of Ocean View. That’s really nice up there, but it’s still seasonal, you know, it’s a summer, a summer thing. If you have it for Mother’s Day, you’re lucky. Cuz, you, that’s what I would always try to go find a bunch of it to give to my mother at Mother’s Day, but um…

NKS: Aww.

RH: Yeah.

NKS: How is she?

RH: She’s okay. She’s okay, but she doesn’t walk. So, she doesn’t get out. It’s too difficult for her, so she just stays at home.

NKS: She deserves a rest. Some peace and quiet.

RH: Yeah, she doesn’t have—my sister takes good care of her.

NKS: Good.

RH: You know, she doesn’t have any responsibilities. Which is fine and she’s 91

NKS: She’s earned it. And you guys are there to take care of her.

RH: Sure.

NKS: Do you mind if I ask you some other questions?
RH: Sure, go right ahead.

NKS: You’ve answered so many of them. So, um, so one thing, we even talked a bit about on the phone, about how your mother interwove her own personal stories into *Ka Lei*.

RH: Mhm, right.

NKS: Do you think that there’s something, you know, the stories and the lei, are they inextricably combined? Do they—what is this relationship between them?

RH: Well, you know, um, my mother would be the first to say that, anybody who has come to this place, either by birth, or to visit...has met up with a lei. Or they know about the lei. You can Google the word “lei” and it doesn’t say that it’s a Hawaiian word—it tells you *about* lei! What lei is. And, probably if you went on Double Jeopardy, “lei” would be an acceptable term. You know, um, maybe even in the Webster’s Dictionary, I haven’t looked recently. But who uses the dictionary now?

NKS: Haha.

RH: But you know, just the fact that it is part of our vocabulary, and it’s a symbol of this place with us brown people. It’s a symbol that tells you, you know, everybody has a story about a lei. You know, and if you were a visitor, you know when you received your first lei, and how you received it. “It was at a convention and it was, a bunch of shells (makes face)” You know. Maybe that colors your attitude towards it. Or you know, maybe you went to a party, and they, crowned you with this garland that you, “I felt like I was a queen!” Kind of thing. Those stories, help with your memory of this place. And obviously, if we can help to provide the good memories for people, they will always think kindly of us. You know, cuz when you, when you give somebody with that, your intention is to, for them to have kind thoughts about you. It—it’s a selfish thing, too. You know, it’s not just a, you give it to them because you’re being generous. But you want them to think kindly of you.

NKS: So, you’re always going to be in that story.

RH: You’re always going to be in that story! The giver and the receiver, they’re linked. And it’s interesting, just study what lei means, how did the Hawaiians use that term in their society, in the days of old? They called their children ku’u lei, or lei makamae. You know, they referred to the children as their lei, their grandchildren as their lei. Their progeny, right? Something that you are proud of.

NKS: That’s very sweet.

RH: Yeah. So, my friend always says, he was in the tourist business. He said, “Your lei is your grandchild with its arms around your neck.” So, you know, you picture that kind of...or if the lei is used with other words in a name. Like my mother’s is Leilehua. She was one of 11 children. Her twin was stillborn. So, she got the name Leilehua. Who are the lehua? The lehua are the
soldiers, the warriors, the ones who had strength. She was the child that survived. That’s why she got her name.

So, I have, four children, they are adopted. One of my children her name was…I’m trying to think of what her birth name was. Her name was Ricky Lee, Ricky Lee, um, I don’t know why I’m forgetting. (both laugh) Ricky Lee Lehuanani. A heavenly, a beautiful lehua, right? So, when we adopted her, we just, we dropped the Ricky Lee. And her legal name was Lehuanani. And then her family surname. And then our name after it. So, um, so the name is important.

NKS: Mhm.

RH: And I was just, I, one of my cousins, you know, changed one of his children, I don’t want to say he was having difficulty with him, but um, they weren’t, um surviving nicely. And so, he tweaked their name.

And I thought, I always thought that was kind of, um interesting that he did that. I mean it’s still legally a certain name, but the name that they call her is different, it’s not the same as when she was born. And the same thing with her son. And so, the way he described it was, it was almost as if with the name change, they blossomed. So, I was reading recently that it was, I don’t know where I read it, but it’s acceptable to do that.

NKS: To change a name?

RH: Yeah. I mean we do that, it’s not unusual. We call each other nicknames, you know.

NKS: Yeah, for something that happened to you, or maybe something you earned...But that’s pretty beautiful.

RH: Yeah…yeah. So, to help his children, he changed their names a little bit, just a little bit. Or just called them, instead of the first part of the name, you know, like “Kalehuamakanoeblahlahblahlah,” you know, instead of saying, he could get called “Kalehua, “or “Makanoe,” you know, just a part of it. Um, to kind of emphasize their their strength.

NKS: I can think about, I mean how that would affect you. You know especially if you were a child. I could almost imagine I had done something worthy of having my name changed, so it would kind of inspire me to do better.

RH: Actually, one of my children was like that. The social worker asked her, “Do you want to be adopted?” We adopted children; they were either six or nine years old. So, these children, you know, they were housebroken already.

NKS: (Laughing)

RH: You know they already had a set of behaviors in place. And we didn’t want to break them of that, but we wanted to help them, move along in a complimentary way. But anyway so, not to say that we’ve been totally successful, (laughing together) but everybody has their own issues. But you know we provided them with a safe home. Hopefully with a nurturing environment. But anyway, the social worker said, her name, she had a lovely name: Ihilani. And so, people would
say, “Well do you know what your name means?” And you know, she looked up the dictionary meaning, you know, she says “It means this because it says so in the dictionary.” And then the rest of her name was one for her father, and one for her mother. You know. So, um, she said, “I want to be called Victoria.” So that’s what we changed her name to.

NKS: Wow.

RH: Interesting choice.

NKS: Mhm, I like it.

RH: And she knew somebody named Victoria, she liked the name. But she prefers actually, we are the only ones who call her Ihilani, well maybe somebody in her family, her birth family does too, but she goes by Victoria. She likes that name.

NKS: That’s awesome.

RH: Yeah, I thought it was very interesting.

NKS: And you, I love how you just let her choose her own.

RH: Sure, she’s gonna have to live with it.

NKS: And it wasn’t something crazy.

RH: No, no.

NKS: I know I woke up one morning and told my mom I was going to be Odette.

RH: (laughing)

NKS: She let me do it for a day, she was like “Okay. Want some breakfast, Odette?”

(Laughing together)

NKS: I don’t think I made it through the day, but it was funny.

RH: Yeah…yeah, yeah. So, you know, I don’t know what the question was, we were talking about names.

NKS: I was asking about stories actually.

RH: Oh yeah stories, so that’s kind of the thing you know, so like, um, you were not born with your Hawaiian name, right? It was gifted to you. So, when I was going to school, I had a birth name that was Hawaiian. Um, and only my Hawaiian language teacher uses it. Cuz that’s what he learned, that’s what my name was in class, right?
NKS: Yeah.

RH: But my friend, haole girl, born and raised in Hawai‘i. Always thought she was Hawaiian, and was very disappointed when everybody said, “You’re not Hawaiian.” And she said, “Oh yes I am!” You know, but so she, she thought about what she wanted to be called. And she says…we had this older Hawaiian gentleman, and she said, “This is my name, what I want it to mean.” And he gave her the name. Ulupainupāikamakaninahenahe. The sound of that wind blowing through the ironwood trees.

NKS: Wow. Wow.

RH: Yeah, so she’s known, from the Hawaiian language teacher as Ulupaina (laughs). But uh, then you have, you have people who have the name Noelani, which is kind of misty right? And you have to be careful with a Noelani because they can be very moody you know?

NKS: I have found that to be true.

RH: So, all these things, yeah, they’re connected, you know the leis are are in that you know too. I was, there’s some really powerful names in my family. My mother’s name is pretty powerful. You know it’s pretty cool that she was named Leilehua. And that leis became one of her passions, you know, and that she had so much strength that she, acco—being one of ten children, she’s the only one that has a college degree. She went to school during WWII during college. And so, her family with 10 children, my grandfather too. Managed to do that. Send her away to the mainland to Texas. (howling dog)

NKS: Aww. You can let him in.

RH: I will.

NKS: I’ve got a little one too.

RH: Yeah—I gotta stretch my leg out first. Um, so you know that was a big deal you know that she managed to accomplish so much as far as being an educator. Cuz that’s what her father suggested she become a teacher, because, you know, she wants to be a painter, you know like Gauguin, you know Picasso, and Matisse and Paul Klee and all those guys.

NKS: She might have had it in her.

RH: Yeah. Well she did, she painted. She did that too. She has a whole series of paintings. But she um, he says, you know, she wanted to be great painter. So, he said, “Well maybe you oughta think about going into being a teacher as well, you know cuz you could always get a job as a teacher,” he said. But I think he recognized that she had the potential to be a good teacher. And so, if there’s any way that I like my mother to be remembered I like her as a teacher. Because she taught me all about leis. She taught me about kapa, she taught me about all the other things that I know how to do, you know I mean there are a few things that I didn’t learn from her, but the
essentials. Or the stuff that makes life interesting. My mother taught me how to plant the first seeds, you know to, to make annuals to grow lettuce, and you know my mother showed me how to do that.

NKS: Wow.

RH: Yeah, so, um, it’s all part of her name, that she had that strength to pass it on.

NKS: That’s beautiful.

RH: And I used to bemoan the fact that I didn’t have a lovely name like that, or like my sister’s name is Kapuhealani, you know the forbidden heaven. I was like how come I don’t get a name like that, you know? Yeah... or, my aunt’s name was Napaeokaimu‘ena‘ena, “the raging, the raging...the fires of the raging the pit,” our name is from Puna. And my aunt matched her name.

NKS: That’s pretty cool.

RH: Yeah, that’s pretty cool, so. And I got Kahalewai. You know, but then I learned, what wai means. What is the wai, where is it, how do, how do we perceive it? The wai is important. It’s in the clouds, it’s in the mist, you know it trickles down in the streams and through the mosses and the rivers and it makes it way to the sea. The wai is important. I thought, “Hō, I like my name.” It’s like, the essence of life. Right?

NKS: Mhhm, that’s true.

RH: Yeah, so.

NKS: It’s all around you too, in your farm, in every flower...

RH: It’s all around you too. You don’t make. Yeah yeah. Yeah... So, the stories about the leis, uh my mom only had, we only had star jasmine, which is pretty worthless as far as, really, it’s pūkake, but as single petals, it’s very fragile, you can’t string em. Um, but they grow in a little cluster with interesting calyx, but we had a hedge of this, you know.

NKS: Wow.

RH: So, my mother would, she’d make lei out of star jasmine. It would last only a few hours, but I remember that from when we were growing up in our very first, the very first house that we bought. We had star jasmine. The other thing that we had in the yard was croton. It’s nice to look at, you can’t use it for anything. It has a sap that stains, and so, but she would make Christmas wreaths, they wouldn’t last the whole season, but they were really bright and showy, you know! The first tree that she and my father planted was called a fern tree. They got it from Makiki Nursery. And it just made rubbish all over the place, so.

NKS: Mm.
RH: And they planted it by a fish pond, we had to take the leaves out of the fish pond, so we have never seen another fern tree on our farm or anywhere else that we lived! No way we had tree like that. But we had um, we had a—she had a whole series of Japanese and Filipino gardeners that would you know come and, they had other jobs during the week, but on the weekend they would come and work for her. So, they said you know “Oh Mrs.! M-make plenty, pretty flower!” I was--my mom says, “Okay.” She says, they said, “No, I plant pretty flower for you.” She said “What did you plant?” Cuz she would have always lots of flowers. And “No, no, no. You…so many days, you see pretty flower coming up.” When the seed germinated she said, “He planted corn!” You know so (laughing together) so then he could, cuz he wanted corn, right? So, so in all the spaces he would plant corn seeds so that they would come up. And he was right, it did have a pretty flower. It made nice fruit too. But she would have that relationship with her yard men. They’d say, “Oh Mrs. I plant pretty flower for you.” Or, “I come hanahana,” I come work for you, you know, and they’d take care of her flowers. Or, once we had, um, (dog whine) we lived in Kāne‘ohe and the flood plain now below Ho‘omaluhia Park, I don’t know if you’re familiar with that, but anyway before they put Ho‘omaluhia in, that was designed as a watershed area, to catch the water.

NKS: Okay.

RH: It’s right at the base of the Koʻolauas as you come out of the Wilson tunnel. But below that, before they put in Ho‘omaluhia, they put in two subdivisions, they were always getting--they had big drainage canals, but that was where the water settled, and uh, they had a couple planters, sitting there with giant papyrus, and lots of heliconias.

And we used to go in there and you know, much around when we were kids. But she, um, that’s where we discovered our fern. That was our fern spot. But uh… Some of the people were moving out because they were getting flooded all the time. So, one of my friends said, “Oh my neighbor has this all these epidendrum orchids you know?” And so, they’re nice, you know, and they’re all different colors, you know, lavenders, pinks, reds, yellows, oranges, and um it’s like, the bed is 3 ft wide by 50 ft long. And you can have all those plants, and my mother says, “I’ll take ‘em!”

NKS: Woah.

RH: Because she saw, flowers, leis, blahblahblah, so...

NKS: Alright.

RH: So, we wiped out the whole lawn in our backyard. She just scraped, I don’t know how we, or I think we just threw, we just put the plants on it. But the grass isn’t like this kind of grass that we have here in Waimea, it was, you could kill it really quick. So, we put the plants right on it, you know I don’t know how many weeks it took us to move all those plants. They put it right all in a big clump with an aisle in the middle of it it, and then we just went to City Mill and we got all these wood shavings. I mean, truckloads of it, just put all these wood shavings around it. And when we sold the house, the whole thing was all flowers. You know, just with enough to fit the lawn mower in a pathway. It was just all these epis (epidendrum orchids) and between the epis she would plant marigolds, and zinnias, and all those other stuff that we’d have to make a lei.
NKS: The house probably sold real quick.

RH: Yep. It did. And those houses at that time, they were just moving into a double wall construction. Cuz prior to that there were 5/8 in or 3/4 in redwood, single wall, single tongue and groove with that 2x4 holding the waist of the whole house together? Okay, they still have some in Hilo, but they were just started. And the single wall was only the exterior walls, the interior walls were, I mean the double wall was the exterior wall, and the single wall was the interior ones between the bedrooms. So that house had, cuz that our first house had really, our walls weren’t even this thick (showing) outside and in. They don’t build houses like that anymore. So that house, it sold, because of the garden. And in the front, there was lehua trees, and a deck where all these lehua trees, you just stand on the deck and pick the lehua right there (miming picking flowers).

NKS: Wow.

RH: And gardenias, we always, had the gardenias the length of the house, which was about 50 ft long, and just the whole gardenia hedge right under the eaves, below was carna-a ru--plumerias. Yellows below, the strip-ed Hae Hawai‘i, you know, up on the top.

NKS: Wow.

RH: Pink ones we went to my auntie’s house to get. We had kīkānia in the backyard, way in the back so no one would fall into it. But that’s all the kind stuff we had.

NKS: That’s wonderful.

RH: Yeah! It was, and so, this, the house before, we got, this farm had flowers like that too. And my aunty’s yard, I was just talking to my cousin about that. Cuz their house, they hardly had any room in there in a yard, but my uncle put in a green house, he put anthuriums in there, he grew maile starts, and he put the maile underneath his lehua trees, and you know they grew up underneath the…all in Kāne‘ohe. So, we did stuff like that.

NKS: Do you think it would be good if more people were growing lei flowers? Do you think it would help?

RH: Of course! Of course. That’s why my cousin who just, she and her husband were living on Lāna‘i, her husband still goes back and forth and works Lāna‘i, but they purchased a house in Kalapana side. And, it’s like one acre flat. So, she’s starting here lei garden. All raised beds, cuz it’s kind of just red cinder. So, I said, “Oh God,” so nothing grows on that. So, I said, “You just hafta bring in lots of compost in, and compost your weeds, you know,” and so she starts her little lei garden. And every time she makes a lei she takes a picture of it. Cuz she gifts them to people. It reminds…every time she makes a lei…She’s a couple years younger than me, four years younger than me. It reminds her of her parents. And she misses them so much. So, she planted a red hala in the front, cuz her father used to make red hala lei, and they have you know, plants that I gave em, and all her, so I said, she wanted to know where to get the seeds for her

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flowers, so I turned her on to a seed company so she could grow, get her annuals from. And uh, cuz she’ll be making leis all the time cuz that’s what she loves to do.

NKS: That’s awesome.

RH: Yeah. Whenever she needs gifts for somebody she would make a lei.

NKS: Mhm.

RH: And so, you know we communicate differently now, right? Before we’d call each other up or we go to their house, but they lived close, right? Now, everybody’s spread out on all the different islands, on the mainland. So, on Facebook she always, she’ll post something that reminds her of her parents. And so, the cousins who knew her parents growing up were, you know when you’re growing up. I guess they’re in their 50s now, 40s and 50s. It helps for them to remember those members of our family who have passed, you know, so she’s real good at that. You know, and she’ll say “I’ve been pulling weeds.” or “I’ve been soaking in my ‘auwai.” And you know that kind of stuff.

And the younger cousins, they really, they really value that because they remember when they were children, that as a family we did this, we made leis together. Some of the other ones, they have a children’s lei contest in Honolulu. And that’s even more rigorous than the adult lei contest, because the children have to sit there and make a lei in front of the judges, and the judges will ask them, “What’s this? What are you doing?” You know, “Tell me about this lei. How did you decide on these flowers? Did somebody help you?” Make conversation. So, the child, the entrants have to be able to talk about, they have to know what they’re doing. The reason they did that, they established this children’s lei, was they killed two birds with one stone. They had a demonstration, and the children could participate. And I know because I was around when they made those decisions. So, my cousins, you know my cousins were at that age where they had different age groups, and they had all the kids lined up, all the 6 and 7 year olds, all the 8 and 9 year olds, and the 10 and 11 year olds, and the...I mean, it’s like you’re on the Waikīkī Shell, you know the bandstand? And they had the...right on the stage there...And you know they’re there all in a line, and everybody’s looking at what everyone else got, and it was really stressful, but those kids really came across!

NKS: So, they just gave them a selection of flowers?

RH: No, no, you brought your own, you had to bring your own. You had to decide how you were going to make your lei, and a kui lei was just as, you didn’t have to make a wili lei, you know, you could do a kui lei. So, but you had to sit there and you didn’t have your mother, or aunty or your grandma sitting next to you, you had to sit dere and do it yourself. It was really, there’s a picture in Ka Lei...


RH: Oh! (dog whine) Hush. Of my cousin, cuz like—this is the cousin in Hilo, she don’t look like that anymore.
NKS: I love these pictures, and in the other book (Nā Lei Makamae), those are beautiful.

RH: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Oh, the Lei…Yeah. So, the interesting thing about this book is it’s like a picture album. There’s, there’s their tag. This is my cousin Jamie. She is, I’m 68, she’s 58 now.

NKS: Wow. So, did she win?

RH: Yeah!

NKS: And that’s the lei that she made?

RH: Yeah. You can see, she ran out of blues on that side. (pointing)

NKS: Oh.

RH: She didn’t space it out, but she went ahead. For this lei, she had to make two leis, and they tied at the neck, so they faced the same way, when you do a- this kind of lei ‘ā‘ī. (whine, dog getting vocal, laughter) I forgot what year, but she judges lei contests now. And there she is here.

NKS: Can I take a picture of you showing me this?

RH: Sure, sure, sure. So that’s cousin Jamie. Yeah, she um, and the reason she um, this is like a photo album of sorts, because sometimes my cousins were the only ones, I needed to take a picture of the leis. I had the leis, I took the picture of the plant materials. I took the picture of the lei, that was the way we were going to put this together. And then I had to have a picture of somebody wearing it. So, my mother wasn’t here, So I took this (pointing to the flower pictures) and I took this (pointing to the other image), my cousin was the only one here, and I said, my cousin, she was home, so I said “get over here I’m gonna take a picture of you.” She was a little cautious cuz she had just gotten her braces off. (laughing) Yeah, so you know she was wanting it to be a certain way you know and I think, she hadn’t gotten her braces here (points to another photo) so she was a little self-conscious, but…

Yeah, so you know I remember these things, like this lady, she lives here in Waimea, this is Didi Bertleman. her husband is um...

NKS: Is she related to Uncle Shorty?

RH: Yeah, she was married to Clayton, so Clayton passed, so she’s like…but this was like 1973? And she happened to be here and we needed a picture of that lei. And this is my friend Marilyn; she lives up in the Volcano now. She’s only two years younger than me, so she’s 66. So, a lot of these people, they were either family or friends, they were here! This lady, my, my mom was there. You know, the idea was to get the puakenikeni as well as the, we don’t see the—we very rarely see this. That’s why when that guy, that policeman who died, he was wearing a vanda lei in that picture that they showed. Like, wow where did he get that vanda lei? And either you could drive here, you could drive here in the 70s, you could drive along Hāmākua and you could see the vanda farms. I don’t know why people don’t grow vandas anymore. So easy. In a small space, you can grow lots of vandas. And you pick em every day, you got plenty of leis! Yeah,
cuz vandas grow like this, they grow straight up and down. Right? so and then you just pick the flowers every day that are blooming, and you just save them.

NKS: How long do they bloom for?

RH: You mean how long can you save them?

NKS: Do they go all year round or have a season?

RH: I think they’re pretty much all year round like the drobiums, they’re probably a little more productive. I would do some research on that, why aren’t we growing more vandas? Because there used to be in Kāne‘ohe, this corner house down from Mrs. Zuttermeister’s house. But we’d go by it, and it was small, the yard was small, it was as big as here to that, to the hibiscus.

NKS: Oh, real small.

RH: It was small. But they would put, for part of the year they would put peanuts in. And then, that’s nitrogen, right? And then the other part of the year, they would put vandas in. And vandas, they grow very close together. There was a time you go up and down Hāmākua, they had lots, Honomū, Onomea, you could see them. the small farms, and they would grow them. And see the neat thing about vandas, is you don’t have to use it whole, you can pull away some of the petals. You know that, right? So, you can use them in different ways. So anyway, I think vandas are a great...but you see, the orchid growers didn’t want to grow vandas because you can’t use them as a cut flower. They’re only lei flowers, anyway. Yeah, so I don’t know why they don’t grow more vandas. Or why they fell out of favor.

NKS: I haven’t seen any of them in any of the stores.

RH: You know who this is right? (pointing to picture) That’s Iolani L..Luahine. I happened to be at, that was Iolani Luahine, and that was her, her student, her haumāna, was Hokulia, uh, Hoakalei Mau‘ū. I think she’s already passed too. My friends all, we’d all go hiking, so I’d take a picture of them, take a picture, take a picture.

NKS: This is a photo album.

RH: Yeah. So, this is my sister, that’s my cousin. You know, they happened to be there, and I needed to take the picture, so. This another lei contest. And my mother was looking for the real lokelani, the one that was chosen for the lei of Maui, so she did all this research. And this is what we call Lokelani, but it’s (sigh) loke ka huli wai, and this is Lokelani, which (Rosa Damacaena Bifera) which is, has a lovely smell. *Major* thorns, though.

NKS: Yeah?

RH: *Major* thorns, (laughing) yeah, so that was kind of fun. Yeah so, she forced me to do all these drawings for her. (pointing to the book again)
NKS: You did them?

RH: Yeah.

NKS: Those are very good, very well explained.

RH: Yeah that’s what I had to do.

NKS: You don’t seem excited.

RH: No, no I do...this is my friend, her name was Ulupainapāikamakaninahenahe, we were both trying to aloha this guy (pointing) we didn’t get him. Either of us! (laughing)

NKS: So, you took a picture of him?

RH: Oh, well you know they were there at another friend’s wedding. (dog whine) Yeah, so, um these are guys, um Moʻū please? (to the dog) There was a Hawaiian club, Hawaiian studies club, or whatever it was, and so they started a Hawaiian language radio program.

NKS: Oh, which one?

RH: It was on Oʻahu, it was with Kauanoe, with Larry Kimura.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: He started, he’s not in this picture but…

NKS: Ka Leo Hawaiʻi?

RH: Yeah. That was back in the 70s. So, like, this, Papa Aila. And then this guy, this guy used to ride the bus around Honolulu and play his mandolin. And so, they were all singing. And we managed to have the party at the person’s house. Like in her estate.

NKS: Wow.

RH: So, this one was at a cattle branding here in Waimea. So, my mother made these leis and we took 'em, they invited us to the cattle branding. And so, they, they had leis, so we could take a picture. And this one we went, I think it’s July 4th, Yeah July 4th weekend at, in Na‘alehu, they always have a big parade, and so these were taken there. This one was at a Kamehameha Day parade on Kauaʻi. Yeah. So, these are my friends, they were both lei makers. This is at a graduation. (page turning, dog whining) Yea so here, ēkoa.

NKS: Ahh, right.

RH: But you have to, so that’s what my, so I did that with some military kids at a summer fun program, yeah so these are all them. I worked with her, she made it, later in life, she became a model for all the different advertisings on the television, Aunty Hannah Kia. Anyway, so my
mom would have to (shushing dog, as dog whines)...So like this lei, was gathered down at Kahalu‘u.

NKS: Mhm.

RH: In um, Kona. We went to get the lei limu kala. Maybe limu kala. Um, this is from here, Hāmākua side. (whine)

NKS: That’s very beautiful.

RH: So that’s the color of the lei from this island. These are all, this one we had to do a lot of searching for this one, and this one too. (laughing)

NKS: To even just take the picture?

RH: Yeah, we had to go to the Wai‘anais. (whine, creaking) See, Didi’s in the picture again, she was wearing the crown flower, now she’s wearing the pa‘iniu so. And uh, that’s my uncle. Yeah.

NKS: What was his name?

RH: His name’s James, Uncle Jim. This was at a ‘ūniki, you know, since she was sitting at the table across from me.

NKS: (laughs)

RH: And this is my friend, who died in a car accident, a hiker.

NKS: Aww.

RH: Yeah, yeah. (page turning, dog whines) And, that was on Kaua‘i. There’s this other picture—this is my cousin, Malia, she was three. (dog whine) Malia must be forty something now. And uh, she was a little shy cuz she didn’t have her shirt on.

NKS: Oh, ha.

RH: Yeah, this is George Holokai, he was a kumu (dog whines), kumu hula. And there’s Lokalia Montgomery, we went to ‘ūniki. a ha-for some people my mother knew and my mother says “take pictures of people with leis.” So, I walked up to her and took her picture! I didn’t know who she was. That’s Lokalia Montgomery, you know, very famous kumu hula! (dog whine)...My mother’s hands...

NKS: This is amazing to watch you tell about this.

RH: Yeah this is my mother—no those are somebody else’s, but I can’t remember who. Who are these ladies? This is Nalani Kanaka‘ole, and this is Pualani Kanahele, when they were only ‘ōlapa. Their mother was still, their mother had taken the whole hālau to Honolulu, and they
were doing something at McKinley High School, and I went backstage and I snapped their picture. This is Nalani.

NKS: You got to go everywhere!

RH: Oh, I just walked up with my camera and stuff. Yeah and like, (whine) so this, this is interesting, you see this, this lei was a lei, this is real human hair, this is a real lei. And this lei was in her family, that was passed to the oldest woman in her family. This lei was owned by Johnny Spencer, he was a famous musician. Have you seen the name Don Mitchell? He wrote the book on Hawaiian games. This is his wife.

NKS: Okay.

RH: So, they were people that we knew. This is...my aunt? This is Hana cuz she happened to be there. Yeah, that lady she was, uh, in the lei contest, so what they did if you participated, you competed for lei queen, and then some became members of her court and followed her around. The other girls just became lei models.

So, you stood there during the lei contest, next to all the leis, wearing the leis of the different islands. So, you had to, you had to,—this is a voluntary position, but you would stand there and people would ask to take your picture and questions about your lei and blahblahblah and stuff. Yeah, I got a lot of those, pictures of those. So, um, I'll show you, the beginning. Okay this picture’s very interesting. Cuz this is Hawaiian, this is Tongan, and that’s Samoan. Samoan would have been fresh, but I didn’t, we just, but the way they strung it together--this one through the seed, this one they took the skin off the hala fruit and then um stitched it to a leaf. And then these flowers in the middle had a very strong fragrance. And this came from the Queen of Tonga. It came to us.

NKS: Wow.

RH: From her. By way of a friend of my mother. This is my friend Heather who lives in Oregon now. And my cousin, Johnny Jean, so, and this, who is this, this is Kawena Pūkuʻi, this is Mary Kawena Pākuʻi.

NKS: Wow, aww.

RH: And this is Aunty ‘Iwa, a member of her family. That’s ‘Iwa, yeah.

So, this, this is the dedication page, the book is dedicated to Kaohinani Michael this is Kau...This is my brother. He died at an early age. He was, before this book was published. He was um, in 1976. Yeah so, my friends, my high school friends, my cousin Micheal, who had just retired from the FBI (laughs) Yeah.

NKS: Wow.

RH: So, he was there. This is Jimmy. One of, Jimmy Santos was my neighbor’s, my mom’s neighbor when they first moved up here. After the lei contest, all the leis that were entered in the contest were taken up the next day up to the Royal Mausoleum in Nuʻuanu. And they decorate—
Muʻō, please? Thank you. Shh come here, okay be quiet. They’re taken up, and they decorate, yeah, the Royal Mausoleum. They were sitting in boxes, in this picture.

NKS: I didn’t know they did that.

RH: Yeah you don’t get the leis back, they go up to the Royal Mausoleum. Yeah okay. So now the back, this was to show the variety of plant materials, you know. New and introduced materials, that’s what all these are for. This lei came from this island, it went to the lei contest, and because the nobils, we didn’t have nobils like that in O‘ahu, they came from here at the time. Cuz I was making the lei. So. Yeah. It’s all the different things that you can make leis out of. And then this, your copy, has the expanded index—the appendix, the post script she called it. Okay so, this is my dad. And this is here on the farm, where she took, yeah, the same idea as a paʻiniu, and she plaited it to make this lei. And so, they were um taking, tryin to use proteas.

NKS: That was incredible.

RH: Yeah, well she had lots, so she was trying. Here, here she combined the silver tree with things you could try. This was taken at my flower shop, the manicurist next door posed for this picture. All the different ways you could string kikā, you know, cuz I had a number of vendors who would make all these. I said “I don’t care, you can make them anyway you want.” So here this is the, you know, the typical flower shop lei wrapped with the strand of rose buds, or we made these little clusters of rose bud with baby’s breath and we would wire them on to the maile lei so they look like this. So, you could get flowers in the maile lei. So that’s what this idea was to show was...

NKS: So pretty in her hair too.

RH: That’s how I would sell it at my flower shop. Then I had a lady who was a back yard grower of the drobiums. And the flowers that she would come in, they were just incredible. So, at Mothers’ Day I would say, “Give me 20 singles, and 20 doubles,” they would come in and there would be brown ones and green ones, ones with... I mean just the most—and I would, I just put ‘em in a box and send ‘em away, you know. So, these are the Micronesian leis. These are really fancy ones, and she’s the lei maker. She’s the weaver. So here we did all these combos, you know, And I—I, they still do that, you know.

NKS: Randy was showing us how to make the old style ginger lei, you know you blow open the buds, and we just kui-ed them.

RH: I knew a lady who would bring, her name was Freida Muller, her name was Godfrieda. Odette, Gotfrieda, right? (laughing) So her name, her real name was Godfreya, and her husband’s name was Lionel. And they had a place in Waimanalo. They had a patch of ginger, I don’t know how big it was, but it wasn’t very big, but they put lights up, so they were able to extend the flowering season. Because the ginger is light sensitive right? It only opens in summer when the days are longer. So, they would turn the lights on. You know, just an hour in the evening, or an hour in the morning. To extend the blooming season. So, I, I she made, I sold so many ginger leis, it was so easy, “I need 4 singles, 2 doubles, and give me a triple!” (laughing)
NKS: Those things smell so good.

RH: Yeah, that was one of my favorites. But my absolute favorite, well, I like a combination. I like freesias, but the guy who make freesia leis up here died.

NKS: Aww.

RH: But he made freesia and he made ākulikuli.

NKS: So, when people pass away who had these specific kinds,—

RH: Sometimes, in some instances, I know in some Japanese families, they inherited the plants, or they inherited the bulbs. I don’t think so though in his case though.

NKS: Sad.

RH: He had tons of freesias. So, when it’s freesia lei season, you walked into his house and it was like (laughs) the kitchen table would be mounded like this with freesia blossoms. First of all, somebody had to get up and pick all this stuff, then they would sit there and string leis. Some were on order, some if they had left overs, he would run around town giving them away.

NKS: Nice.

RH: That’s how, he, he did during the spring and summer is make leis. I met Mrs. Bell who was a very famous lei maker here. And my mom and I sat with her and watched her make a pansy lei. But she didn’t make it alone. Her husband bundled all the flowers. He would put three or four pansies together in a bunch and he would make all these little bunches. And so, she, and all the palai would be trimmed the way she needed, and so she would haku and she would just pick up a bunch, and he’d put another bunch in its place, you know, so she never had to stop braiding.

NKS: Nice!

RH: Oh, and there would be a little cluster of Chinese forget-me-nots, and little clusters of sweet bay laurel. And that’s how, that was a lei that she, from this place, from Waimea.

NKS: Mmm that’s so special.

RH: Yeah, so I was lucky to help with this book and, the other book to even though I didn’t want to help with that one. I got to, I had to, the photographer couldn’t go to some places, you know, so I got to go to Kalaupapa and take some pictures there, and go to a couple other places, um Kaua‘i as well as on O‘ahu when he couldn’t go.

NKS: I love that they took them in place, the pictures.
RH: Oh yeah! That was part, that was the format that they wanted to follow. So, Mr. Weissich passed recently. But he worked with my mom on a number of different projects, or she worked with him on a number of different projects. Cuz he was the director of Honolulu Botanical Gardens. (dog whine) And so he would um, get her involved in all kinds of stuff.

NKS: Haha.

RH: And he would think of, he says, “Oh okay, Marie, you gotta write a book on kapa.” She says “No way!” (imitating voices) (laughing) You know, so yeah. They were plant people, so. (dog whines) I think, I don’t know if he published it already, but he wrote a book on ‘ōhi’a. That was his, I know he was working on it a few years ago. Paul Weissich, so. If it actually got published, or is in process of being published. But he would come up here because we have so many beautiful ones in Waimea, in a close place (laughing), he’d just stand there, and there were all these different ‘ōhi’as! So that’s what he did.

NKS: Well, we’ve been talking for a long time.

RH: Okay. But did I, did I answer most of it?

NKS: You answered so many questions, and so much more. I was moved to tears a few times! But it’s four o’clock; I’ve taken two hours of your time.

RH: That’s alright, that’s alright.

NKS: So, okay, well, I didn’t realize it was already four, but maybe I could ask you one more if you have time for it? But I know you might have other things to do.

RH: Okay. Sure.

NKS: Let me see which one we didn’t get to…

RH: I’m okay, don’t worry, Mu‘ō (to the dog, dog whines in reply). I know, I know, pretty soon, pretty soon, pretty soon.

NKS: So, what motivates you in the lei making process?

RH: Money.

NKS: Okay, money?

RH: Yeah, I don’t, there was a time when I would make lei just for the sheer joy of it, because it was something. I’m not at that point now, uh, sometimes I’ll make a lei because I want to give somebody something, and that’s an appropriate gift, (dog howls) (to the dog) Stop, you go out, you go out, you can go outside, door opens, (dog ruffs) (laughing). I’m not going with you! It’s getting close to his dinner time. He knows; he can tell time.
NKS: They do, yep.

RH: So so, now, it’s, well last week I did a workshop, but I did it because of, I was involved in the inception of a school garden here in Waimea. I don’t know how many years it’s been, but a few years. And all three of my children had helped with the garden when they were in middle school. And I think that that’s an activity that it is not only appropriate, but important for young people to develop a relationship with plants and growing things—not just for food. It’s called mala‘ai, and so it’s a food, it’s a culinary garden. But it has a whole bunch of things, and it has a cultural link to the families here that go to Waimea Middle School. I’ve been a supporter all along, so they, I was on the board at its inception, and one of the things, it wasn’t my idea, it was my friend’s idea, and I put it to the board.

And we do an auction. It started as an art auction, because that’s what I could give, I could give kapa or I could you know, and cuz I found out after I’d been asked to be on the board that the function of the board is to raise money. That’s what the board for nonprofits are for, they’re supposed to help the nonprofit to function. I thought, “Oh my God what am I gonna do, as a full-time farmer?” So, I helped with the auction, I’ve given lots of kapa to be auctioned off. And they’ve made money off of it, very, that’s why I did it. And that provides the money for the staff to do their job and help the students to…every kid at Waimea knows how to make a lei, a ti leaf lei. They make kaula, and they make kaula with kukui nut. A bracelet. They know how to make salad dressing

NKS: Wow.

RH: They know how to, they have chickens, I don’t eat eggs or chickens or anything like that, but they know how to take care of the chickens, and they can make an omelet out of what’s in the garden and the eggs and the chickens. So, they have made meals that have been, that went on Hōkūle‘a.

NKS: Wow.

RH: They helped for part of that. They made tea that sold at one of the restaurants here in town. You know all the, they grow all the herbs, lemon verbena, lemon grass, and they sell it and… So, I help with that. So, the last auction, “How about if we auction off a workshop?” And I said, “Okay...we could do it on leis, or you can...” And so, somebody bought it. So, I had to make good on that (laughing). I had to make good. So that’s what motivated me.

But mostly I used to, when I first got here to Waimea, my husband had a job, but I didn’t have a job. And so, I would make leis with my mom. She would have orders for leis, so I would make leis and I’d get the money for it, or when they’d sell at the farmer’s market, I would make leis to sell it, you know. Sometimes we didn’t sell it, but. Often times we’d sell a lei. I don’t do it anymore because I have enough vegetables to sell.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: But I’m sure if I put some leis out there, somebody would buy it, but that’s another chunk of time that gets tied up. So now, my current thing is to beat kapa and to help people learn how to do that. Cuz there are a lot of people who want to learn how to do that. I did a workshop, but
when I do it in workshop format where you have a condensed amount of time, and I have to take all the tools, all the raw materials, and they want a success experience, but they want to come away with something that they made... So, what I do now is on Mondays and Thursdays I don’t have a vegetable harvest, I’m not required to do anything, except maybe clean my house, cook the...that’s my kind of thing, so at least that’s my, the time I can devote, at least the afternoon hours. People come over, and we work out here. We harvest the wauke and we beat it. In a sense I’m still doing, leading a workshop or teaching, but this is what we come away with, the beginnings of larger pieces. this is what I’ve been spending a lot of my time on is this…

NKS: Wow!

RH: Yeah so, I…

NKS: May I? (gesturing with camera)

RH: Yeah, yeah! So for the ladies who have asked me to do, a lot of times they ask me but a lot of times I ask them, do you want to learn how to do this, and they come over, a lot of times, everybody comes with different expectations, I have one lady who, she not sure about what’s going to happen with this, but she’s going to do it because she’s never done anything like this before. So, okay. And then we’re going to do a show. I managed to get us a show. And they wanted a show of kapa, I said it will be my stuff too, but I’m going to ask other kapa makers. That left it really open. I want all my students to contribute something to it. So, like, some people I have a couple that are going to do a video of the sound of the beating of kapa in the forest.

NKS: Wow.

RH: And somebody who is going to…she takes pictures of all my work, so to do kind of a photo journal of it, so they can see the plant material and how every step of the way, and then the actual finished pieces.

I wanted my students not to have to worry about the size of these, you don’t have to make kihei, or “I gotta make a pā‘ū!” So, I had a whole bunch of mats, so I said why don’t you think about it fitting in a frame so you have a certain amount of format here. I said the matte can be plain, or the mat can have kapa on it, and the kapa on the inside, we talk about watermarks that are beaten into the kapa, so, this --does it come across in your picture? (holding a piece of kapa to the light for me to take picture)

NKS: It does!

RH: I’ve got to figure out how to display this so people can see the light all the time.

NKS: Yeah, there should be a fun way to do that.

RH: Yeah, I’ve, so besides big pieces, so this is the light idea (shows me a box of framed kapa, around a light source, like a paper lantern)

NKS: Are there fishtails in there? (looking at the kapa hanging in the window)
RH: Which one?

NKS: That scalloped shape there?

RH: This one? That’s leilehua! You see it now?

NKS: Oh, of course, I do.

RH: I’ll show you, I’ll show you where it came from. You beat these shapes into it. (goes outside) These started as printers, you know, printing the design. I was looking at it yesterday.

NKS: Ahh!

RH: What is that? It’s a thick bamboo.

NKS: ‘Ohe.

RH: Right! It’s been split, and instead of carving, you take away the skin and you carve across the fibers like this, this on you carve into the fibers, it’s actually easier to carve. So anyway, that’s my thing. That’s not a traditional thing, that’s my thing. (dog barks) Oh hush! You know anyway, so, like that, (demonstrating) I beat it in, as well as printing it in, but anyway that’s one of my favorite ones, cuz that reminds me of leilehua. It looks like lehua blossoms coming up. But anyway, that’s my current thing. So, the kapa I don’t charge for it.

NKS: You don’t?

RH: No, I’ve done some workshops for an organization where they gave me a fee for it, but the regular workshop here, they come and go. But we are doing it this time of year because it’s the harvest time and the plant material is available for us. Parts of the year you can’t harvest it, it doesn’t come off the stick. So, the same thing with leis, I would, a friend of mine said that some people were organizing this big convention, the convention was aimed at new entrepreneurs and how to market Hawai‘i, and they wanted to do for part—you know how these conventions goes.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: It’s for local people as well as mainlanders, so they wanted to have a lei making workshop for a particular time period. I guess, there [Duane] Kurisu, he was part of the KTA guys, he’s building homeless shelters on O‘ahu. ‘Kay yeah, so he wanted to do a couple of lei making workshop for, oh, 25 people or so, I was like, “Ugh (sighing heavily),” (laughing) you know, and I could just…How much would it cost, what would it entail, and finally I said to my friend, I don’t want to do it. I don’t want to do it. Cause, this is why. It’s the craft activity that you fit in between all the different…

NKS: Mmm yeah.
RH: See that’s my gripe with the whole tourism thing. It’s just a craft activity that we do to fill a space of time. Maybe I’m sounding pretty um…

NKS: No that’s okay, you’ve got a right to this opinion.

RH: But you know… yeah, they’ll fill this space of time so they can wear their lei to the cocktail party afterwards. And how much would I charge them to do that? You bring all the materials. You drive all the way down to the Four Seasons. And you know, do this thing for them. I… you can’t pay me enough anymore.

Cause I’ve been through, my mom and I did one shortly after I first moved here. First time, I hadn’t been down to the Mauna Lani and we were driving down, I’m driving Tsugi Kaiama, who is a world-renowned feather lei maker. She’s in her eighties. My mom’s in her eighties. We’re driving down to the Mauna Lani, they’re having a dinner for some group, and they want activities before, during the cocktail hour. They gotta set it up in this place, where the light–you can’t see! It’s dim. Tsugi is making feather leis! In the wind! Right? She’s supposed to be demonstrating. You’re asking this eighty year old woman to sit there and demonstrate in the dark! So, we’re making leis in the dark. It’s dark! So, they set up these things with no concept, it’s a filler. Somebody else asked me recently, “Oh, they’re going to have lots of kids who are going to be coming with their parents and everything, so how about we do ‘oh e kapala printing’?” And I went, “no way, I’m not gonna do this. They don’t understand what it means, it’s just a printing activity to them.” Yes, for us, it’s unique, we value it, we treasure it. But I said “No, I’m not interested.”

But, at the same time, I have a young girl who said to me the other day, she’s seventeen, she’s going to be a senior at HPA. She says you know, I can’t remember a time when there wasn’t Aunty Roen around. There wasn’t Aunty Roen and there wasn’t Farmers Market. I used to come to Farmers Market from when I was really little and Aunty Roen was always there, and there were flowers, and there were leis, and there were vegetables, I can’t remember a time when there wasn’t Aunty Roen. She’s not my child, but so, over the years, from when she was 8 years old, her father would say, “Oh Annika wants to come help get ready for Farmers Market.” And I’m like “Eight years old. What am I gonna do with this kid?”

NKS: (laughing)

RH: So, he would bring her over, I’d say, “Okay Annika, you take this parsley, and you’re going to put them in a bunch like this, and you’re gonna—” I taught her how to use the scale. “You gonna put it on the scale, and it has to read three point zero. Every bunch is three point zero. You put the rubber band on this way, and you trim the stems that way.” So, she started by doing our vegetables. And then she graduated to “Okay we have all these dahlias. I picked all these dahlias okay we gotta make bunches. So, we’re going to use, I don’t care which colors you put together, it’s your choice. We’re going to put three of those kind, and three of those kind, and three of those kind and a green. You’re going to gather them in your open hand, place them in your open hand so all the flowers, you can see all the flowers, and then we’re going to put a rubber band on them. We’ll trim the stems, and we’re going to wrap them in this leaf.” She would be make, she was in heaven. And I allowed her, she said, “How about that?” I said, “That’s fine.” We make all these different bunches, I said three this, I just put a number to them and we just assigned a price to them, all the bunches at $5, right? People would come and they buy all of hers, and she’d say
“See? I told you they were going to buy those! They were really nice, that was a nice dahlia.” She would get so joyous about the fact that somebody else saw the beauty that she saw in that bunch of flowers. And that she was allowed to make all these different combinations. They didn’t have to look alike, they could be every one different! I allowed her to do that. There was never, “You’re gonna waste it. Don’t waste it!” You know. I showed her how to handle the flowers, and we did it all together, and we’d have all the flowers in the sugar looking, “God, we’re gonna sell all these flowers...You think people are gonna buy these flowers from us?”

And she, said, “Aunty Roen I want to beat kapa.” I said, “Okay, you come on Monday or Thursday afternoon.” And so she comes, and she’s like, she is, she’s beaten it before, but now that she’s older, she’s like on the doorstep of adulthood, she, when I say, “Okay, I want to you beat it in such a way that you are going to move the fibers, you have to be very consistent in your beating. I don’t want you to beat it too hard, you just want to move it a little bit at a time.” And her beating is so beautiful, and so she said, “Do you see this hole here?” “Yeah.” “You know how you fix that?” “How do you fix that?” “You beat a little bit on this side, you beat a little bit on this side, and then it’s fixed” I said, “How did you figure that out?” She said, “I’ve been watching how this thing works.” So, I have accomplished everything, she’s paying attention to what she’s doing, she’s able to handle the plant material and get what she wants out of it. So, it’s the same thing with the leis, you know. I make leis with my niece. She’s in her forties now, but I’d say, “Okay, we need forty of ‘em’ Not a whole lei, but just a little cluster. They’re gonna go on a pū’olo and they’re gonna wrap a salad in it. So, we just make them all. So that to me is satisfying, when Annika comes, or the other ladies come, and they get it, they get it. “Oh wow! I know how I’m going to do it,” they tell me. Or they want to know about dyes. I said, “Well try it out, let’s see what happens!” That’s how I learned.

NKS: Trying?

RH: Yeah. My mother gave me the basics, she taught me how to do the running stitch, or she taught me how to braid, and it was from there, on. She said, “You need to put a light behind the kapa.” So, I’m putting a light behind the kapa. So, I take all those over there and I show her. “Okay, I’m going to put a light behind the kapa. I’m going to mount this in a box and I’m going to put a light source in it, and it’s going to sit on the wall or on the table.” I said, “You said to put a light behind it. So, does it work?” She goes, “Yes, it works.” I said, “Okay, but I cut all the holes in the kapa, I cut it all out,” you know, the frame. I cut all of this. “So now I have all these little pieces of kapa, so what do I do?” Well my mother also taught me how to quilt.

NKS: Ha!

RH: So, I’m just showing you this thing (fetches roll of kapa squares sewn into a quilt pattern). So, this is how I am motivated, I took all the pukas and I sewed it together.

NKS: Wow!

RH: So, these were all larger pieces that I cut out to use as frames, for mattes. And then I stitched them all together, like a quilt.

NKS: Can I take another photo?
RH: I mean, it’s totally useless, you know, not like a *quilt* quilt.

NKS: But it’s beautiful.

RH: Sure. And to me that’s valuable. I mean, I paint the walls in my house, so you know.

NKS: Haha.

RH: There’s value in it. Anyway, so I show these kinds of things to my students just to get them going. So, I have this one lady and she showed me what she’s gonna do. She’s gonna make the kapa and she’s gonna make this thing that folds up and makes a big star, and I went, “Great! Wonderful! Go for it.” So, it’s taking a tradition thing, the traditional tools, the traditional plant material, the traditional techniques, and planted it in this time. That’s my take on it anyway. Cuz I didn’t start as a Hawaiian artist. You know, I was a student of art. I did batik, I did wreath making, I did ceramics. I did all those things. Even the back is fun.

NKS: Yeah.

RH: I did all...and so these are all natural colors too. I have some people who do this because they just want to do natural colors, they want to paint a picture using natural colors on a natural fiber that they made. They don’t want to go to the store and buy. Which is, you know, the artist papers and stuff like that, and the artist colors, they’re all predictable. This is not predicable. It’s sort of, I mean they got an idea of how it’s gonna come out. But until they actually put it all together. So, it’s the same thing with a lei, you have predictable materials, but you could put the same palette of materials here, and you have four lei makers all come up, they’ll be the same materials, but the leis will look different. Because they had to put part of themselves in it. I mean outside of plumeria leis and tuberose leis, but if you did wili lei or haku lei, they would all look different. And that happened last week. All the ladies’ looked different! And I could say, “Okay you’re gonna, when you put the flowers in, this is as wide as your lei is gonna be.” But they come out that wide, (showing a wider span with her fingers) but they put in on their head and they still feel beautiful.

NKS: That’s awesome.

RH: Yeah, so. Did that answer the question?

NKS: It answered very many questions. Thank you so very much.

RH: You’re welcome.

NKS: You’ve just told me so…I’m blown away.

RH: Well I was lucky. I was lucky. With my mother’s publication, there were some other small publications at the same time. You could probably research them.
NKS: Yeah, I think I picked up a few of them.

RH: And actually, when she was working on them, I remember being at Hamilton Library at UH Mānoa—cuz I wrote a paper, I forgot what class it was—about leis. Cuz that’s what I was familiar with, why should I make it hard, right? There wasn’t, you really had to look in a whole bunch of different places for information about leis. And it was usually about people who observed people wearing leis or using leis or making leis, they are observers to it. Right? They were not participants. See? So, you’ve been a participant. You make leis. Same thing with kapa, there’s nothing really written. There’s some stuff, but mainly by observers. It makes a greater impact I think if it’s written by somebody who actually does it.

NKS: Absolutely.

RH: So, I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. At the time I was like, “Oh mom, please, I don’t want to do something else, do I have to?” And she said, “Yes. I need you to help me.” So, I thought, “Okay...” There were a lot of benefits, every time we did this fashion show, it was called, the fashion designer was named Richard Goodwin, and he designed, he had a whole line of wear for Kamehameha Garment Company. I don’t think they exist anymore. So, he did the fashion of the Hawaiian woman over a hundred years, hundreds of years.

NKS: Oh okay.

RH: So, leis were woven into it. And so, he did it for various events, and so there were different leis for different parts. You know there was one that was worn, lei kino, you know, like side saddle, cuz she wore the regalia of a pāʻū rider with a hat, a velvet hat, the fleece collar, and there was you know, there were certain leis that had to be made. And so, a red one, a yellow one, a white one, a blue one...you know that kind of thing.

NKS: Yep.

RH: So, it was kind of, it could be drudgery work, but every set was a little bit different depending on what time of year it was. And I’d get paid for that. That’s how I paid for college! Like I told you, my tuition was only $115 per semester.

NKS: (Laughs) You don’t want to know what mine is today.

RH: I know what it is, I had a son who was going to school and he couldn’t afford it, so.

[...]

RH: Yeah, aha, what was your Bachelor’s degree in?

NKS: My bachelor’s was Anthropology, but I also minored in Art, Drama, and Psychology. I couldn’t make up my mind so I just did all four.

RH: Yeah. Yeah, so you just did a lot. Right.
NKS: Right, cuz there’s more than one way to look at things. And anthropology, you might not leave and go directly into an “anthropology job” but you learn stuff that you can apply anywhere, just like with art or psychology, just the way that people and life and logic works, so. Wow I’ve taken so much of your time.

RH: I hope it’s been helpful.

NKS: It has been wonderful. If I could, I have a form actually, so there’s the IRB at the school, and they make sure you’re you know,

RH: Right, right. That you actually did get your interview.

NKS: Right, the title is a little funky because I started a while ago, it talks more about tourism, I think that it does about leis, but it’s okay. You can sign one, and then you can keep one. And then what I’ll do, is I’ll transcribe this, and then I can give you the transcription, and let you go through it, and you can add stuff, delete stuff, change names, whatever you want. If there’s anything you’re concerned about, you just let me know. Or if you change your mind about anything. And then, what would be the best way for me to get that to you? I could do email, I could come in person again, or I could mail it to you.

RH: You can email it, you don’t have to make it difficult on yourself.

NKS: Okay, would you like to write your email on that one?

RH: Sure. Every once in a while, I say to my kids, “I remember when we got the first cell phone. I remember when we got the first computer.” You know. Time is so condensed now.

NKS: It is. It’s crazy the amount of information that we have and that we’re responsible for.

RH: Sure. sure. They take it for granted, they’re always with the phone,

NKS: I didn’t have a phone till I was sixteen. I lived, I still survived.

RH: I think my kids out there...I will pass this on…charging…Okay great. So, Hilo’s not so voggy now?

NKS: It’s been okay. I did have some trouble with my asthma a bit, but the last couple weeks have been better.

RH: Yeah. I’m gonna kick my door. (as we both exit her house) I don’t know why it’s...I think if I put the fixture on the bottom it won’t be so hard to open.

NKS: This is my favorite color, (pointing to the blue door) I would love to paint my doors that color, but my landlord wouldn’t like me very much.
RH: My whole house is painted. It’s my house. I do whatever I want.

NKS: Thank you so much!


NKS: I really appreciated it.

RH: No problem. I hope you are successful.

NKS: I hope so too! I’ll be in touch.

RH: Okay you can just email or call me,…

NKS: Alright.

RH: You drive carefully now.

NKS: I will, thank you. Aloha to your mother.

RH: I will.

(wind blowing through the ironwood trees)
Phone Interview with Roen Hufford

NKS: It’s alright yeah, okay, there we go. So maybe could you describe, …do you think that lei making has changed over your lifetime?

RH: Yes. Mainly because, the biggest concern is the availability of the materials. Like if you look at it from a commercial perspective, there are less and less people who are inclined to grow lei flowers, that killed the florist’s market. For instance, So, there was a time when I had a retail florist, and that was my bread and butter was to make leis. And you know, that was on O‘ahu many years ago. I know that experience where I needed to send flowers, my mother wanted to send flowers to a funeral on O‘ahu. She asked me to call the florist. Her first choice was to send a lei. Of course, as it would happen, this funeral was on Mother’s Day. There’s Mother’s Day, there’s always a prom, there’s Mother’s Day itself, somebody decides they’re going to get married, and then somebody has the misfortune of dying and having a funeral so (laughing). The florist that I called, I had been out of the business for a long time. I just looked on the internet and called one that looked interesting. And a lei was just out of the question. Much less something like a simple bouquet of gardenias, was just out of the question. And so, you know, from the florist’s perspective, there’s just not enough flowers being grown locally for that market. So that’s the biggest change. I’m a child of the sixties, I was born in 1950, so going down to Maunakea Street, there was just lots of leis down there, and all kinds of leis. And many of the lei sellers, they had contacts with people who grew the flowers just in their backyard. So, there was a lot of supply. When I lived on Kaua‘i I worked with somebody who told me that his college education, his parents were Filipino, from Waimea on Kaua‘i. They put him through college by selling lei flowers from their yard.

NKS: Wow!

RH: Yeah people don’t do that. Yeah, bozu, crown flowers, that kind of thing. They grew lei flowers and that’s how they financed his college education. Of course, college, back in, I graduated college, UH Mānoa in 1973. And my tuition, full time tuition for one semester was $115. So that’s the biggest change. Things cost a lot of money, I think people are wrapped up in having to spend their time earning more money to pay for things. So, they don’t have time to do a backyard garden. It’s been a long time since I lived in O‘ahu, I know there’s many many more people since I grew up. People don’t have that kind of space to put in a little garden where they can grow flowers for themselves or to sell to a florist to make leis. When I was a child, when Lei Day came around, we just scoured the neighborhood, and everybody had plumerias. You know that’s what we made leis out of. We made lots and lots of plumeria leis, all different kinds. I don’t see that anymore. Of course, I don’t go to O‘ahu that often.

NKS: So, you went to Lei Day on O‘ahu?

RH: Yeah, my mother worked for the City, part of her job was to put on the lei making contest every year. That’s how she, how her interest in leis was refined. There were always leis in her life, ever since she was a child, when my grandmother had a garden. She grew her own flowers out of which she could make leis. And so, the same thing happened to me, my mother always
had a flower garden. She made sure we had lots of, there were several different kinds of plumerias, we had all kinds of other things that you could make leis out of, there were ferns, there were gardenias, orchids, there was all stuff you could make a lei out of. And because she worked for the Parks and Recreation, that was part of her job, to help put on the lei contest. She learned all the different ways to make leis depending on what lei materials were available to you. Because it was her job, but she had that interest anyway. My mother has always been interested in plants and growing things. And she’s art trained, she’s and art educator.

NKS: Yes, I read that.

RH: You didn’t know about my mother that way? My mother was an art educator.

NKS: Yeah, I read it. Didn’t she go to school in Texas?

RH: Didn’t she go to school where?

NKS: In Texas?

RH: In Texas? That was college. (Texas Women’s University)

NKS: Okay.

RH: She went to, she was born on O‘ahu, raised on Moloka‘i, went to school at Kamehameha School for Girls, she had to board when she was in high school. She went to school during the war, WWII. She was able to go to college in Texas. (inaudible)… but her major was art education. So, she got a job with the City and was a playground director, was a senior citizen specialist, she was arts and crafts specialist--that was her last position after she, before she retired from the City. And in her position there, she had to do in-service training for the playground director so they could do the lei contest, so they knew what they were doing. So, they could encourage people who came to the playground to learn how to make leis, if they didn’t already know. Out of that, she got to be well versed in lei making. And she got to meet, this is what we would do. We would be driving to school, and my mother would be looking in everyone’s yards to see what there was to make leis out of. And often times, we were late because she would be rubbernecking, that kind of thing. And when it came time to make leis, she often met people who had interesting things in their yard, because she would stop and ask if she could make leis out of them. And that’s how she met a lot of people. And, she put together a slide show, people would say to her, “Can you come and do a lei making workshop for us?” And so, as part of her job, she would do that. And so, because she was showing people how to make leis and talking about it, she did a whole collection of slides, showing all the different leis, and lei making materials, both native and nonnative. She amassed this whole--we call it a database now--she had this whole, all this information that she collected. And people would say, “You should put it in a book.” Okay, so that’s how she started writing her book. So, when she, the concept, if you’ve seen Ka Lei?  

NKS: Mmhm.

RH: Have you read it?
NKS: Not in its entirety, but it’s actually on my table right now.

RH: Okay, well the basic thing is part of the text is in regular font, and part of it is in italics.

NKS: Yeah, isn’t it her personal story?

RH: ‘Kay the parts that’s in italics, yeah, is her personal stories about leis and her life. And anybody who’s grown up here, or even visited here, has had that kind of little story about a lei in their life. Or leis in their life. That’s why she wrote it that way. You got the botanical, and cultural information, about particular leis, and then you got her personal stories why leis are important. So, at the time that she was, she started collecting all this information when I was in high school, maybe even before that. Being the very astute art teacher that she was, she always tested everything out on her own children. So, all of us, my sister, brother, and I, we all made leis! She tested out on her nieces and her nephews. She tested it out on all of her siblings. And so, it’s become a family thing, we all make leis, pretty much. Or we are involved somehow in gardening to grow the leis. So that’s how it evolved through high school, and then when I was in college we’d have big lei making parties, especially before Lei Day, we’d stay up all night and make leis, eat a lot of food, and go to the lei contest with a lot of sleep deficit. That was just part of what it was like growing up. When I was in college she insisted that I help her with this book and take all the photographs for it. So, I am not, I was forced to do that. She brought the camera for me to do that. And so, I would go everywhere she needed pictures taken for various things. So, it was kind of interesting, on one occasion, we had to go to a concert, and there were all these old time guys, you don’t even know their names, who were going to be performing. But at that performance was a hālau from Hilo. And it was Mrs. uh, Kanaka‘ole and her daughters came. And they, one of the first times that they were introduced to Honolulu society, they came and did an event there so. There are some, there is a picture in Ka Lei that I took of Nalei Kanaka‘ole and Pualani Kanaka‘ole. They were both dancers then, at that performance. I often times got put in a situation where shed take me to like a ‘uniki of a hālau and say, “Take pictures.” So, I would walk around, and I would stick the camera in somebody’s face and take pictures. Somebody who I thought was interesting, who had all kinds of leis on. So, there’s a picture in there of Lokalia Montgomery who was a very famous old time (inaudible). And I didn’t know who she was at the time, and that was probably very helpful in my being able to take the picture, cuz I just walked up and took a picture, said, “Thank you!” And walked away (laughing). So, it turned out to be nice pictures so we put them in the book. So that’s how I got involved in it, by simply being my mother’s daughter, I didn’t complain, I enjoyed doing that. And that’s been the story of my life. I enjoyed doing them, and my mother always insisted that we do it well. So, I excelled at it. She often times would take, if she was teaching a workshop, I would go and I would assist her, and so I would have to make like (....) I had to know what I was doing to help her, to help people to learn how to make leis. And then it turned out that if my mother couldn’t do a lecture or presentation, that I would do it. Or, I would do it with my friends, when I was at UH Mānoa. I don’t know if it was Lei Day or whatever, but the associative students of the University of Hawai‘i at UH put this big tent up on campus, and all kinds of things were happening. I guess they asked me and my friends to do a lei making workshop, and have all this stuff, and anybody who passed by could make a lei. I think they gave us a couple hundred dollars, said, “Sure, we’ll do it!” You know. So, we just got all the stuff together, and in between our classes, we just hung out
in the tent, and anybody who wanted to make lei, came in and we would show them how to make a lei. We would go to the mountains and pick ferns, we would go in our yards and pick all this stuff. And so, people would just sit down and learn how to make leis.

And I think for one of my classes, it was an ethnobotany class, I forget what number it was, botany something or another. Everybody, it was for non-majors. Anybody who attended the class had to do some kind of project. About some plant, or plants that were important to the Hawaiians for their existence. So, I went in and talked to Beatrice Krauss, I said, “I can do a project on leis” I told her. Cuz i knew about it. She said great, you can give the lecture, she told me. So yeah, so at that point I was a junior, and I said okay, I got a slide, I can do a slide presentation. And she said okay you can do it to all the different (I guess there was three or four classes that she had) and she said, “You do it for all four classes, and that will be your project.” Anything that meant I didn’t have to write a paper was fine with me. So. I could write a paper, and I think I have written a paper at some point about leis, at that point, my mother was really into her research about leis. She was reading everything there was to read, read about Isabella Bird’s trip around the islands and all the things that she saw when she came, and my mother read William Ellis, she read David Malo she read, Kamakau, she read Native Planters, she read anything. Anything that she could find that had the word “lei” in it, or the name of some kind of plant that was used to make a lei. And she was getting all that information so she could write her book, and just because she needed to know that. Also, at that time, when I was in college, I was doing a lot of hiking. So, she would send us off to the mountains, my friends and I, or I had a lot of friends who were in botany, they were entomologists, or botanists, and so we would, when we’d go hiking we’d be looking for all kinds of stuff that she needed so, you know to gather to photograph for her book. So that’s how I got pulled into all of this. Cuz my mother said I had to. And because it was a lot of fun, yeah. That’s how I got started. Anyway, I could go on for days about it, but I’m gonna, maybe we can get together at another time in person, and we can go over that kind of stuff.

NKS: Sure, if you’d like that, that would be great.

RH: Maybe yeah, we can talk. Let’s make it, I’m also a kapa maker, that’s another thing that my mother insisted that I do. So usually on Monday and Thursdays I’m beating kapa with a group of ladies who come and do that with me. Actually, this Thursday I am doing a lei making workshop for a small group that’s, this week I’m kind of busy. I’m still working as a farmer, so but any time after this week, usually my three days where I don’t have to wash vegetables, or sell vegetables, my free mornings are Mondays, and Thursdays. I’m available any afternoon, usually after 2 o’clock if you want to come out to Waimea.

NKS: Okay, after two.

RH: Yeah. So, you can think about that, or if you want to set a date that I can put on my calendar

NKS: Yeah, absolutely...I usually work Tuesday and Thursday, so what about a Monday, Wednesday or Friday after two? Or in the morning on the Monday?
RH: On Wednesday after two is fine. Because I sell at a Farmer’s Market on Wednesday morning so in the afternoon, I’m not harvesting flowers, I’m not beating kapa or any of that kind of thing, I’m just resting.

NKS: Okay, what about August first, is that okay?

RH: Just a second let me get my calendar.

NKS: Of course.

RH: August first will be fine.

NKS: Where can I find you? In Waimea?

RH: You can come to our farm, which is I can give you the address […]

NKS: Okay! Thank you very much.

RH: So, two o’clock is fine for you?

NKS: That’ll be perfect.

RH: Alright, I’ll put you on my calendar.

NKS: Thank you so much Roen, it was a pleasure to speak with you.

RH: Alrighty, well, talk to you later.

NKS: Sounds good.

RH: Yep, Good bye.

NKS: Take care. (Call ends)
Interview with Kāhili Hahn

Date of Interview: 18 July 2018
Location: her home in Orchid land July 18, 2018
Duration: 3 hours
Interviewer: Nicole Kapawa‘alihilani Schuler

NKS: (admires her very neat braiding on the lei)

KH: And it’s stretchy, yeah.

NKS: So if you don’t know how big the person’s head is?

KH: Yeah.

NKS: And it smells so good!

KH: Isn’t it cool? I love the pink. Sierra made this.

NKS: Can I take pictures of all this?

KH: Of course.
(were eating watermelon, music lightly in background)

NKS: So, are you going to wear these? (referencing leis that she is about to make)

KH: So, I’m just making them for the club to donate as a fundraiser for them. They’ll probably sell for… I’m not sure on these because we did a lei stand fundraiser before. Usually if you go if you order one on Instagram, there’s all these people who do haku leis and different, more decorative flower crown style rather than any kind of traditional-ness. From $45-75 for the lots of flowers. But this style, you know it’s only one thing, (pink ti) it took me about 45 minutes.

NKS: And it’s stunning.

KH: Yeah, so I don’t know. Last time they sold them cheap, for $35. So just because it’s easy I might do this kind for $25, I don’t know.

NKS: Look how pink that is!

KH: I used most of the really pink ones in the first one.

[…]

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KH: Anyway, they usually donate flowers for the club regatta, we decorate…we haven’t really sold leis before, we usually just because they have so many flowers, we usually just make leis for all the crews. But well, makes some money for the club

NKS: That’s so sad.

KH: Let me get my stuff.

NKS: How have you been up here?

KH: Fine.

NKS: The air has been alright?

KH: Yeah. I’m gonna run outside and get a couple of the other kinds and you can ask me questions.

[…] 

KH: (pointing out photos) This is my college graduation from San Francisco. My mom brought me leis from here. She brought me the haku and puakenikeni in 2011. Here’s our 80s hair, and my daughter with the chickens. She is a chicken person.

NKS: And you shot a hog?

KH: Right here in the yard. I’ve done that a few times, actually…(Talking about her daughter Sierra getting a tooth pulled later that day)

KH: When she went in November, I knew she had to have it done…Luckily, I was able to hustle and sell some wreaths. A few years ago, all the Wholefoods stores in O‘ahu, two in Maui, they ordered from us, like 90 something wreaths.

(NKS Admires her chickens, KH found mites in the house because her daughter brings in baby chickens. She had to use diatomaceous earth on all the chickens that day.)

KH: All wild birds in Hawai‘i have mites, I just wasn’t on top of it like I should have been…When they were chicks she would pick ‘em up and carry them around.

[…] 

KH: (to herself) Okay, what color am I gonna make?…

(We sit down, Hahn organizes into woven baskets. She sets up a small kiddie table for our food.)

NKS: Anything else I can get while I’m up?
KH: Well maybe I need to use those orchids. And the crotons too.

NKS: I can just bring the vase.

KH: Sure. This I cut from my mom’s house this morning.

NKS: So, you got some from your mom’s, some from Volcano House?

KH: Yeah, these ones I bought, these from mom’s yard?

NKS: What is the red one called?

KH: The anthuriums.

NKS: Anthurium, and them that’s a big orchid?

KH: Cymbidium orchid.

NKS: Oh Nice. The little purple ones?

KH: Those are also anthuriums. This is laua’e.

NKS: And you got this from your yard?

KH: This is from mom’s yard. This are torch ginger, not torch ginger, a type of red ginger, this is another type of ginger.

NKS: The purple is?

KH: Yeah, these, so I don’t know if I’ll use these or not…

NKS: They are so funky!

KH: The little ones will work, but…so I was taking Sierra to school this morning and an entire truck full of this just fell out of somebody’s truck, and I saw the little thing sticking out, and I thought, “Oh, maybe I can use that!” So, I jump out, but they were …(to me)Here maybe you can rip all these guys off? Up to about …leave the…okay. Cuz I plant all these, they grow really good from cuttings.

NKS: (I begin stripping the song of India.) I tried to grow one, I had a cutting from a baby shower, but it died.

KH: Yeah that’s probably good. I might use that little end actually.

NKS: Anymore?
KH: Actually, if you could rip all of those, cuz I’m probably going to make one just like that, I’m trying to without having to spend a lot of money. That’s called Song of India. This is laua’e. These things, I don’t know what they are, but Sierra was like...we pulled over at Target, to pick red ti leaf they have in all the bushes.

NKS: So, you kinda get your materials from all over?

KH: The sides of the road, wherever. I refrain from picking them out of people’s front yards, unless I have permission, but Target, vacant lot...

NKS: That’s awesome, you’re really thrifty.

KH: These guys, this is all...

NKS: I can just ask you random questions, we can be super informal.

KH: Okay!

NKS: Then I’m required to tell you, you can choose not to answer any question at any time, or you can tell me to shut up and go home at any time.

KH: (Laughing)

NKS: No questions asked! But if that happens though, I do get to take one of your small chickens with me.

KH: You want 10?

NKS: No....I don’t think I have the space, but I’ll take the one!

KH: Leave the end on, pull from here down...Kukui, and then these are all...

NKS: So, you just started to try things?

KH: Well, I’ll give you some history. So, when my parents got divorced when I was like 10, in 91, I was 9. Um, and my mom started dating this guy Paul who was half Hawaiian. He taught me how to do this style. My mom also knew enough cuz she always was a hippy flower child. Hence me being named Kāhili.

NKS: That’s your birth name?

KH: Yep, cuz I was born after the kāhili ginger that grows in volcano. Wonderfully fragrant, apparently invasive weed, that’s beautiful, smells amazing.

NKS: Hahaha. You take that as a metaphor for your life?
KH: No. I just recently learned that! I was like, “Oh yeah, that’s an invasive plant...(realizing) oh!” But um, no I so, she always knew some stuff like this, but Paul taught me in high school the wrap style, which is what I’m about to do. And then, he also taught me how to make wreaths, Christmas wreaths.

NKS: The ones that you sell?

KH: Yeah. So, I just kind of made a couple, yeah that’s cool, you know, whatever. But then I came back from college, and oh yeah, I worked as a Flower Girl--what you did!

NKS: Oh yes! I forgot about that!

KH: Yep, I was a Flower Girl.

NKS: That’s so funny!

KH: (Laughing)

NKS: Where?

KH: For Melinda, right here in town. So, when I moved back, I moved back for a little while and I was collecting unemployment from you know, working in California, and that’s when I decided to get my Real Estate license, so I was going through Real Estate school and decided, “Oh why don’t I try this thing again?” And it grew from us going to the markets, to you know, getting a lot of regular orders. It was awesome. And then it just got really really big. Lots of orders. And we’ve kind of scaled back a bit. And it was me and Paul and my friend Crystal who would sell stuff. Cuz I ran…my friend Crystal who was one of my best friends until we were like 13, so I kinda taught her how to do the wreaths, Paul taught me, and then the three of us kinda just did this little business together. Actually, we have a Facebook page, “Hawaiian Wreaths” you can look it up. It has a lot of the work that we’ve done over the last...started in about 2010.

So, I tried a couple of times just making a haku here and there but never really like pursued it that much until recently. It was actually in 2016, we were paddling, and we went to States on O‘ahu. My friend Rosa, who I met through the Club. She actually was in Kainani’s class…

NKS: Oh yeah!
KH: So, she was 20- 20-whatever. She was right ahead of me. But a couple of times like when you know Kaliko was subbing, she came and sat in on the class. But she’s always danced Tahitian.

NKS: Woah.

KH: Grew up here, and anyway so we were over there paddling, and we were on the same crew together in O‘ahu, she had brought some stuff from here on our Island, I forget, I don’t know what it’s called, it’s like a lichen? A little green leafy thing with little balls at the end....like if I
saw it...I don’t know what the hell it’s called. But I think it’s a native something. These are the ones Sierra picked.

NKS: The big ones?

KH: Yeah.

NKS: Do you want me to do that last one? (I’m snipping leaves or still doing song of India)

KH: So anyway, she had brought that with her from Hilo on the plane, and some raffia, and just wanted to make leis for our crew after we raced for States, the 6 of us.

NKS: Wow.

KH: Actually, I think there were two open women’s crews, and a couple people raced twice, so I think there were nine of us or whatever. So anyway, we were sitting there on the beach in O‘ahu Ke‘ehi Lagoon and she was like, “Here, make these leis.” So, everybody was like “Oh, I’ll make one.” So, they all kind of made them for each other, but I was the only one who was like, “Oh I haven’t done this in years, but I know how to do this.” And we used naupaka because it was there on the beach, and that stuff that she brought. So that was the year I did that Spartan race, I had brought Sierra with me. She actually stayed with a friend because that year the water was so disgusting. We had a big flood and the water was just completely absolutely disgusting sludge water. So, it was probably not even safe for us to be in that water that place is disgusting.

Anyway, so I didn’t have Sierra with me, I had a friend of mine on O‘ahu keep her for the day while I raced. So, I was sitting there making leis, did a race, hanging out, and I went and stayed from there I had rented a little AirBnB on the North Shore in Waialua. Saturday was States, and the following Saturday was the Spartan Race. So that year I was working out like crazy, I had lost 90 lbs, I was like doing...Spartan Race, Ragnar Race, I did half marathon, all those medals I got in one year, all in 2016 from different marathons and stuff.

NKS: Woah, marathons? (she points to a shelf full of medals)

KH: Then I basically broke both of my legs and gained all the 90lbs back.

NKS: (gasp!)

KH: It’s so easy to gain it back.

NKS: It is, it really is.

KH: I worked so hard and then it all came back! And now I’m lazy. So, Rosa stayed also, she just was cruising in O‘ahu, had friends, and I said, “Well, just come stay with me. I had two friends, my one friend that I went to fashion school with in San Francisco. Her and her husband were coming out to do the race with us. I hadn’t seen them since, gosh 10 years or something. They came out for their Honey Moon in 2005. Here you wanna rip some of this stuff up?
NKS: How so?

KH: Basically, you just, so it has the little...about a half an inch. (snapping) This is how I did the other one. (we rip ti leaves)

Anyway, so you know I was like, “This is so fun sitting on the beach making leis.” Rosa came and cruised with me and Sierra up at the Airbnb, I picked up my friends from the airport, and I thought, “Oh they’re coming to Hawai‘i, let’s make them some leis.” Her and I were basically just cruising, foraging on the north shore. We made a bunch of plumeria leis, and then the tiare, and like all kinds of stuff. So that kind of inspired me. I see here with her haku lei, she has an Instagram page, KuiLeiAloha, she takes orders and sells them and stuff. (ripping)
But it was so relaxing, it’s so fun to just sit on the beach for an hour and make something. I am such a little flower child. It makes everything better.

NKS: I have a friend you would love.

KH: So, I just started playing around with it, and it’s been a couple years since now...I started I always knew the basic technique, which I’ll start and I’ll show you now. Basically, you wrap, this is Raffia that I buy at Walmart.

NKS: So, you do that as opposed to like dried ti leaf?

KH: Yeah, well see, so some people there’s a lot of different ways to do it, and because I’ve never really, I haven’t ever been shown other than Paul showing me you put something down and you wrap it, you put a piece down and you wrap it, it’s basically just constantly wrapping with the ti leaves. But to me, you wanna try and make, first I would just sort of tie things together, I didn’t know how to start it, I didn’t know how to finish it, it was all ugly. So, I just tried different techniques, to get it to look nice on the ends. And so, this is what I have developed.
This is more than enough to go around your head. So, I start with five or six of them. And this is only just in the last dozen that I’ve made I’ve kind of adapted.

NKS: You figured this out?

KH: Yeah, to figure out a technique that I really like that look really clean. It’d be really interesting to sit down with an actual you know, lei master…

NKS: Have you ever?

KH…and watch. No, I haven’t.

NKS: Did you ever take any of Leilehua’s classes?

KH: No.

[...]

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NKS: They are actually sponsored by the HTA.

KH: Really?

NKS: Yeah, so it’s free if you ever…

KH: Well, yeah I would love to learn different styles and like I just learned to make the pāpale niu, the coconut hat. I just went to this Aloha Hui festival, it was at the Makuʻu Market a few months ago, it was free. Someone was doing haku lei making...for the kids, all kinds…I sat down, with the lady, and she could see that I was crafty and that I could figure it out, so she didn’t really—this is such a pain in the butt because it braids it up. (talking about long raffia string ends)

NKS: Yeah it braids that way.

KH: Yeah. But yeah so when it came down to finishing it, she only showed me once, and I was like, “Oh I get it,” and then I was like, “How do I finish it?” She wouldn’t show me because she saw that I was trying to figure it out. “Your brain’s working…” Fine! (scoffs) And then you know there were other people that were not quite getting it and she was helping them.

NKS: So, did you come up with your own method?

KH: For this I did, yeah. Because…

NKS: So like 8in of the braided raffia?

KH: Well, this is what you’re going to tie to the other side. This is almost a little further than I need to, but…So I tie that, and make a little knot here right at the end of my braid, so that’s what’s going to tie eventually. So basically, all it is then you just put something down and you just wrap wrap wrap. The reason I put all of this down now, is so when I get down to this much left, I can pull out a long one, tie this to it, (raffia ends) so that it tie it off. And I can use the next long thing. I can just pull it out of the thing. And by then, other people use like the bone of a ti leaf as a base, I don’t, always, only because it the stems of what you’re using create a base. If your using something with thick stems like these. And I think with this one, just to try and be kind of fast, maybe I’ll just...trying to stick to just simple…if I try to do too much of a pattern, I confuse myself.

NKS: Sometimes it’s just pretty to let it be whatever flower you pick up.

KH: Yeah.

NKS: So, did you ever come to Lei Day by the way?

KH: No, I couldn’t make it that day. I wanted to. Yeah see, I am contemplating what to do, this one is kind of short.
NKS: You would be pretty good at showing others how to make lei (at Lei Day).

KH: I’ve done that at a couple of different places. I’ve done a couple different workshops, where I was like broke. I did, like the paint and sip, it was a haku class kinda thing. So...(sorting the ti in her hands) what am I going to do, I gotta come up with a pattern. Am I just gonna use crotons...?

NKS: Crotons are the black and red? Or the yellow?

KH: Crotons are all types of...I think I’m going to, maybe I’ll cut some of these. Could you cut all of these off? (handing me the leaves)

NKS: So you cut off the little fingers?

KH: Yeah, because that’s all you really want to stick out. You don’t want too much.

NKS: Would you like me to cut some for you?

KH: Sure! See maybe I should have used a base on this.

NKS: So, do you ever do any kind of special flowers for any kind of special meaning?

KH: Mmmm...Well I had an order for one for a graduation lei a couple weeks ago. It was for Waiākea High School, which is my Alma Mater.

NKS: Aww!

KH: And they are blue and white. So those hydrangeas out there, I bought the plant this time instead of gathering. And then I planted.

NKS: I think I remember this, wasn’t this close to the party? (Kāhili’s birthday party) You want all of them cut?

KH: Sure. So, because these are so short stemmed and they are not very strong, I am adding in the bone of a ti leaf for the base. And I start with the thick end first, cuz once you get down to it, if I start with...I used to start with this end, and have that as my first little tuft of something, but then you have the thick end at the end, and all of your ends have already piled up. So, I started, just little tricks, using the thick end first. Because the beginning is where you need that structure, whereas by the end, the other stuff is all piled up.

NKS: Do you ever do any lei or anything from a specific place? It seemed when you were telling me the places where you had gathered from, do you ever do like a specific place? Like from my garden, or from Hilo, or...?

KH: I have, in that just doing stuff like New Year’s Eve, I hiked up to Shipman Beach with a friend of mine who was here visiting, one of my friends from high school, she was here visiting
with her husband. And so, I basically walked in with a bag and a handful of raffia and gathered whatever was there along the way. We ended up with some pretty sweet, mostly all greenery, but we ended up with some pretty sweet leis at the end. We sat there on the beach, she played with my kid, and I sat there and made us leis. And that was the first time I’ve done that, going and gathering along the way whatever kinda looks cool. It was really cool. It gave me a nice project while I was there.

NKS: Do you keep your leis?

KH: Well, they don’t last very long. And that’s the difference between the wreaths and the haku, cuz the wreaths, you need to make it so that it will last for the season, so…

NKS: I kept [the lei po‘o you made me].

KH: Sometimes they dry, sometimes they don’t. Just depending on what…

NKS: Mine’s really pretty. I wore it around for like three days.

KH: Good, haha!

NKS: Oh yes, and I took as many pictures as I could, I wore it to KTA, I wore it everywhere. Cuz it’s like wearing a crown, like you’re this beautiful goddess dripping in flowers, for as long as they last.

KH: Yeah.

NKS: What are you going to use these for?

KH: Same kind of thing, so these are going to be all…I’m trying to make as many as I can…my friend Sara, you met her at the party, Sara. So, she’s made these as well. And she just busted them out so quickly. And that’s what I’m trying to do now is just kind of lay them so they’re faster. Like she kind of placed them, she didn’t make them as tight as I usually do, so I’m trying to do that now, in an effort to get more done, more you know. So, this is actually I’m trying to do it more her style. Which is, see how the back is not as tight, normally I try to make it really tight and add more stuff, but I’m trying to make a lot of them, and I’m not selling them for very much. So…I wanna try and make them—it’s not going to be all huge and full like yours, that was…

NKS: That was amazing....that was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever worn in my life!

KH: Hahaha, yay!

NKS: And I had no idea it was coming! I knew I was late getting over there (at the Pā`ina Pani Kau at Ke‘elikolani May 2018. Kumu Kaliko Bemer-Trapp and I were there with our HAW102 classes), I felt so bad, and then that happened! It was so sweet.
KH: For me, I don’t really like to make them for myself, cuz I feel like, like it’s something, like you make lei, and you give lei. Like it’s a...you know you put your energy into it. You know, you don’t want to be in a shitty mood when you make the lei. You don’t wanna be like, “Ahh fuck it mehh”...like thinking about how horrible things are. When you do this kind of thing, you definitely put your mana into it, you know, you put your...

NKS: Just like your plants.

KH: They do! I saw this thing on Facebook where it was a social experiment at school. They had these two plants that were in a glass case, and the same thing where they got the same amount of water, sunlight every day, but one, had a tape recording of like, “You’re ugly you suck,” all this, that one was being bullied. The other one was “You are beautiful, you are the best plant ever,” and it was all like positive recording, right? And all the kids knew it, you know it was this social experiment, and the bullied plant, after a couple of weeks, was like, yellow and droopy.

NKS: Aww.

KH: And the other one was like happy and thriving. And it was interesting because, they had the exact same conditions, they lived right next to each other. So...Be nice to your plants!

NKS: What kind of plant was it?

KH: And your friends, and your not-friends.

NKS: They’re listening! Plus, who the heck is...Oh! Turn that back, that’s so pretty!

KH: Hahaha!

NKS: Can I take a picture?

KH: Let me put my hair down.

NKS: I promise you look gorgeous.

KH: Try to look...

NKS: And I will not use any of these without asking you.

KH: (laughing) Yeah, I hope I have enough of these. I really like these bumpy ones.

NKS: Yeah--texture. It’s good.

KH: Yeah, and this is actually, I’m impressed this is going faster than, I’m trying to think like Sara! So now I have that little stubby, piece...

NKS: Yeah...
KH: So, I pull out my next piece.

NKS: That’s been hiding out there all along and you’ve just been wrapping it?

KH: Mhhm...tie it to itself.

NKS: Oh okay, that’s really smart.

KH: Then, since the key to making this wrap style is tension. You have to constantly hold tension and pressure. So now, if I have to like, pee or scratch my face, or do something that requires two hands…

NKS: You just have to use your feet.

KH: I can, because it’s tied, holding it.

NKS: Oh! So as far as that new piece goes back…

KH: So now this is the old piece, I just lay it back down, and I start with my new piece. And theoretically, the reason I started using about six of ‘em, you try to find a fat one, theoretically, I’ll get to about here, which is enough to go around your head, and then I should have three left to braid and then it’s a nice finished end.

NKS: That’s nice!

KH: That took me a while to figure out.

NKS: Yeah, that’s really clever. So okay, so is this one braid here going to be bigger than that end braid will be then?

KH: Yeah, yeah, it’ll be fatter.

NKS: But I didn’t notice it when I was looking at that one.

KH: Well, that one is a different style. That one is only three pieces. That is only, I’m just braiding, and I can do another one like that after this, cuz this is actually going faster than the other one. And its 12:40.

NKS: Whatever you have time for. Oh wait, did you say you had to go at 1:00?

KH: I have to pick her up at 2:00 in Kea‘au. It takes me 15 min to get there.

NKS: Okay.
KH: But probably about 1:30 I gotta start wrapping up. Cuz I’ll probably go to town, she has a dentist appointment today.

NKS: Today? Poor thing (she is getting extraction). You should make her a lei.

KH: She doesn’t ever wear them. That’s what she told me. “He aha ka lā ‘āpōpō?” (imitating herself, and then her child, sadly) “He huki niho.”

NKS: That’s awful, you just dread it for weeks.

KH: I know. But I’m probably going to work on some [lei] in town. I’ll bring some of this stuff. I had a friend of mine help me pick some of this stuff yesterday. So, this is actually turning out cool.

NKS: It’s really pretty. I love that, plant. What did you say one more time?

KH: Crotons.

NKS: Crotons. My friend has a Jackson chameleon, and he likes those plants.

KH: Oh?

NKS: That’s apparently their favorite plant or something.

KH: Really?

NKS: Yeah. It always makes me think of chameleons.

KH: See how this is starting to get fatter now? Cuz of all the ends? But at the beginning, I needed that support of the ti leaf.

NKS: So, you’re putting, one green, two red.

KH: I’m putting, two reds, so that it makes kind of a pattern. I don’t always you know, I don’t know, I don’t always make a pattern. Sometimes I do. But I’m trying to…the way Sara does it, she more lays them flat and…

NKS: Seems like they’re really in there.

KH: Yeah.

NKS: My friend says her final touch is to smack it on the ground to see if it’s going to hold.

KH: (laughs)
NKS: So, I just was thinking, if you want to go on to second year (ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi), which you totally should. Anyway, the stuff that we said we were going to post online, I’m actually working on that now, I’m making all the vocab quizzes and they’ll be online at ProProfs.

KH: Oh okay.

NKS: So, if that means anything to you.

KH: Yeah, the PDF of the notes are what I really want to have. I have them all printed in a binder, cuz I can just read through that.

[…]

KH: So how did you end up…doing that, just being teachers aid and the whole thing?

NKS: Um, well, Kaliko has been really sweet to me, he kind of has been working with me for two or three years now, so basically he was meeting with me three times a week online one-on-one while I lived in St. Louis. And so, we’d chat like three times a week. And because it was one on one, I was able to learn really fast.

So, I only needed to pass, one of the classes, but I ended up passing three of them when I took the placement exam. So then right after that he asked me if I wanted to come sit in on his class anyway, cuz I didn’t really have as much speaking experience, and I was kind of shy, I hadn’t gotten over that yet. And so, then he asked you know if I wanted to become his Assistant Teacher, and I was like, “Oh yes that sounds awesome.”

KH: Yeah!

NKS: And then that’s when I got my name…and so yeah. So, then the notes thing just kind of (inaudible) out, but I had been helping him with his website, his distance learning…so that’s how I learned in St. Louis. And once I finished the stuff on his website, you know, he was working with me on other stuff. So right now, I also work for him for his website, and then I also work for him for the university. It’s good…So, was Nā Kai ʻEwalu easy to read?

KH: Oh no, I didn’t freaking read any of that book. I read his notes.

NKS: Exactly.

KH: And then I like went back and tried to do what’s in the book and it didn’t make any damn sense.

NKS: There’s no answers (key) the explanations aren’t clear.

KH: Yeah.

[…]

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NKS: I was torn between Mānoa and here, but here is way better.
KH: Yeah O'ahu sucks.
NKS: I am so glad I didn’t go there.
KH: Haha. It’s fun to visit but…
NKS: Yeah, I need to go visit.
KH: But there’s people and traffic and ick. Frickin’ tourists and…
NKS: Yeah…it’s just, there’s so much.
KH: It’s like Kona on steroids.
NKS: Yeah. Kona’s enough.
KH: Am I almost there?
NKS: Yeah, you’re really close.
KH: Hmmm.
NKS: See it’s definitely bigger.
KH: You can see it gets bigger cuz of all the (stems). And I’ve made the mistake before of thinking, “Oh that’s too big,” and cutting it, right at the end, but then once I continue on, once I get to the cut, it just kinks over and folds right there cuz you need to have that consistent bone I guess of base, because…
NKS: And so, by having the ti leaf spine first it kind of helps?
KH: But if you cut it, if I cut it right here, It would just kink, not work.
NKS: I have a question for you. So how has lei making changed since you were young?
KH: Mmmm, I don’t know. I remember…
NKS: Like when you were Sierra’s age.
KH: Well I just remember the few times I would go to the mainland, come back, I’d be like super stoked, thinking, “I’m gonna get off the plane and get a lei, and it’s gonna smell like home and be nice.”
NKS: Aww.
KH: Hahaha cuz that’s just what happens when you get off the plane in Hawai‘i, so um, and I really think the first time I ever flew anywhere I was seven. I went to California, I was supposed to go back for the summer with my grandma, she was here visiting, and she was supposed to take me back, but then I got Chicken Pox, and they wouldn’t let me on the plane. So, I had to wait, and then they sent me by myself.

NKS: Oh no!

KH: And I was like seven.

NKS: Oh man!

KH: But you know, they were all cool, so. That was the first time coming back, and I really didn’t travel much, but it always stuck in my mind, “When you get off the plane, you get a lei when you come home.”

So, um, but I don’t know, we would just string flowers, I remember, I feel like there were more places in town, we used to be able to pick like plumerias, cuz plumerias was the first lei I’ve ever made, cuz its simple, you know, you just string it. Poke it through the middle and string it. But they don’t really grow here as well. They like to be hotter, they need to be in Kona.

NKS: Yeah.

KH: But I remember when I was kid, there were a few spots where we could always go and um, pick um, (camera clicks) um pick plumerias. But I don’t know if the climate has changed or what…

NKS: Yeah who knows.

KH: It seems like it has a little bit, Kona seems to be rainier.

[..]

NKS: It takes longer than you think.

KH: I’m running low on these but I’ll probably have enough of the bumpy ones. And I picked these, these are awesome. Cuz these I like the color on them, but they’re kind of big, so you need to kind of kink um and just use the end. (folds leaf)

NKS: Ooh!

KH: Then I gotta rip all this other stuff off and not use it. These ones are nice cuz they’re skinnier.

NKS: They’re already like that.
KH: So, and then I have to really like I have to squish it, cuz this is a lot of material now, so I’m trying to, like I can rip some of the leaf material off, but if I cut too much off...

NKS: Yeah that’s a big chunk.

KH: Yeah.

NKS: So, has anybody ever, do people ask you how you learned lei making, or ask who you learned from, or things like that?

KH: Yeah, um, just yeah, I’ve had a few people like, “Oh how’d you learn to do that?” and I just You know. My uncle, which he was like my step dad for 10 years. Um, and I just kind of adapted it.

[...]

KH: And so, when I came back, that’s when I realized that growing up in Hawai‘i, is kind of freaking awesome. And them, um, so I moved back, it was a two year trade school, so I went to school, it took me a little bit, like two and a half years cuz I needed a job over there, and of course grew up with animals everywhere. My mom has nine acres right across the street, she raises macaws and so I’ve always been on a farm, around animals. She raised me on dairy goats’ milk.

[...]

NKS: Wow.

KH: That’s done yeah.

NKS: Okay so that’s the front, yeah?

KH: Yeah, I was just measuring, I’m gonna call it done. Um, however, I need one more thing, yeah? To be able to braid. So, what I’m gonna do is…I’ll put one more, I’ll put this one cuz its all curly and pretty, it’s the last piece. So, tie this off to the last one… Okay, so I’m going to take this from the back, from the middle and then tie these two back together. Then I have more, string to do my braid.

[...]

KH: So yeah, I ended up moving back after 4.5 years, so 2009, so I came back and that’s when I realized that yeah there is a little bit of prejudice like, “Oh you know you’re haole,” or whatever but that underlying aloha spirit is really a thing.

NKS: You’re still a part of this community. Especially since you did grow up here.

KH: Yeah.
NKS: You’re still going to run into those people who don’t take the time of day for you to say by the way I did grow up here, there just going to say whatever they feel like.

KH: Yeah, and you know, people are jerks everywhere. You know that’s just a part of life. But they’re a little bit less jerks here.

NKS: I feel like the community it more tightly interwoven, people talk to each other.

KH: Yeah, people look at you and wave, just because. Like you can always tell when you’re driving and you have the yield, when you yield for somebody and they’re like, “Oh thanks,” even though you’re just following the rules of the road, but—So this one kind of sucks. I always kind of say the mark of a good lei maker is if the back looks nice, and this one, the back does not look that nice. See how in the beginning, they’re breaking? See these are fragile leaves.

NKS: Oh, I see. But at least they’re in there.

KH: Yeah that’s okay.

NKS: And you won’t see it from the front.

[...]

KH: I’m trying to think of what to take to town to make…

NKS: This is very pretty, it will be very strong, so someone can whack it on the ground and still wear it.

KH: Right? My one little...I couldn’t decide if was going to use that or not. That is not going to be on this pattern.

NKS: Wow, but then I can’t see it. Wow. Dang. It is really thick.

KH: Yeah, it’s pretty tough.

NKS: They smell so good. When you’re wearing one of these...yeah that night, you gave me one, you gave me a lei po’o and then Kāhea gave me a rose lei, and I still have that too cuz it was so sweet. So, these are sitting here, do you know how to do the lei nīpu’u?

KH: The what?

NKS: Nīpu’u?
KH: Well I know there’s one way just to braid these together. I was just gonna use them, in another one like that (the lei po’o she made). Yeah, I don’t, but actually my friend sent me this today. This one, playing video: lei tutorial with kukui.

[…]

NKS: (shows her lei nīpu’u, Hālau LeiManu style)

KH: What should I bring to town?

NKS: Song of India.

KH: Yeah, it’s easy.

NKS: After watching that video, I’m gonna have to go home and play with these styles.

KH: Hahaha, yeah that braided style, I was the same way. Like my friend Rosa who, you can see the back…

NKS: Ohh wow.

KH: I think I sent you these pictures last night, You’re welcome to use those if you want.

NKS: Thank you, yeah definitely!

KH: She said that they would do that when she dances Tahitian. And that’s what they would always say is, “How’s your tracks, how’s your tracks?” and you take it and flip it over, cuz I’ve always kind of heard that the mark of a good lei maker is if the back looks nice. So.

NKS: So, you don’t so much do the traditional stuff?

KH: Mmm, well I don’t necessarily know all of the traditional stuff, so I’m just kinda…

NKS: Cuz what I learned, and this is one person’s opinion, but the kukui is kind of a masculine thing, so they don’t really use it for hula unless it’s for Kamapua’a. And so that was the kind of feeling. But you were talking about putting it in a lei po’o anyway.

KH: Yeah.

NKS: And I think it would be gorgeous there, aesthetically.

KH: Yeah, I used it before, just…So I don’t know if there are certain things that are not supposed to be used for this, or for that, I don’t know for sure.

NKS: But you don’t really let that deter you from making something beautiful?
KH: Not really. I mean. I don’t know, nobody’s given me crap about it. So, if somebody did, I would hope they would...like if I knew that, I probably wouldn’t use it, but I don’t so, I guess I’m, ignorance is bliss.

NKS: I think that’s okay, I think it kind of gives you fresh eyes…

KH: Yeah, well that’s what Ikaika was saying, he was interested to see how the different stuff that I used, just because I wasn’t trying to make whatever kind traditional.

NKS: And you don’t gather from any specific place, you just do it on the go.

KH: Yeah, yeah.

NKS: And take whatever you find with you.

KH: Oh, what should I bring to town? I want to use these, I want to come back and try to make more tonight. These still look alright, they’ll look nice in there. A couple of ‘um are kind of junk. With the song of India, and braided with the kukui? These little cute ones.

NKS: I love the purple ones, sometimes I get them at the market and they last for two weeks.

KH: That’s why I was surprised, I got them on Saturday and they haven’t lasted. That’s why I thought maybe they had been cut already for a while, cuz there’s not as many people coming through Volcano these days, so maybe they had already been sitting there for a while, I was kind of thinking. Okay, I gotta go change and get my kid ready to go huki niho!

NKS: Well I’ll be thinking about her. Thank you so much, this was really nice.

KH: Well let me know if you have any more questions or anything like that.

NKS: You know, yeah maybe I’ll come back up this way and talk-story with you some more, just for fun.

KH: Yeah, anytime.

NKS: It seems that you have your own take on this.

KH: Yep, just doing my thing! I just use what’s pretty. If it’s pretty, I use it, that’s what I told Ikaika.

NKS: That should be your slogan.

KH: Hahaha.

NKS: So, I have this consent form thingy, that’s terribly formal.
KH: That’s okay.

NKS: Can I trouble you to sign it?
Interview with Leilehua Yuen

Date of Interview: 18 April 2018
Location: Yuen’s home in Hilo.
Duration: 1.5 hours
Interviewer: Nicole Kapawa‘alihilani Schuler

Notes:
While we chat, Leilehua works on filing the edges of earrings she making from triangular pieces of copper. This image represents Maunakea. We sit on her back lānai. The weather is sunny. Occasionally cars can be heard passing in the background. Leilehua, a natural story teller, shares various mo‘olelo about her life, including growing up with parents that were artists, family tragedy, and lei making. Since we have an existing relationship as friends, and kumu/haumāna, conversation flows easy. When the oral history reaches natural conclusion, Leilehua begins to chat with me about more day to day things, as if to bring the mood back full circle. It felt as if the conversation was helping us transition from the more serious stories that she shares about her past, back to the present. This conversation was spur of the moment following the cancellation of one of my classes due to the Merrie Monarch Festival. We had originally intended to meet the following evening, but I received tickets to the festival, so we decided to meet that day instead.

LY: So, there’s a lot of mo‘olelo connected to that... and...um I can move this out of your way too, I think I’m blocking the sound. There’s a lot of mo‘olelo connected to the name of Hilo. And some of it is part of what is connected to our lei making. So...if you could follow me around with a camera and a recorder, then I can uh, mo‘olelo on that, and...

NKS: So, would you like that to be one of the videos that we work on this summer?

LY: Ahh, actually I was hoping to do it like very rapidly.

NKS: Oh, for Lei Day maybe?

LY: Yeah, yeah. So, it’s up online before Lei Day. Because I want to use it as a promotional thing to try and get funding.

NKS: Let’s do it.

LY: (Ohh)...I actually thought about doing that today.
NKS: Yeah, I apologize for the spontaneous cancellation tomorrow.

LY: No, spontaneous is good.

NKS: I...yeah I think it’s a wonderful thing what I’m doing (going to the Merrie Monarch Festival), but I don’t mean to inconvenience you.

LY: No worries, no worries. (grinding copper earrings to file smooth)

NKS: We can schedule, maybe next week--after Thursday, my presentation will be done, (LY: mhmm) which will take some of the heat off of me. (LY: mhmm) and then maybe if you are still interested, unless you are done that day after the meeting, we have hula that night, so if you wanted to still have our tea in the evening, (LY: Mhmm filing) or alternatively---

LY: Yeah, I could do tea after hula.

NKS: Or I could do it earlier if you would rather do the earlier afternoon before Manu comes home?

LY: Yeah...another thing that’s coming into this, and uhh, I’m kind of behind because of it taking so long to get the um...to get the grant stuff, so much energy had to go into getting all that put together, I need to have 50 short....I need to do 50 lei making workshops before the end of the year.

NKS: Fifty?

LY: Five zero. One a week. (NKS: Oh.) And...they need to be documented. So...and we’ve got light in the evening now, so I wanted to start going down to the church early, and going out and utilizing their kukui grove for lei making.

NKS: Would you teach our hālau?

LY: I’d like to.

NKS: Mmm!

LY: Yeah, we can harvest early and take the stuff, cuz--umm the kine....Kauila, he can’t be going out into the kukui grove and neither can Krissy.

NKS: Hmm.

LY: So, the others of us could come a little early and harvest. And I can do moʻolelo and then we can do the making it in the um, in the area where we usually meet. (grinding again)

NKS: That sounds lovely.
LY: So, I need to get that done.

NKS: Would they be video documented?

LY: I’d like to! I’d like to do still photos and video. You know, these days you can easily, well you’ve always been able to easily take a video, and extract a still photo from a video, so, that’s not a problem. (grinning) So the video is more critical because it’s harder to get, and we can always extract stills from that.

NKS: And is the grant, does that (engine revving)...Is that what funds the lei classes?

LY: Fifty percent of the lei classes. So, we’re supposed to get matching funds for it.

NKS: Okay.

LY: And that is to come through tuition.

NKS: Ahh.

LY: So ideally, we want people to be paying you know, ten to twenty dollars a piece depending on the class. Some of them are more difficult to get materials for (passing truck)...and then, it’s also we’ve worked in, included in the grant is, I am required to give two scholarship positions each, uh, for each class. So, you’ve got a scholarship, and then Brooke’s got a scholarship. (grinding)

NKS: Thank you by the way.

LY: You’re welcome.

NKS: It was very kind. Alrighty. Well, um for the oral history (LY: mhmm) we can just do kind of a brief one and then I can supplement it with, you know, all the other little conversations that we’ve done here and there.

LY: Mhmm. Okay.

NKS: And um, but what I was kind of interested in asking you about, and you can choose what you would like to talk about.

LY: Mhmm

NKS: Um, is maybe about the people who taught you.

LY: That sounds good.
NKS: And then, um, what it was like growing up in a family of artists. You know, that’s so cool. How did you, you had to get such an early start. So that’s what I’m interested in, and them um, if there’s time we can talk a little about Lei Day too.

LY: (filing.) Okay, that sounds good.

NKS: Okay, um. So normally for this I would have a consent form…

LY: Uh huh, well we can fill that out any time.

NKS: Yeah, yeah. And um, but I’m just required to let you know about that. But I know we talked about it before too.

LY: And it’s a thing for me too, it gives me um, yeah, I like consent forms. They’re good.

NKS: Yeah, yeah. They’re good. They give you credibility.

LY: So, do you want to jump right in?

NKS: Sure! So, um, could you tell me a little bit about growing up? Where did you grow up, where were you born?

LY: I was born in Berkeley, California. My parents were students at the California College of Arts and Crafts, where they met. My father was from Hilo, he was born in Hilo. Went to California for art school after he got out of the Navy. I believe he attended on the GI Bill.

NKS: Ahhh.

LY: And. (filing) ...my mother, was uh, she--she had a mother who had great ambitions with art, and so my grandmother in--she was very supportive of my mother going to art school. My grandmother managed an art gallery in Walnut Creek, California. (filing) That’s my mom’s mother.

NKS: Mmmm.

LY: And so, uh so my mom was at California College of Arts and Crafts, and that’s how she met my dad. And...about five years later I came along. So...I...was uh, I spent a lot of time in both Hilo and California. I went back and forth. So, for school holidays we came home. And then, when school was in session, we were there in California. I...I tell people that my first home was a Dutch galleon. Because that’s the first home I remember.

NKS: Aww.

LY: My first memories of a place that I thought of as a home were of the boat, which was a replica of a Dutch galleon, because they wanted the space and the living, you know they wanted the living space that the galleon floor plan would give them. Because galleons were cargo boats.
And so, they were designed to have a nice big hold and designed to carry lots of stuff. The plan was to do it as a live-aboard. (NKS: So…) Which never happened.

NKS: Aww, haha. Was it going to be docked somewhere in the water?

LY: She was in Sausalito, California. Near San Francisco. She was in the south bay. (filing)

NKS: So, it never happened that you lived aboard?

LY: No...we still maintained the apartment, and then when my parents divorced, the boat was sold (filing) but, when I would go to art shows with my mother--I guess my dad moved back to Hawai‘i after the divorce. My mother stayed in California, and...so we would go up and down the California coast doing art shows, and every so often we would pull into an estuary, and--there was my home!

NKS: Ahhh.

LY: The boat would be there. And I would want to go and visit her, but my mom said that she was owned by new people, so I couldn’t go visit.

NKS: Awww. That had to be hard.

LY: It was. It was very hard. (filing) My father still has some of the pieces from the--this was from when they were um, tearing down a lot of the old, beautiful homes in Berkeley, and...so uh, a lot of the fittings and rails and break work and everything was these gorgeous hand-carved pieces off of the old Berkeley homes.

NKS: Uh-huh.

LY: So, she was just spectacular. We can... put pictures of her with that. Which kind of gives you an idea of the aesthetic that I grew up with.

NKS: Yeah.

LY: That just because something is functional doesn’t mean it can’t be beautiful. I grew up living in functional art. My first home was essentially a sculpture of a boat. Hmm…So, that...ahem. That life as living your art was just how my parents and my grandparents, to some degree, lived. So...(filing) So I guess the lei for me is an extension of that. (filing)

NKS: How so?

LY: Well, the lei is a beautiful adornment and...so I, the first lei that I remember making, you know, as a small child...you aren’t always aware of what’s inside of something, you just see the outside of it at first, and...so the first lei I remember making was from lantana. This was at the house in Alameda in California. And, lantana, the individual blossoms, are tubes. They have little tube shapes. And so, if you, so you can push the tube of one into the blossom…
NKS: Oh, to make a chain...

LY: ...of another and make like a little chain. Of course, it doesn’t hang together, there’s nothing holding it together, but it looks like a lei when you push it together like that. And that is what I did. So, I made this little lei and put it on my doll and it promptly fell apart. I was quite distraught over that. And my mother came to see what was going on. I showed her and told her about it. “How do they make the flowers stick together?”

LY: “How do you make the flowers stick together to make the lei?” and my mother said “Well, you have to put it on a string.” “Oh.” Where are you going to find a string small enough to hang lantana? My mother had glorious long, hip length golden hair. She was a platinum blond. And when the sun... To my eye, when I was a girl, my mother’s hair...if you take blonde honey, not the deep amber, but blonde honey, and you hold it up to the sun...The place where the sun is brightest through the honey was the color of my mother’s hair.

NKS: Wow!

LY: She’d be out in the--she was quite athletic. She had been California State high-diving champion the year she graduated high school. And, so she was out in the sun a lot, and I think of her, as being out in the sun. You know, my early childhood memories. Always outside doing things. She...neither of my parents wanted to sit around. So, we would be outside, and the sun shining off her hair just intrigued me so much as a girl. I had long hair but it was dark, deep mahogany red. It wasn’t the same as my mother’s, shining yellow hair.

NKS: Wow.

LY: So, my mom usually had a comb around someplace, because when you have that much hair you kind of have to keep it under control. And so, she went to her comb or brush or whatever it was she had with her, and she pulled a hair out. A long, golden hair. And the very first lei I made, I strung the lantana fleurettes on one of my mother’s hairs.

NKS: Oh.

LY: And then I tied it on my doll. So that was my first experience making lei. And then, I don’t remember much about lei making until after my parents’ divorce. And I ended up here, with my dad’s mom in this house actually. We had property out in Puna, in Kehena, where the nude beach is now.

NKS: Haha.

LY: It wasn’t a nude beach back then. It was just a beach. It was quite a bit bigger. At that time, the um...you know the rocks that--have you been to Kehena Beach?

NKS: (shakes head)
LY...There is a rock formation that extends out into the water, when I was a girl that was the center of the beach. But then we had a big earthquake and that whole shelf subsided.

NKS: Wow.

LY: So anyway...Back to the lei. So, when my parents got divorced after a few years, I ended up here, living with my dad’s parents. And...um my grandmother taught me much more about making lei. So, we would go out--one of my favorite memories with her was going out by the light of a full moon and harvesting lei--harvesting plumerias to make lei.

NKS: Why the full moon?

LY: You could see. (filing). There’s no, there were...the only street lights on the island were in Hilo and Pāhoa at the time. (Car passes)

NKS: Ahh. And I guess it was hot--(car passing)

LY: I’m sorry?

NKS: I guess it was too hot during the day at the time?

LY: Oh, you wanted the...yeah you didn’t want them to wilt. You wanted to collect them when it was cool, and also during the day you wouldn’t stop your working. We had cattle and horses and chores and things and...And when you live in a beach house, people are always dropping in on you.

NKS: Ahhh.

LY: At that time, the road used to go...that was before the Kalapana Highway was covered up. The Red Road used to go all the way up to Volcano. So. People would visit the volcano and then drive down to see, they’d drive down the Chain of Craters Road and...then they’d drive along the coastline to my grandparents’ house, and often have lunch and what not. Also, in the day time, you know, I’d love to, you know, I was riding my horse. I had a horse. And we’d play and take the dogs out and be swimming and everything. So, we were quite active. Doing all kinds of things. So.

NKS: How old did you say you were when you moved from California?

LY: Umm...I guess I was 8 or 9 when I quit going back to California...That was quite hard on my mother... (long pause) Adults need to learn to put the children first. When they want to fight...Anyway. Ehh...I probably was better off here, not that I’d ever want my mother to hear what I think, but you know...I probably was the most stable of the three siblings.

NKS: Were your siblings younger or older than you?

LY: They’re both younger than me. [Redacted]
NKS: Oh yes, we can edit that out.

LY: (Laughing) But you should know. For the record, you should have everything. So anyway...The oldest of the two boys, the one that I was closet to...He died from diabetes.

NKS: Aww.

LY: Mmm.

NKS: What was his name?

LY: His name was Sterling. (filing)

NKS: How old was he, if I may ask?

LY: He was in his forties.

NKS: How far apart were you?

LY: I think I was about five when he was born.

NKS: Okay.

LY: So...it’s about ten years ago he died. I’ll have to double check the dates, but...I think it was close to ten years ago.

NKS: And your younger brother?

LY: And my younger brother, he’s...fourteen months younger than Sterling was. And, he was a heroin addict.

NKS: Wow. I see your point.

LY: He did some jail time for running heroin across the Mexican border. Then he almost did jail time because he’s um...he got caught with a firearm in his car. And so, I ended up standing up for him, taking on some of the responsibility for keeping him on the straight and narrow. And so, the uh, the judge assigned him--because he was my mom’s caregiver, you know she, at the time--that was before her hip surgery. So...they put the bracelet on him and let him stay home with my mom. But...addicts...do...They have high risk behaviors. I’m far more risk-adverse than my brother is. (long pause, jingling.) I want to make wind chimes out of these (holding up her brown glass pendants with gold petroglyphs, made from beer bottle shards.)

NKS: Oh, is that the finished product?

LY: Hmm?
NKS: Is that what they look like in the end?

LY: Well this is the ones that have been uh...Oh you haven’t seen the glass ones?

NKS: I saw the glass ones, but not--they didn’t have any string on them yet.

LY: Oh okay. So now what we’re going to do...(Humming) See the beads have to be big enough so that I can get two strings through them. And the ones at Ben Franklin are either these big honking wooden ugly beads, or they’re itty bitty little beads that just...

NKS: I didn’t find anything there either.

LY: They have poor selection. (pausing to sort beads)

NKS: So, I guess while you were living here with your dad’s parents, was your dad living with you at that time?


NKS: And it was his mother who kind of, introduced you to more Hawaiian culture?

LY: Yes. Even though she was Irish.

NKS: Ahhh.

LY: Gal from St. Louis, Missouri.

NKS: What do you think prompted her to share that with you?

LY: The culture? She loved Hawaiian culture. She lived for it. Her joy, her delight...got her out of St. Louis.

NKS: Haha, I guess history repeats itself.

LY: Mhmm. Well yeah, she was half Irish. At that time there was a lot of prejudice against Irish people.

NKS: Would you like to tell that story?

LY: Sure, mhm. (Pauses to collect her thoughts) So, back at the turn of the previous century...Right now you have a lot of white supremacists talking about how they don’t feel that the blacks, you know why were the blacks complaining, the Irish were enslaved too, you’re Irish, you were also, you were dragged here and then enslaved...They’re very much overstating the case.
NKS: Hmm.

LY: It wasn’t the same. But--there was a form of slavery in servitude. Um, in England, at the time of the potato famines and all that--there’s one with beads on it (showing me a sample of her work).

NKS: Wow.

LY: So, what with the potato famines and what not...um...English were really trying to get rid of the Irish. If you want to read the work of Jonathan Swift, you can see what some of the...he dealt with it through satire. And you can kind of, by reading between the lines, see what the real...tradition is.

NKS: Is that the um...the--I don’t know what to call it--

LY: “A Modest Proposal?”

NKS: Yes! Yes--about eating the babies!

LY: Yes. Yep. So, my grandmother’s mother was born into that. She was English. And she I think as a very young woman came to the Americas with her parents. She married a young Irish lad. And, so she was English Protestant, Church of England and...she married this Irish Catholic and was disowned by her father. Because Irish were not considered fully human at the time.

And also, there were different kinds of Irish. There were Ulster who were Protestant and...basically Scots and English who had moved to Ireland to take over some of the lands there, and then...There were the native Irish, whose history is rather similar to Native Hawaiian with the sovereignty issues, the loss of language and culture. So. So that’s my grandmother’s mother--English woman who married an Irishman.

So, she was promptly disowned by her father. She has two little girls, one of which is my grandmother. And, the uh, then when my grandmother is six, her father dies. They thought he was dying of cancer because he was wasting. And every time he would try to eat, he would throw up. It was really quite sad because, in the autopsy--being a Protestant, my great-grandmother allowed an autopsy of him. During the autopsy, they found that the whole thing had been caused by this little tiny flap of skin that had closed off his esophagus, or closed off his food pipe. And he starved to death. That’s why he had been throwing up, the food would hit that little blockage. Today, you would have a little um, in fact about ten years after he died, this gadget was invented which was essentially a little electric wire loop that you go and you snap the object, you snap the thing with it. And, hit the button. Then the current runs through, burns the little piece of meat off, cauterizes it, and you’re good to go. That’s like a five minute office procedure now. But, at the time it was deadly. So, my grandmother. She used to tell me how she for years believed she had caused her father’s death because she had been--he had been giving her a horsey ride on his leg. You know how your dad might cross his leg, and you sit on the shin, and hold your hands, he bounces, and you’re riding a horse. So, he was lying on the sofa with his knees up and his legs crossed and she was sitting on his shin. And, he was giving her a horsey back ride. She slipped and landed on his stomach and he went “Ooph!” and then the next day he died.

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And she told me that she was convinced for years that she had killed her father. I think it deeply affected her. And so, when I moved here, it was shortly after my mother’s mother died. I was actually the one who found her in the kitchen. She...we had been in a Society for Creative Anachronisms, one of their affairs, one of their events. Because my mother was quite active with them. And so, my grandfather, my mom’s dad had come to pick me up and my two brothers. He picked us up and had taken us back to the house. So, I immediately went running in, “Grandma! Grandma!” And she was lying on the floor with a sack of potatoes in her lap, which was quite odd. And so...I called “Grandpa! Grandma’s here. She’s lying on the floor.”

My grandfather came in right on my heels and saw her. And I remember him, that they used to fight like cats and dogs. I remember him kneeling beside and just so tenderly touching her face and saying, “Eve.” Her name was [inaudible] but he always called her Eve. “Eve, Eve. Can you talk to me?” But she was already...she was already gone. I remember, actually, I was looking up because grown-ups are tall.

NKS: Mhmm.

LY: I was looking up for her. You know I was...the garage had been converted into a living room, and then you went up and there was the former dining room, it was just this little, kind of like a...um. What do you call it? Like where you would drop off milk and butter and stuff.

NKS: Hmm.

LY: So, it was up a few stairs. About three stairs. So, I went running up, looking up, looking for her. And I didn’t see her in the kitchen. And so, I already was scanning and looking toward her bedroom thinking she might be in the bedroom. So, I was running, and I stepped on her. And I thought I had killed her. Especially when they sent me out of the room, and wouldn’t let me stay there anymore. And...so then my grandmother over here--This is why I say I think that sense of having killed her father, I think it affected her deeply because...She told me that I had killed my grandmother.

NKS: Woah.

LY: I used to...Whenever I wasn’t obedient, she would say, “So you want to kill me like you killed your other grandmother?” (filing)

NKS: So, remind me just for clarification…

LY: Mhmm?

NKS: It was your grandmother who was riding on her dad’s knee?

LY: My dad’s mother.

NKS: Your dad’s mother. Okay. And what was her name?
LY: Her name was Thelma. I should call her by name. So, Thelma’s my father’s mother. And she’s the one in the portrait in the living room.

NKS: I see. And so, she told you that you had killed your grandmother?

LY: Yeah, every time she felt I wasn’t being obedient enough she’d say, “So you’re going to kill me just like you did your other grandmother?”...What a horrible thing to tell a small child.

NKS: How old were you at the time?

LY: I was, let’s see...Grandma died when I was nine. So, it was ever since I was nine or ten. Right at that age when you think you are self-aware enough to think that the world revolves around you, but not aware enough to realize there are other people that affect the world. Prepubescent. The absolute worst time to be.

NKS: (Laughing) I can’t agree more.

LY: It was during...from then up to my teens, the adults in my life were telling me--except my dad. I have to give him credit he never told me this horrible thing. But the adults in my life would say, “You think you’ve got it hard now, you just wait till you’re an adult, then you’ll know what it’s really like. You should appreciate what you’ve got now. These are the best years of your life.” And I would think, “Oh my God, let me die instead. Let me wake up dead. Because if this is the best it’s ever going to get, I don’t want to stick around for the rest.”

NKS: That’s where you get your saying that “Whatever your high school years were like, those are the worst years of your life”? 

LY: Yeah. Yeah. Once you turn eighteen and move out on your own, it only gets better. It’s what you make of it. You know. Once you’re eighteen, if you have a crummy life, well you have full power to change it. Even if it may be hard to change it. You know, I’m not saying some kid who’s an inner city young black guy with no resources or anything, I’m not saying that it’s easy to make the change, but...you are a free agent at that point, and so if you just work your tail off and...you know, and get out of that, there is a chance to better yourself away from it all. So. You know, so I am just firmly convinced that youth is the absolute worst time of your life. Just, if you think that your childhood is the best time of your life, I feel terribly terribly bad for you because you’re only a kid for eighteen years, and then you’ve got an awful lot more years to go. So, don’t let them be awful.

NKS: Nahh, they don’t have to be awful.

LY: No.

NKS: And so, you eventually...this was your way of dealing with that incident of feeling like you had killed your grandmother?
LY: Um...How did I deal with it? I didn’t, just to be honest. I never thought of that before! Well, see that was an attitude, I was probably in my forties when I realized that they had all lied. So that came much later. Umm...how did I deal with thinking I had killed my grandmother? Uh...I went through a phase where I figured that I was just such a fuck up that it didn’t matter what I did because no matter what I did it was going to be wrong. So, I was a really problem kid for a while. But before those teen years, before I became filled with teenage angst and became the enemy of all who live...When I was still a cute little kid, that was when my grandmother started teaching me stuff. She um, she taught me to make the leis, different kinds of lei, and how to wear them. She’d have me put on a holokū and high heels and walk up and down the stairs. With my heels and a holokū on or a cocktail dress so that I could learn how to walk properly in them, and not be clumping along in my heels. That stood me in good stead, because years later, I had a gig as a model mother for a clothing designer. And...so I would, and then I was a model mother for a clothing designer. She had a line of knitwear. And then, I was model mother for a uh, for a bridal workshop, when they would do their bridal shows, I would work as a model mother. And, then I worked for a videographer doing wedding shoots. And I would teach the brides how to walk and carry their flowers.

NKS: Wow!

LY: So that was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that. So, all the training from my grandmother did stand me in good stead. (filing) So the lei making. I want to get back to lei making.

NKS: I’m curious at what point you decided that you wanted to take it more seriously?

LY: Hmm...

NKS: Maybe, when did you decide to be a kumu hula?

LY: I’ve always been...Let’s see, I studied with my grandmother just informally. You know, She just taught me and there was no escape. And whenever there were parties and things we would dance, and make leis. We would make leis for any guest we would have. When someone was having a party, we had leis for them to get. It was nice. Becoming a kumu hula...that was much later in life. I was working in the National Park. I had gone to Pu’uhonua O Hōnaunau, one of their cultural festivals. And I was utterly intrigued with kapa making. With making the traditional bark cloth. And, Carla Freitas...I don’t know who was demonstrating it that day. But, this was before I moved to Kona. I became exposed to the kapa making. It was so intriguing. And then, some years later I moved to Kona, and I was so uh, I had the opportunity to go and visit the cultural festivals more often. And they couldn’t get rid of me. I would show up and try to learn how to make kapa. So, they finally had me fill out the paper work so I could become a volunteer. I already knew lei making, so I could volunteer and teach lei making at the park. And then I was teaching uh, I studied kapa making with Carla Freitas and I studied rope making with Rose Fujimara. And I really liked the rope making. You have to make string to make the leis, right?

NKS: Right.
LY: Or at least some styles. So--

NKS: Was that Rose Fujimura you said?

LY: Yes. Rose Fujimura. The first female Parks Superintendent in the US, the First Native Hawaiian Parks Superintendent in the US, the first Chinese American Park Super Intendant in the US. She was half Hawaiian, half Chinese. And married to a Japanese [inaudible]. Her husband was quite the character...but anyway.

So, I had the opportunity to study with these amazing women. And then um, Aunty Rose was something else. When we’d--when they’d have cultural festivals there, the way I would hear about them is I would get a phone call, just a message. “Leilehua. Aunty Rose. I need you. Call me.” (filing) And that means, “You will show up and do what you’re told.” So, I would drive over to Kona, and spend as much time as I could there.

Eventually I was uh working (filing) on the Kona side for a publishing company, Space Age Publishing. And...Then um, I cut back to part time because it was really hard to raise a super bratty evil teenager (filing). And...so I had to homeschool her because...this bringing guns to school thing is nothing new. When she was in school, one of her classmates brought a handgun to school. And when he got called on the carpet by the school officials, the dad showed up to the meeting with a shotgun, or a rifle. So, I figured with Jessica’s mouth, I needed her to not be in that environment. Because I could just see her mouthing off at one of the obnoxious kids with the guns, and getting herself shot. Because, she...to this day has never learned what fear is.

NKS: Wow.

LY: (jingling) And...neither have her sons. So--I like that. I like my little wings.

NKS: I like them too.

LY: So, then she...So I’m working part time for this publishing company and I need to find a way to earn more money. And, I’m commuting from here to Kona. And, Jessica is...commuting back and forth with me. I’ve got her in homeschooling by now. And I get this phone call. “Hi, Leilehua, this is Pua--”or Blossom Sap, “...Aunty Rose just passed away, could you please apply for her job?” So, I applied, and I got the job. And so that’s really where, working in the National Parks was where a lot of the refinement of my art, my craft came. Because at that time, it was during the Clinton Administration. And so, there was--ooh! That’s cool! (jingling, looking at her necklace she made). I should remember that.

NKS: Its gorgeous--one big one!

LY: Yeah! That’s what I’ll sell on Etsy. Cuz I’ll do these...for the local gift shops, and then I’ll make these spectacular pieces to sell on Etsy. (jingling continues as Leilehua shows off the new necklace. Hands it to me)

NKS: I like it! That’s gorgeous.

LY: Yeah.
NKS: It looks like scales layered on top of each other.

LY: Mmm, it does!

NKS: Would you do them all the same--the petroglyphs? Would you put them on the necklace?

LY: I think I might not even do petroglyphs. I like your scale idea. I might do scales.

NKS: Ohh! Ohh, that would be so cool!

LY: Maybe just even follow the line of each piece, just a very thin gold line down each piece...?

NKS: Wow.

LY: Well they use this petroglyph as one of their logos.

NKS: At Kapohokine?

LY: At Basically Books.

NKS: Oh!

LY: (Inaudible, as Leilehua goes to fetch a bag full of pendants from the house to show me. It is a necklace made from recycled beer bottle pieces. The necks are cut into rings that form large beads on the string.)...beer bottle necks.

NKS: I saw those the other day--I’m really curious. Is this a necklace?

LY: Oh, it’s just a string, I just hang it on there. But I could wear it as a necklace. Those are beer bottle mouths. Aren’t they [inaudible]? I guess I could hang those on the big massive necklace.

NKS: So, do these beers all represent a really good time?

LY: They’re just bottles that are donated.

NKS: Just curious!

LY: It would be a--That’s actually something I thought of, was um, to...once I get the big kiln set up. I was going to ask you about the possibility of inviting your young friends over. They would have to be the kind of people who would follow my instructions exactly.

NKS: Okay...

LY: Invite young people over and buy a bunch of pizza and have it here at the house. And I will make a rope, rope straps, and we’ll carry my big kiln up here.
NKS: Oh!
LY: It’s in the garage.
NKS: Okay.
LY: So, the best way to carry it is to criss-cross a whole bunch of flat straps under it, and have like six people on it with straps wrapped around your hands. And that way nobody’s...we can adjust the length so that nobody’s under each other.
NKS: Right. Right.
LY: And the people on the high side can have the long straps. People on the short side can be close up to it. You know just lash it down. Basically, weave a net and carry it up that way.
NKS: And then make some cool stuff?
LY: Then I’ll be able to make big cool stuff instead of little cool stuff. And you can come to make stuff too.
NKS: I would love that!
LY: So, once I get that kiln set up, what I was thinking was that I could have people give me like a bottle, a champagne bottle from their wedding.
NKS: Aww!
LY: And I can put their name on it in gold leaf. And then I have a friend who does etching, so she could etch something really pretty on it. I can do the gold leaf and then she can etch something on it. If I did the etching first, when I fire it hot enough to set the gold leaf, it will melt the etching.
NKS: That’s a really cool idea. And it’s personalized, which it what everybody likes these days. And that’s a really good way to get it out of your refridgerator!
LY: Yeah!
NKS: That’s where my mom’s are to this day, even after thirty years. And I said to her, “You wanna just drink that some time, let me know.” And she oscillates back and forth between the idea of saving them for a “special occasion” and “life is a special occasion!” I’m a “life is a special occasion” kind of person. So, I got her to lighten up one day and open up one of the bottles. It was horrible, but we did it.
LY: (laughing.) It made a better souvenir than it did a drink. Was it champagne?
NKS: Yeah.

LY: Champagne doesn’t age well.

NKS: No, it must not.

LY: Really, very good champagne, if you have it in very perfect temperature will age, but...

NKS: I guarantee it was in our basement for years.

LY: I had some really wretched wine a friend made for me. I wanted to um, I have a rose bush and I had saved the rose petals and made rose tincture--or not rose tincture, that’s alcohol. But I had made a sugar syrup with the rose, I forget what it’s called. Rose water essentially.

NKS: Yeah.

LY: And so, I gave a gallon of it to this friend of mine to make wine from, and he went and put dye in it and everything to be like the pink color...I was like, you know, that’s kind of adding artificial to it to create this ghastly pink color, that kind of ruined the point of having organic rose wine. And it was wretched. It was really, really awful. All totally lost the rose flavor in the fermentation process. But, I figured, you know, worst case, I can use it as meat tenderizer. If you simmer meat in wine, the alcohol breaks down the muscle. It’s better than using the papaya based tenderizer, because those make the meat mushy. If you want really good beef, ignore the stuff they say about adding red wine at the end because you don’t want to damage the flavonoids... Just take the absolute cheapest box wine, red wine that you can get your hands on, and simmer--just put it in the crock pot, cover it with red wine. Simmer it, and then after the meat is cooked, then add all your spices and everything.

NKS: Really? I could do that today. I’ve got the box wine and everything.

LY: You can do that today. So, um, it’s just...

NKS: How long did you put it in for, is that an all-day kind of thing?

LY: Yeah, I start it in the morning, throw in some bay and rosemary, you know, your standard spices. And you know, I spice twice, because a lot of professional chefs say, “Oh you never want to add your spices at the beginning because you’ll destroy the flavor, you want the fresh flavor at the end.” To me, fresh spices that are added at the end taste bitter. I don’t like that. You know how a stew always tastes best on the second day?

NKS: Yes.

LY: If you start the spices at the beginning, you’ve already made your second day. That counts as one day.

NKS: Unless its basil or something that I want fresh--
LY:--and that’s a delicate spice.

NKS: Otherwise I agree and I like to cook my seasonings.

LY: The resinous ones, all the resinous ones to me really need that long slow cook. And the tannins in red wine just bring out the best of the flavors. And alcohol denatures it. So, the alcohol will denature all the harshness out, and the alcohol and the tannic acid helps to break down the um, it breaks down the connective tissue without making the protein mushy.

NKS: Would you use, would you put a piece of beef in there? What would you cook?

LY: I like the raunchiest piece of beef I can find because it has the flavor that holds up the best.

NKS: Really?

LY: I don’t like to use...heart, tongue, is really good. Any of the organ meats. Kidney! Liver, no. Liver just turns to nasty mush in red wine. If you want to add wine to liver, make a pate and add a nice white wine. Um, or you can do a liver pate, but you need a lot of garlic and onion to stand up to the flavor of the liver, because the taste is really intense. And be sure you add rosemary and bay to kind of balance that strong flavor. Umm...anyway. I’ve gone way off the path!

   Well, everyone in my family cooks. My mom’s, both of her parents were really good cooks. My mom is, she is a cooking writer and used to teach cooking.

NKS: Wow.

LY: My dad’s--My grandfather was very good at Hawaiian and Chinese foods. My dad’s mom was an excellent cook for pretty much anything. My dad is a really good cook. My stepmother used to own her own restaurant.

NKS: Wow.

LY: So, cooking is a thing in our family. And, ever since I was little...My family wasn’t so much into buying toys, but, just having you do stuff with them, which I think is more valuable.

NKS: Mhmm. Especially if there’s something you took away--like cooking.

LY: Life skills. Yeah. I feel very sad for children that grow up parked in front of a television.

NKS: Yeah, my cousins who we go out to stay with sometimes, they are just steeped in it. And to go outside is like a chore. But once they get into it, you never get them back in the house. But you have to make them go. And I just think that’s so backwards. It’s not healthy to be staring at a screen all day anyway, but you’re not developing your own brain, your own abilities.

LY: I was so upset one time. I was at a doctor’s office and they had the TV running, and they said essentially...what they were telling parents was if you watch the Disney Channel, it’s the
same as taking your kids around the world for all these great adventures. So, you don’t need to go and do it.

NKS: Oh no... That is just not true. The only thing I could see as being a substitute for travel would be getting your kids to read books and use their imaginations.

LY: I think it’s a great tool. If a lot of that stuff had been available when my daughter was growing up, I probably would have sat her down for videos and things so she could learn before we went. That way she would know what to look for. To think that watching an hour of Disney, no matter how well-produced the TV, the show is, that that is the equivalent of actually going to China and interacting with real people?

NKS: That’s scary to even suggest that that is a substitute.

LY: You end up with people like we’ve got voting now. Anyway, um…

NKS: Well this, was really good by the way, but if there was anything you wanted to add to or revisit?

LY: Probably focusing, if we wanted to do a second session, probably focusing on the training in the National Parks, and the access to all the different kupuna and the variety of people who are in the National Parks, where... um. Where more of the depth came from. Kind of like the difference between being a working rancher, growing up on a ranch, and then going to college and studying animal husbandry and getting your MBA. You know, going into the National Parks and studying at a formal hālau would be like that. You know, I grew up with a lot of this stuff, but when you grow up with it, you're not learning in an organized learning fashion, it’s very intuitive, which is really good.

Um, but, there’s a lot of stuff that you really miss. It’s like my dad, when I first wanted to start making jewelry, he really encouraged me to go to college and study art in college. I was like “Why? You’re a master.” And he said, “Because you’ll learn things that I wouldn’t think to teach you.” He said, “Study with everyone you can; study as many different styles as you can. Never ever tell your instructor, ‘Oh but so-and-so, my dad does it like blank...’ Just shut up and learn. Learn every technique you can. As wide as you can.” If you studied Chinese water color with Linus Chow, then go and study impressionistic art paintings at STASAC. You know, go for the diversity because you’ll learn the broadest, you’ll develop the broadest range of skills that way. And he really encouraged me, and my mom was the same way. By that point I was communicating with my mom. I didn’t really talk to her for...it was about ten years. And then it kind of grew, so now we are reengaged with each other. But both of my parents were very much proponents of studying as many-- learning as broadly as you can. And one way my dad explained it to me was, “If you look a carpenter’s tool chest, they don’t just have one hammer and one screw driver. There are so many ranging tools so that they can do whatever they -- you need a lot of tools to accomplish your vision. You can build a whole house with one saw, one hammer, and one screw driver, but it’s going to be really hard, and you might not get exactly [inaudible] or you may have to do an awful lot of work to accomplish what you want. If you have a lot of different tools, then you can pick the tool most suited for the job.” And so that’s also what I tell young people who say to me “Oh you’re so talented and you do so many things. I could never be
as talented as you because I can’t make leis, and paint, and weld, and do this.” But, my father would be like, “No. Actually, she has one talent. She can see the art that she is trying to create. But she has got…she has developed skills with a lot of different tools. And some tools will fit your hand better than others. But I really strongly believe most people can learn to use most tools adequately if they work at it.” Now maybe you don’t like that tool and you don’t want to work at it, that’s perfectly valid. (clatter). I saw a great cartoon the other day…This gal was standing at a canvas, painting. And this guy comes up behind her and says “Oh man, that’s so gorgeous. I don’t have any talent. I wish I was talented like you.” And she says “Oh yes. I was born with a paint brush in my hand. I was born knowing exactly how to mix my colors. I was born knowing the rules of thirds. All of that came to me as they cut the cord, just like doctors are born knowing how to handle a scalpel, like all mechanics are born knowing how to fix a carburetor.” So, the guy standing by her says “I wish I had the sticktoitiveness to spend six years in art school studying how to do this.” And she goes, “Yes it was.”

NKS: (laughing.) This was really good. I really...I enjoyed hearing your stories again. And you’re such a natural story teller.

LY: (chuckling)

NKS: I think you know that too!

LY: It is a finely honed craft.

NKS: Because, you have developed it--(laughing)

LY: I…what my story telling is, is I am trying to use sound waves to paint an image that I see that I want you to see.

NKS: Ohh. Did you think about that before this? Did that just come to you now?

LY: Several people have written articles on me and asked me the same questions--(laughing). But I think that is the most succinctly I have put it together. I think the answer gets a little more refines each and every time. And sometimes people will quote me and I don’t remember saying it. But I really like it, so I say “Oh yeah, that’s what I meant!”

NKS: When I make the write up of this, I’ll just put that in bigger font, so when people skim through they see that and go, “Wow!”

LY: That’s really deep. (laughing)

NKS: And they don’t have to know anything else that was going on. We’ll psyche them out--“Wow she’s deep.”

LY: Did I show you the little blue pendants I made?
Interview with Randy L.
Date of Interview: 13 July 2018

Location: Lei making class with Randy L. at Volcano Art Gallery, Volcano, HI;

Duration: 1.5 hours

Interviewer: Nicole Kapawaʻalihilani Schuler

RL: (beginning to teach the class how to make lei ‘awapuhi melemele) Get close, yeah. So, what I’m going to do is to start, I’m going to take an end over here to make a stopper on the end. But you go ahead and prepare your blossoms for the lei, like what she’s doing. So, what we’re going to do, let’s cut the end of and then you’re going to string it… Pull it straight…Okay we’ll keep all the pistols on one side, so as we go, the pistols will all be on the top side, but you alternate them back and forth this way to lock the lei so it doesn’t spin all over. You can make what I call lei kapakahi (laughter). Just sew!…You got the idea. Okay. Put a bunch on your needle and just bring it all the way down to the end. Okay? Who wants to sew?…No this is an old style of making this ginger lei that is not seen very often. Umm, because of the fact it takes a long time to prepare and stuff. They just don’t do it.

Woman: and is it just called “ku’i?”

RL: Yes, this is a kui.

(pause)

Woman: How are they made normally?

RL: Um, well if they’re not done—there is a loose style, it’s a Micronesian style, it’s not Hawaiian, but it’s using a fiber to twist in loops. Of course, you can still kui the lei in the same way, but, um just string it without having all on one side. But you want to hold it in your hand like this, so it…this one on that side…back and forth.

Woman: How long is this ginger going to last?

RL: For the day. It’s a very special lei, it’s not something that’s going to last for three weeks or something like that. But it dries up and it still retains its fragrance.

[...]

Woman 2: Randy, you are a treasure. (murmurs of agreement from the class)

RL: Ahh?

[...]
Woman 2: A couple months ago, you brought a palai and braided, and I thought, “Oh my God, to use palai!”

RL: I brought some with me, but I’m going to use it for the pū for the leis for today.

Woman 3: The pūʻolo?

RL: No no no, we’re gonna use what we call the palapalai fern to tie as a ribbon instead of a ribbon-ribbon. The Hawaiian style of a lei where you put the pū at the end after you tie the lei together, it’s normally something that’s more natural, that compliments the lei.

Woman 3: Yeah something also, the ribbon is going to last, and the color is going to last, but something also kind of ephemeral.

RL: This is the fern that I gathered. This is known as a the palapalai fern. And this is very cultural in our hulas, that are used for our hulas, the leis made from this fern.

Woman 3: When you get tons of that, it feels like a feather boa. It’s so wonderful, and it has a little kind of fragrance. And it’s cool and refreshing.

RL: Like from here, this took me about a hundred miles that way to get it. And it grows in our state forests in Kalōpā… I have been growing in my property, but not enough to use for today.

Woman: We did go there, (Kalōpā) yes it’s very high up.

RL: It’s a neat place. You can walk through the forests.

[…]

(more people arrive, NKS moves over for them)

RL: Hi, aloha! Okay so we can get another table. What I’ll do is I’ll get you started. Oh there’s no more chairs. Here take this one…

Unknown: How many flowers to do bring?

RL: Whatever you can handle in your hand, 8-10…What we are going to do now is now we…

[…]

RL: Okay in the flower itself, okay if you look at it like so, there’s a natural hole break underneath the pistol. You slide in. That’s the hole, okay? Alrighty.

[…]

RL: Where’s grandma? Oh this is yours too?

338
Grandma: Yeah that’s my mo’opuna. (part of the big family)

RL: Oh okay, so this is your daughter. I see!

[…]

RL: You need approximately 100 flowers. And what we going to do is take this part off right here, the small green leaf, bud things. And then open them up, you can either do a little puff and they just, they open, okay?…Okay what I’m going to do, I’m going to prep you guys’ needles.

[…]

(class participants discuss Kaimū beach, Uncle Robert’s, jumping off South Point, Robert’s first day back open, Kalapana eruption)

[…]

RL: Yeah they had food there on Wednesday. There is a hula dancers there, a local group there.

Woman: Hilo has a Farmers market.

RL: That’s tomorrow. I’ll be down there tomorrow, I am a vender down at the market

Unknown: What do you sell?

RL: We do a lei puakeniki and normally, and then I’ll probably, if I can make some gingers tonight I’ll put some gingers out there. And then um, I do the Ni’ihau shell leis and I also weave lauhala.

Woman 3: Your puakeniki are so perfect. They’re huge!

RL: Some of yeah, they will just, some of ‘um are— there’s a variety where the flowers are about probably three inches across.

Woman 3: I took a picture and I sent it to my sisters.

RL: After we’re done stringing these, just return the needle so I can use it again, haha. The lei needle here.

[…]

RL: Are you done?

Man 1: My daughter will be momentarily.
RL: Where did I put all that stuff? Oh there we go.

Woman 2: See how beautiful it is when it’s all strung?

Woman 1: Where do you break off the stem? How long should the flowers be?

RL: Okay, just about like a half to a quarter inch. Like so. Okay, don’t go beyond the arms, you know like you snap them off…

Woman 1: The petals will fall off.

RL: Yeah, haha… Make sure you get all these things off okay because they don’t have a nice smell. Just this part, okay?

Man 1: So you take the bottom off too?

RL: As you string. Because it’s easier to pick up the flowers than try to pick up the little things like this (demonstrates with trimmed flowers).

Woman 3: What word did you use for the ribbon when you used palapalai?

RL: Oh I call it the pu‘u of the lei… This is just a little hook (describing the needle eye) so gotta make sure that it’s attached to your… Just a little step just to keep it from sliding off here. Okay you’re going to hold the needle like so, and you pick this… there’s a natural hole in the center there. Okay it goes right behind this pistol. Okay. put it in like so, and the pistols will be alternating left to right as you sew them.

[…]

Woman: Where do you find this?

Woman 2: It has a puka already

Woman: Oh my goodness it has a little puka! How nice.

[…]

RL: And just take a few flowers, you know like three or four or whatever you can handle. And…

Woman: Then you slide this down…

RL: Let me lubricate them with some water.

Woman: So where do I put it? Behind the pistol?

RL: Behind the pistol. Yes.
Woman: And then when do I break off the rest of this stem?

RL: Oh, you break it before you put it on the needle. Let me just give you some water there.

Woman: Push it down together.

RL: Take about 3-4 together, and just (push it down).

Man and Young Girl: Thank you very much, but we have to go.

RL: Oh okay.

Man: We made a little one, so we have left over.

RL: Well why don’t you take that to have some fragrance in your car?

Man: We can? Okay.

RL: Yes of course. You want to tie it on your wrist?

Young Girl: Sure!

(Maybe we can fill out the forms? Man: We already did yes.)

Unknown: Great thank you!

RL: Hawaiian leis, nothing is in a …quickly, it takes a while. So if you go into the market, and if they have these types of leis available, it’ll run you about twenty bucks. That’s what I sell them for at the market.

Man: Bye, thank you.

Woman 2: Are my flowers not opened up enough?

RL: No that’s fine, as long as they are...(sounds of blowing open flowers can be heard)

Woman: what am I doing wrong? Is it turning out to be a kapakahī lei?

RL: No worry. It’ll still be fragrant, hahahah!

[…] Desire Krills:(chants an oli) Aloha ā, aloha ā…

RL: È!!
DK: (continues)

Kahoʻokele Crabbe: (joins)

RL: We’re doing ‘awapuhi melemele.

Man 2: He nani!…Hanauna!

Desire Krills: Ohh dis is what I wanted to learn!

RL: Okay, well come come come. Everybody this is my friends um, this is Desire Krills and um (Kumu Moses Kahoʻokele Crabbe)Kahoʻokele Crabbe who’s a kumu.

DK: Aloha everybody.

RL: Desire is one of our former Miss Hawai’is. (general whoops and laughter) Just the other day, that’s right.

KC: Brother, I have a question.

RL: Yes?

KC: When you work with ‘awapuhi melemele do you need to dip the needle in water?

RL: Dip what?

KC: The needle, the mānai?

RL: No need.

KC: You just string um?

RL: You can moisten your flowers, but just spraying them so they slide on.

KC: They’re beautiful.

DK: So you guys are learning the real secrets of lei haku?

RL: It’s an old style that I teach you.

KC: Brother, how many blossoms does it take?

RL: About 100. To 120, depend on how close you...going to cut. You guys want to string one?

DK: No, no, not right now.
KC: No. No thank you.

DK: No no, thank you so much, we getting ready for the hula performance next Saturday over here at 10:30. on the other side of those green tents there’s a little pā over there.

RL: Okay.

DK: That’s our new hula pā. So 10:30 be there, or be square. Bring your fresh lei that you made, another one.

RL: Is it tomorrow?

DK: Next Saturday.

KC: Brother, when you coming back from the keiki hula?

RL: I’m coming back on Friday.

KC: I gonna call you later for two lei before I come up here in the morning.

RL: When?

KC: Saturday of next week. Puakenikeni.

RL: Just I’ll—tell Dayna.

KC: I just need two.

RL: Alright.

DK: Can I take some pictures of you folks please, just for our program? (affirmative sounds from group) So did you folks just happen by or did you hear about it?

Woman: I looked this up in advance.

DK: Oh maika’i.

Woman: We came on purpose for this.

DK: so what about you folks, do you live here?

Woman 2: We’re now in Guam.

DK: Oh, what are you doing in Guam?
Woman 2: My husband is stationed there. Yeah but we’re from here.

Unknown: Any of you guys dance hula in Guam?

DK: Randy is a gem, so glad to have him once a month here.

RL: Thank God it’s only once a month!

[...]

DK: I need two leis for...I’ll text you.

RL: I leave tomorrow, I go to O’ahu tomorrow. I have 90 lei to do for Keiki Hula. I’ll be at the market tomorrow.

DK: You want my flowers for tomorrow? They’re white.

[...]

NKS: (asks about Lei Day)

RL: I worked with Lei...I used to be up there, for the past three years for Lei Day, but usually before that...You know Leilehua? You know her?

NKS: She’s my kumu.

RL: Oh she is?! Okay, well she called me a little too late for the last Lei Day because um, I usually did the Palace Theatre before back in the day and...and then the Cultural Center. I demonstrated over there.

Woman: When is Lei Day?

RL: Lei Day is always May 1 in Hawai‘i.

[inaudible]

NKS: I’m doing my MA at UHH, HM program.

RL: Okay, I helped one person who was doing his MA, U in Honua. Last name is Chai. He works for the Legacy thing up in Nolowea. State, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Hawai‘i Forest Legacy Program. He did an interview with me about the cultural resources and how they’re being depleted. My thing is grow your own, where you can. And knowing that the forest can only provide so much, yeah. This stuff (yellow ginger) is considered invasive, okay, haha!
I did an interview with him in Kalōpā talking about the forest there. How it’s been exploited by some of the hālau and stuff that go up there and use...just rape the forest without any notion of how long it takes these things to grow. I noted to them that there was a vine.....I was up there just picking up....some lei, but um, I think it was during a graduation or something, somebody because the maile was growing so high in the tree, reaching down, as it cuts the maile vine which has been sitting there for probably 50 years. And it just killed everything. Yeah. I mean to me it was horrible. I mean…

NKS: So that was his MA?

RL: (He used it for) 30 something years, and now it’s just gone [he used the parts that hung down, they cut the big vine and killed it] you know one day, someone needed a lei for something, but they don’t know the proper….the maile vine with...tree. And it went up the tree and came back down, and they just cut what they needed, they cut the whole tree down [because they couldn’t reach the maile] and killed it. I came through there.

NKS: So you grow your own?

RL: Yes,...this...there’s particular...like the maile…

(NKS asks about the invasive ginger, Randy said it was imported from China. His ancestor liked them so much he took them with him.)

RL: My grandfather from Waipiʻo Valley, actually Waimanu Valley, [my home] on this island, the flower grew there, so when he moved from this island to the island of Oʻahu, he actually took the white ginger with him from Waipiʻo.

Woman: Is the white ginger still there?

RL: Oh yeah, there’s still the white ginger.

Woman: (asks about going to Waimanu)

RL: Waimanu? Okay, be careful, be prepared that’s all, ....other side of the river. [Watch the weather.]

[...]

Woman: There might be a lot of people who are there who are living there, so just be aware of that.

RL: There is a waterfall up mauka there. I lived there, so um...I down in Hilo once a week at the Hilo Farmers Market, where I also demonstrate [lei making]. We make our own things and stuff. I will weave something while I’m there, or we string lei puakenikeni while we’re there, sometimes I might have a lei to make I’ll have my own palapalai something that I’ll take down there. People get attracted to that…
Man: (asks about the shells)

RL: My cousin… Karen? I can’t think of her last name, married to a lawyer in Guam. She used to teach hula, I don’t know if she’s still doing that over there, her maiden name is Chang. My uncle was also there, his name was Wallace Lee, and he took Pepsi Co over there, he was VP of Pepsi Co. and he took the company there to Guam this is back in the 70s and they also had a bakery there.

Woman: So you’re going down Waimanu, the trails kind of steep and all these little [kukui] nuts want to roll under your feet.

RL: That’s what I remember, I mean I haven’t gone there since I was a kid. You wanna make a smaller one? (makes bracelet) Go from left to right.

Woman: They said hopefully the dry season starts next month.

RL: What is that? The dry season here? There never dry season! Why you think it’s so green!? We’re expecting some major rain in a couple days it starts tonight.

Woman: We went into the...

RL: Uuhh, in Kohala?

Woman: It poured rain.

RL: Oh that’s not safe. Don’t trust those.

Woman: We trusted them and lived. We, we’re surprised at how many people were still out there, it was pouring pouring pouring rain.

RL: Some people live out there. Mhm.

Woman: We thought, “We’ve gone somewhere nobody’s been before,” then there was someone’s stuff.

RL: Yea they have reservations.

Woman: There was like a machete path. Bamboo to follow it just ran through.

RL: You never know what’s out there.

Woman: Yea somebody’s hide out. There was even a little solar panel. Somebody’s really cooking out there.

Unknown: Remind me of those weather stations out there to monitor….
RL: You shoulda seen how many came out of the Puna forest when the lava took over it (hahahahahah!) Oh yeah...

[…]

NKS: So where did you learn your lei making?

RL: Um, my lei making skills are passed down with me from my Grandma, my kupuna, so my lauhala weavings all kupuna that taught me. And I guess you know I did this as a young kid and not knowing that I would still be doing it like 60 years later (laughs).

NKS: Is it less common now than back then? Lei making in general?

RL: Umm...you know a lot of our…a lot of the knowledge of making certain leis were all passed down, leis come in all forms, they come in shells, seeds, flowers, feathers, you know that kind of stuff, each, so many people, they don’t know all the leis, I can, but I’ve done it but, feather leis, shell leis, like these here, lei kūpeʻe, …

[…]

RL: Yes this is the Haumea shells also known as the [inaudible] it’s one of our rarest of our shell leis that we have left in existence Um, leis like this now, come at a price of, um like they start at like 7000 up to 25000 [dollars]. I sell them for three thousand. But it took me when I got interested in something like this is it took me 15 years of collecting enough shells for the lei.

[…]

NKS: Where?

[…]

RL: I’m leaving tomorrow night for O‘ahu, I’m doing my dad’s one year. And I’m also gonna spend time with my mom but I’ll have to make my 9:00 leis first you know. (for the hālau) There’s not even...there’s only 16-18 dancers but I’m doing full sets, and then this is…they want in Japan? but this year’s keiki hula is not at the...hotel. Some place in Kalama I don’t know.

RL: (to a man) What is that on your neck? The white?

Man: Um, giant clam shell.

RL: Oh wow. Did you carve it?

Man: I wish I did.
RL: (Hawaiian name for the clam) We don’t have them here, thank God! (laughing) no we don’t want them! They’re known to da kine close on divers and stuff. Yeah! People see um and... but do you guys eat em?

Man: Yeah. We eat em. Not the ones that get big like Palau, those are the giant ones. Our are only like (showing basketball size).

RL: I want a shell, I don’t have a shell, somebody took mine. My giant clam that I had as my little water at my property. Somebody stole it. But it was my old salad bowl before.

Man: Shower, bird bath, sink, ...

RL: You guys dive for it though?

Man: Yeah.

RL: Is it legal?

Man: Yeah, gotta be 6 inches.

RL: Oh that’s small.

Man: Yeah. Well that’s not the big ones.

RL: Oh you don’t have the big ones.

Man: They only grow like this (10in maybe). But in Palau they’re trying to save them too, because people were…

RL: Exploiting them? For decoration or whatever.

Man: Yeah.

RL: What was that, Coco Palms? (Kaua‘i resort)

DK: Coco Palms sink!

RL: All were giant clams!

DK: You’d wash your face, it cut your face!

Woman: I gotta finish that yeah, I just did a slip knot. This is so amazing.

Unknown: Wait, you started before me, yeah? hahaha

Woman: It’s gonna take me all day.
RL: We have another hour, I think.

Woman: Just taking those little petal parts off takes me forever.

RL: Oh.

NKS: What other organizations do you work with?

RL: Um, Merrie Monarch, Aloha Festivals, not Aloha Festivals anymore, we had Hawai‘i Island Festival, our Aloha Festival went bankrupt on us. So, Hawai‘i Island formed their own because...on O‘ahu…

[...]

RL: Um no I’m only volunteer here on this Island. Hold on a minute....at my age I’m entitled to forget things.

Woman: Is this knotted?

RL: Yes…

Man: What kind of horn is on your (gestures to lei)?

RL: It’s not a horn, it’s a lei niho palaoa whale tooth. But this is orca, from Waipi‘o. I don’t know why my cousins decided that...it’s a passed down thing, okay? It’s handed down to me, um, so they told me it was my turn to wear it. I said why? (hahah!) It it my age or it it...hahaha My grandfather married into ali’i Hawaiian ali‘i. Umm, I mean my grandfather supposedly Chinese, married Hawaiian in Waipi‘o, where the but I’m related to the Father of Kamehameha, which is Līloa. Okay that’s where my line comes from. He wasn’t royal then but it is considered ali‘i line. Um, and I guess this is what they give you know hahaha, you don’t question it. But it’s something I am proud to wear it. To represent my culture and my bloodline supposedly. Okay? Um, I’m also related to Chinese hierarchy, okay my grandmother’s…sister’s, they’re known as the famous [inaudible] sisters. One was married to Mao, one was married to Chiang Kai-shek, and the other one Sun Yat-sen. Um Sun Yat-sen was the first President of China. Yeah and Mao Zedong was the dictator of China later in the years when I was growing up. I heard about it. I had no idea that I had this...yeah but that was like outside of my...he married my blood but that...

I had Hawaiian, I had Chinese, and I’m part Russian, and my Russian part comes from the Czar of Russia so I was told by our family historian. That gave us this spiel when we did our family reunion.

It doesn’t matter in my life, you just who you are now. Yeah. Well I don’t wanna be a since like, I tell the Chinese persons that come from China that my aunty or whatever was married to Mao, they go “Oh, ooh” (gross! hahaha) but my grandfather on my mom’s side, he I would say he stowed away when he was 16, he came in as like 5 or 6 brothers. And that time they were on a sandal wood boat trade back in the 1800s. Okay. And they decided to jump ship,
and they all ended up in Waimanu Valley where their Uncle was, King Kamehameha was um, was he was given the kuleana responsibility, the konahiki of Waimanu. And my grandfather and his brothers got to to say you know, they were settled there. And they all married into families from the next valley over, which is Waipiʻo.

RL: I have family reunion in Kohala next week. Why you need 15 strands?

Man: Cuz…

RL: Well you better start picking, you can do three days ahead.

Man: (Singing) My yellow ginger lei, reveals her scent through the day. Enchanting moments with you, makes me love you. (others join in)

“Lei ‘awapuhi melemele i pu ia me ke ala honauna, o ka hihi manaʻo iā oe i kou lei ‘awapuhi…”

RL: I didn’t bring entertainment

Someone starts playing the song on phone

“Uihā!” Laughter. All start singing along.

Unknown: You gonna dance, you gonna hula?…Lanakila [inaudible], one of his fav flowers is awapuhi melemele…Who wrote this?

RL: In the 50s yeah? This is the first song I learned on the ‘ukulele, at Lincoln Elementary.

Woman: I went to Lincoln.

[…]

(the group discusses slack key concert, down town Hilo, by the Kress Building, from 12-6 on that Saturday; Guam, smaller than Molokaʻi)

RL: Woman hang it halfway over, halfway in the front, put it on with a kiss. There you go. the puʻu goes right over here on the left side by the heart. Women usually wear their leis halfway back halfway front.

(Earthquake begins. Table starts shaking)

RL: There was a little shaker! If it starts going a whole minute, then we gotta worry. Yeah the last time I was here, it rocked, yeah, and there was a big poof on that side from Halemaʻumaʻu. It erupted that pressure thing, that was here. At one [inaudible] just before I had to leave here, they said we just had a little eruption, I said o…kay. But it shook over here pretty much.
(Randy L. comments on the workers in the Volcano Arts Center running all over to grab the things that were falling on the floor.)

RL: That’s why when you live on the Big Island, knowing that we have, if we display anything on a shelf or something, if you glue it to a shelf, the shelf nailed to the wall. …self-locking cupboards…Don’t have anything, like high standing cases of your favorite china cuz that comes crashing down. You gotta have something that’s actually attached to the wall. You gotta nail to the wall or whatever. I remember when I...everything was nailed to the wall, and the glasses was not nailed, but we had this two way sticky thing that would ...so it wouldn’t fall off yeah.

Good job. I’m glad I don’t have to grade anybody, cuz you guys did well. But this is a very old style, the style that we did today, it’s seldom seen. The style of the lei itself. Growing up...kids you know the...plumeria leis. In [inaudible] we all made plumeria leis. And I remember from Kindergarten, every time the veterans sing...the punchbowl, 24 inch on the tombs. Like this.

Unknown: Are those shells called kūpeʻe?

RL: Yes they are, these particular shells that I have on these are all from Kalapana. The one in the center here is from Kaimū, is now the beach is covered. the dark ones on the outside here were from the Queen’s Bath. These are...Not from inside the Queen’s Bath but from the ocean side, yeah. And these were picked the day the lava was filling Queen’s Bath, these two leis here. (gestures to lei kūpeʻe on his hat)

So back in the days, we were allowed to go see the flow, you know it crossed the road, no body barricaded you away from it, you know, and we got this close and the thing would be floating by (hahah). I had taken my kids, cuz we heard the Queen’s Bath was gonna go and we thought, “Oh well we can go for last swim,” but by the time we got there, the lava was already filling Queen’s Bath. So I said, “Let’s go out to the ocean and take a dip, you know on the ocean side.” They used to have a nice big and the pond in the back where used to cross net and stuff but, so when we got out there, 12 in the afternoon, all of this goes out on the rocks (the kūpeʻe). It was the height of the day, they were actually escaping the heat of the [lava]. They were escaping so they were climbing on the rocks and everything. And so we had our truck and our five gallon bucket and, “Look at all the kūpeʻe!” The kids, they, “Oooh!” So I said, “We’ll take ‘em home and cook em up for your guys, and you know eat em.” So I had them save all the shells actually you know the...And so I’ve had these...this I’ve had for about 20 years I’ve already had it made. We had our hula, the hula thing that was last, a couple weeks ago in Hilo, it was the uh, what did they call it.

Unknown: We want a picture of our leis and we want you in there. yeah, Kumu—?

RL: Well we were stringing what we call a lei awapuhi melemele, this is the yellow ginger lei and these are the wild flowers that grow along our road side and also in people’s gardens. We had the raw flowers, just to give you that experience, these were picked alongside the road here. So we took the leaf buds here from the gingers and we took off this part here, okay the outside. And then we just blew it open like that.

Unknown: And then the stem comes off the bottom?
RL: You can do that but it’s easy to...those were all prepared earlier...I’m gonna put a little piece of the stem here as a starter.

RL: (to NKS) You ready? (asking if NKS is ready to move no to the next step with her lei)

NKS: (bringing lei to RL) Any particular reason you picked the old style?

RL: It’s the only style I know. I can do other styles, of ginger, (phone rings)...You ever been up here?

NKS: No it’s my first time.

RL: Oh, I thought you had. All this time, I’ve been doing it the last five years up at the Gallery in the Park, yeah before the eruption. She [Pele] was already pooling all the years that I’ve been up here, but never like what it is now.

Woman: I never thought she would go where she’s gone.

RL: Oh no! It’s so quick. But you know, I look at it as a good thing, it’s a new beginning, it’s a re-- rebirth, you know giving it a clean slate, you know, the whole area, everything had been compromised down there, the whole area, you know, not only the land itself, but the, we have all this fungus (ROD rapid ‘ōhi’a death) that’s been affecting all our ‘ōhi’a, now it’s gone. The ‘ōhi’a is sprouting back in Kalapana, and all the (inaudible) is dead, all the albizias are dead. And all the other stuff...

You know I took a ride into ‘Opihikau, recently, and the only things that are surviving are the lauhala and the ika ferns and the trees...and the trees and stuff, everything else that has been invasive is gone. It just dried up and died. Which is wonderful.

NKS: I heard that from a friend of mine.

RL: Well now you know how (hahah). This season, the yellow ginger, I only teach it when it comes into season like this in the summer, otherwise I’d be doing...I couldn’t bring the stuff that I was gathering by my place, it wasn’t allowed in the Park, thinking that I’m gonna bring the ROD into the park. Well, my trees are pristine, they’re still growing, never even none of them got effected by the disease.

NKS: My friends’ had a rubber tree in their back yard, or an albizia, whatever it was, it got covered in lava, and the only thing left was that one tree.

Woman: The one they hated? Oh!

RL: Oh your friend’s house got covered? Down in Leilani or Kapoho?

NKS: Not sure. Never been down actually.
RL: I got to enjoy the places when it was so pristine, I mean there were no houses, there were no cesspools, nothing, down there, just a road to the area, and it and then over the years it just got so, what, pilau, …

NKS: So it’s a good thing then. That’s so fascinating about the ‘ōhi’a... thank you so much for sharing, I really appreciate it.

RL: Thank you so much for coming up, cuz last month I had two people.

NKS: I found about it last month a day too late.

RL: Aww, well my day over here has been, how should I say, the second Friday each month for the last 5 years.

NKS: That’s nice though, you get to come up here once month.

RL: Well I drive a pathway up here cuz I have my property down below in Glenwoods, so it’s you know, but I like it up here because it’s cool.

NKS: And it’s quiet.

RL: Yeah it’s quiet. But the air gets compromised, the atmosphere gets compromised when the volcano decides to go. There’ve been rattled like every day, a few thousand earthquakes so far in the past (hahaha).

NKS: I have friends who post on Facebook, “Here we go again…”

RL: Yeah it’s gonna go as long as the way it is, another 30-40 years of it. It’s not gonna stop. It’s not gonna stop.

NKS: Do you think they are gonna be able to reopen the park?

RL: It’s gonna take at least a few years, because of all the damage. And it got that big hole over here in the road that they just filled with cement! Hello? You can’t just fill a sink hole with cement and think it’s gonna stay there! It’s just gonna add pressure, that big hunk of cement is gonna come flying up into the traffic!
Appendix E Index of Lei Styles and Techniques
(McDonald 1978; 2003; Yuen 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Technique</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lei kui</td>
<td>common strung lei made with a piercing stitch. kui means to sew or stitch, to string pierced objects such as beads or flowers into a lei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei haku</td>
<td>a three-ply braided lei haku means to braid a lei or to fabricate a lei; not a strung lei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei wili</td>
<td>a lei made by winding fiber around successive short lengths of decorative material; sometimes a base material such as lau hala, a thick raffia braid, or other suitable material is used to make wrapping easier; multiple strands of the lei material are twisted to form a loose rope-like strand. the twist, in this case, is only in one direction, not like the double helix of the hilo style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei humupapa</td>
<td>also known lei humuhumu, lei humu, lei kuipapa; flat style of lei; decorative material is sewn flat on a band in a scale-like pattern humuhumu means to sew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei hili</td>
<td>a braided or plaited lei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei hilo</td>
<td>made by twisting two or more strands into a double helix; hilo means to twist, braid, or spin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei nīpuʻu</td>
<td>formed by tying the petioles of leaves together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei kā wili</td>
<td>made from twisting together strands of soft bark after first beating the iwi (the inner hard, bendable stalk) so that the ‘ili (bark skin) pulls free; non-native ornamental hibiscus can be used to substitute for endangered maile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>How They Are Worn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei kino</td>
<td>draped across the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei po‘o</td>
<td>general term for lei worn on the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei kūpeʻe</td>
<td>worn as an anklet or bracelet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei ‘āʻī</td>
<td>draped around the neck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei pāpale</td>
<td>worn on a hat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian hopseed bush</td>
<td>‘a’ali‘i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ginger</td>
<td>‘awapuhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>octopus tree</td>
<td>aralia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian screwpine; pandan; pandanus</td>
<td>hala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hibiscus</td>
<td>hau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ilima</td>
<td>‘ilima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candle nut</td>
<td>kukui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sword fern common sword fern</td>
<td>kupukupu ni‘ani‘au palapalai pāmoho ‘ōkupukupu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musk fern</td>
<td>laua‘e leuwa‘e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limu kala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limu pāhapaha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| coconut | niu | *Cocos nucifera*  
| Arecaceae (Palm Family) | Non-Native Polynesian Introduced  
| (Fahs 2006:174) |
| ‘ōhi`a lehua | *Metrosideros macropus*  
| Myrtaceae (Eucalyptus Family) | Native  
| (Lilleeng-Rosenberger 2016:266) |
| Hawaiian lily | pa`iniu | *Astelia menziesiana*  
| Liliaceae (Lily Family) | Native  
| (Lilleeng-Rosenberger 2016:235) |
| lace fern | pala`ā  
| pala`e  
| pā`ū o pala`e | *Odontosoria chinensis* or  
| *Sphenomeris chinesis*  
| Lindsaeaceae (Lace Fern Family) | Native  
| (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009) |
| type of fern | palai | *Microlepia strigose* or *M. setosa.*  
| Dennstaedtiaceae (Hay-Scented Fern Family) | Native  
| (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009) |
| plumeria | puamelia | *Plumeria rubra*  
| Apocynaceae Family | Non-Native Central America,  
| Mexico, Caribbean,  
| South America (Dacus 2012) |
| type of shrub | pūkiawe,  
| kānehoa,  
| kawa`u,  
| maiele, maiele,  
| puakeawe,  
| puakiawe,  
| pūkiawe,  
| `a`ali`i mahu | *Styphelia tameiameiae*  
| (Ericaceae Family) | Native  
| (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009) |
| native spreading shrub,  
| Hawaiian hawthorne | `ūlei, eluehe,  
| u`ulei | *Osteomeles anthyllidifolia*  
| Rosaceae (Rose Family) | Native  
| (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009) |
| kapa shrub | wauke mālolo | *Broussonetia papyrifera*  
| Moraceae (Mulberry Family) | Non-Native Asia; 1000 (Stone et al. 1992:143) |
| ti | kī; lā`ī | *Cordyline fruticose*  
| (Asparagaceae Family) | Non-Native Polynesian Introduction  
<p>| (Kinsey 2019) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Name in Hawaiian</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Origin/Introduction Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>algaroba tree</td>
<td>kiawe</td>
<td><em>Prosopis pallida</em></td>
<td>Non-Native South America; first recorded in Hawaiʻi in 1828 (Stone et al. 1992:139)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cornflower; bachelor’s buttons</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Centaurea cyanus</em></td>
<td>Non-Native Europe (Ogden 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bozu</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Gomphrena globosa</em></td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; introduced as an ornamental plant in 1929 (Stone et al. 1992:126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigar flower</td>
<td>kīkā</td>
<td><em>Cuphea ignea</em></td>
<td>North America; 1915 (Stone et al. 1992:142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>star jasmine</td>
<td>pikake hōkū</td>
<td><em>Jasminum multiflorum</em></td>
<td>Non-Native (Smith 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>croton</td>
<td>lau kalakoa</td>
<td><em>Codiaeum variegatum</em></td>
<td>Non-Native Indonesia, Australia, Fiji (Taylor 1999) Imported by Donald MacIntyre for Damon Gardens (Hodge 1971:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardenia</td>
<td>tiare</td>
<td><em>Gardenia taitensis</em></td>
<td>Non-Native (Barboza 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mock orange</td>
<td>alaheʻe haole</td>
<td><em>Murraya paniculata</em></td>
<td>Non-Native India, Philippines (McDonald 1978:167)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hibiscus</td>
<td>aloalo puaaloalo</td>
<td><em>Hibiscus arnottianus</em></td>
<td>Native (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese violet</td>
<td>pakalana</td>
<td><em>Telosma cordata</em></td>
<td>Non-Native Smith (1998) India (Dacus 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crownflower</td>
<td>pua kalauna</td>
<td><em>Calotropis gigantia</em></td>
<td>Non-Native (Barboza 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jasmine</td>
<td>pikake</td>
<td><em>Jasminum sambuc</em></td>
<td>Non-Native Saudi Arabia (Dacus 2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. (Continued) Names of Plants in English, Hawaiian, and Binomial Nomenclature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Plant</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Hawaiian Name</th>
<th>Binomial Name</th>
<th>Origin and Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dendrobiium orchid</td>
<td><em>Dendrobiium</em> (Orchidaceae Family)</td>
<td>`okika honohono</td>
<td><em>Dendrobiium anosmum</em> (Orchidaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America, Malaysia, Australia, Pacific Islands; late 1800s –1930s (McDonald 1978:169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epidendrum orchid</td>
<td><em>Epidendrum</em> (Orchidaceae Family)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1940 (Stone et al. 1990:119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job’s tears</td>
<td><em>Coix lachryma-jobi</em> (Poaceae Family)</td>
<td>pū<code>ohe</code>ohe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native Asia; 1895 (Stone et al. 1992:120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>false koa</td>
<td><em>Leucaena leucocephala</em> (Fabaceae Family)</td>
<td>ēkoa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1837 (Stone et al. 1990:139)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ten cent flower</td>
<td><em>Fagraea berteriana</em> (Gentianales Family)</td>
<td>puakenikeni</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native (Barboza 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kāhili ginger Himalayan ginger</td>
<td><em>Hedychium gardnerianum</em> (Zingiberaceae Family)</td>
<td>`awapuhi kāhili</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native Himalaya (Dacus 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carnation</td>
<td><em>Dianthus caryophyllus</em> (Caryophyllaceae Family)</td>
<td>poni mō‘i</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native 1800s (Palk 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydrangea</td>
<td><em>Hydrangea macrophylla</em> (Hydrangeaceae Family)</td>
<td>pōpōhau</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native China (Cook 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue jade</td>
<td><em>Strongylodon macrobotrys</em> (Fabaceae Family)</td>
<td>nukukikiwi uliuli</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native Phillipines (Cook 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red jade</td>
<td><em>Mucuna bennettii</em> (Fabaceae Family)</td>
<td>nukukikiwi <code>ula</code>ula</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Native New Guinea; (Cook 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Plant</td>
<td>English Name</td>
<td>Hawaiian Name</td>
<td>Scientific Name</td>
<td>Location and Year References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple  of Sodom</td>
<td><strong>kīkānia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Solanum capiscoides</strong> (Solanaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1837 (Stone et al. 1992:150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lantana</td>
<td>lākana</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lantana camara</strong> (Verbenaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1858 (Stone et al. 1990:151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marigold</td>
<td>‘ōkole ‘oi’oi</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tagetes minuta</strong> (Asteraceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native South America; 1932 (Stone et al. 1990:131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Leucospermum cordifolium</strong> (Proteaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Africa, Australia; 1890 (Watson and Parvin 1970:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavenly Rose</td>
<td>lokelani</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rosa damascena</strong> (Rosaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Asia Minor; 1800s (State Symbols USA 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Rose</td>
<td>lokelani</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rosa chinesis</strong> (Rosaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Southwest China (Dacus 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuberose</td>
<td>kupaloke</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Polianthes tuberosa</strong> (Asparagales Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1932 (Stone et al. 1992:136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Vanda</strong> (Orchidaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native (Stone et al. 1992:207)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidenhair Fern</td>
<td>‘iwa’iwa  ‘iwa’iwa hāwai  ‘iwa’iwa kahakaha</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Adiantum capillus-veneris</strong> (Pteridaceae Family)</td>
<td>Native (Elliot and Tamashiro 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinnia</td>
<td>pua pihi</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Zinnia palmeri and peruviana</strong> (Asteraceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Tropical America; 1980 and 1909 respectively (Stone et al. 1990:131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vireya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rhododendron javanicium</strong> (Ericaceae Family)</td>
<td>Non-Native Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Adams 1981)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G Images of Lei Styles

The following compilation of images of lei styles are mentioned in the interviews as well as were observed at various events during this project.

Lei Niho Palaoa

A number of lei styles and techniques are modeled below. Randy L. wears his family lei niho palaoa as a lei ʻāʻī. Encircling this lei are three strands of kukui, which are lei kui. On Randy’s hat is a lei pāpale made from shells which have been sewn into lei humupapa. Finally, the keiki is crowned with a kui style lei poʻo made from ʻawapuhi melemele.

Figure 8. 13 June 2018, Randy L. wears his lei niho palaoa (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Making Lei Nīpuʻu

Lei nīpuʻu made from kukui leaves, as taught by Yuen at Hālau LeiManu’s lei making class. After harvesting kukui leaves and sorting them according to size, stems are warmed in the maker’s hand to make them more pliable. Two leaves are stacked on top of each other front-to-back. Their stems are tied around each other to form a knot, through which the stem of the next leaf can be inserted, and the process continues. Each subsequent leaf lengthens the lei. Yuen chooses to use two stems rather than one in order to strengthen the lei.

Figure 9. 7 June 2018, Lei nīpuʻu made from kukui (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Wearing Lei Poʻo Nīpuʻu

Lei nīpuʻu can be worn in a variety of styles. Two haumāna at Hālau LeiManu wear lei poʻo they have made from their lei nīpuʻu.

Figure 10. 7 June 2018, Haumāna wearing lei nīpuʻu (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Nīpuʻu as Kūpeʻe

Lei nīpuʻu made from kukui can be fashioned into kūpeʻe, worn on the wrists or ankles.

Figure 11. 14 June 2018, Lei nīpuʻu kukui (Photo by Schuler)
Making Lei Lāʻī Hilo

Yuen instructs visitors gathered for a cultural class at the Maunakea Visitor Information Station how to make lei lāʻī hilo. She suggests two people can contribute: one to maintain the tension, the other to twist the double helix. This lei is made from ti leaves that have been heated to wilt the leaf so it does not crack in twisting. This can be done by freezing, ironing, microwaving, or using a dryer.

Figure 12. 12 June 2018, Lei lāʻī hilo as taught by Yuen (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Hulu Humupapa

An antique lei hulu humupapa made from peacock feathers. Feathers are sewn to a flat surface (the papa). They are arranged in a scale-like pattern.

Figure 13. 9 June 2018, Antique lei hulu humupapa (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Kukui

At the Merrie Monarch Royal Parade in Hilo, this pāʻū rider represents the island of Molokaʻi. Green is the official color of Molokaʻi; kukuī is the official lei. This pāʻū rider wears a lei poʻo and several layered lei ʻāʻī made with kukui. Even her horse wears a lei.

Figure 14. 7 April 2018, A pāʻū rider at the Merrie Monarch Royal Parade in Hilo (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei ʻAwapuhi Melemele

Lei ʻawapuhi melemele as taught by Randy L. at the Volcano Arts Center. This style is lei kui; the needle is visible in the lower left corner. Blossoms are prepared and strung on a single strand. Instructions for this lei can be found in Randy L.’s interview in Appendix E.

Figure 15. 13 July 2018, Lei ʻawapuhi melemele (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Haku

Yuen demonstrates how to haku a lei poʻo from ‘iwa‘iwa and kupukupu harvested from her garden.

Figure 16. 6 June 2018, Yuen demonstrates how haku a lei poʻo in the hili style using ‘iwa‘iwa and kupukupu. (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Poʻo

Schuler wearing a lei poʻo made by Yuen fashioned from ‘iwa‘iwa and kupukupu.

Figure 17. 10 April 2018, Wearing Yuen’s lei po‘o (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Making Lei Hala

Bright hala keys are fashioned into lei. Hala means “to pass” or “to pass away.”

Figure 18. Hala keys (Courtesy of Keʻala Martins 2019)
**Lei Hala**

Hala keys are fashioned into strands of lei kui pololei.

Figure 19. Lei hala. (Courtesy of Keʻala Martins 2019)
Making Lei Kā Wili

A community member from Hilo Lei Day demonstrates how to make lei kā wili using ornamental hibiscus. She prepares the hibiscus by pounding it with a pōhaku (rock) until the ʻili pulls away from the iwi.

Figure 20. 1 May 2018, Making lei kā wili. (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Kā Wili

This lei kā wili is made from hibiscus. The lei is worn open, draped over the shoulders.

Figure 21. 1 May 2018, Lei kā wili hibiscus and kauna‘ao pehu. (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei Po‘o with Song of India

This lei po‘o was made by Kāhili Hahn with Song of India, pink ti, ferns, and red anthuriums. She used raffia to bind everything together into a ti leaf spine base.

Figure 22. 3 May 2018, A lei po‘o made by Kāhili Hahn (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Lei from the Region of Micronesia

A style of white ginger lei from the region of Micronesia is draped over the basket handle.

Figure 23. Lei from the region of Micronesia (Photo by Schuler 2017)
Lei Puakenikeni

Randy L. sells lei puakenikeni at the Hilo Farmers’ Market. This lei is tied with a ti leaf pu‘u.

Figure 24. September 2018, Lei puakenikeni (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Wearing Lei Puakenikeni

Susan (center) is a member of Hālau LeiManu. She is wearing a lei puakenikeni made by Randy L. (left).

Figure 25. September 2018, Wearing lei puakenikeni (Photo by Schuler 2018)
Appendix H Glossary of ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Terms

The following terms are organized according to Hawaiian alphabetical order. Unless specified, all definitions are from Pūku‘i and Elbert (1986).

ahupua‘a  land division, usually extending uplands to the sea
akua  God, goddess, spirit, ghost, image, idol, divine, supernatural
alaka‘i  to lead, guide, direct; leader, guide, conductor, head, director
ali‘i  chief, chiefess, ruler, monarch, peer, noble, aristocrat, king, queen
ali‘i wāhine  chiefess, queen
aloha  love, affection, compassion, mercy, sentiment, kindness, greetings, regards
anana  a fathom, or the distance between the tips of longest fingers of a man, measured with arms extended on each side
apu  coconut shell cup
Hae Hawai‘i  hibiscus; carnation; lit., Hawaiian Flag, from having red petals striped with white
hālau hula  long house, meeting hour for hula instruction
hale  house, building
Halemaʻumaʻu  name of the pit at Kīlauea Crater, home of Pele
Hāmākua  district on the north-eastern side of Hawai‘i Island (Andrews 1865; Parker 1922)
hānai  foster child, adopted child, to raise, rear, feed, nourish
hao  iron, general name for metal tools
haole  formerly any non-Hawaiian foreigner; a white person, American, Englishman
hapa haole  part white person
haumāna  student, pupil, apprentice, recruit, disciple
heiau  pre-Christian place of worship, temple, shrine
hewa  mistake, fault, error, sin
Hi‘iaka  first part of the names of the twelve younger sisters of the goddess Pele; the youngest and most famous was Hi‘iakaikapoli O Pele
Hōkūle‘a  voyaging canoe launched in 1975 during the Hawaiian Renaissance
holokū  a loose, seamed dress with a yoke and usually with a train; patterned after the Mother Hubbard’s’ of the missionaries
Honoka‘a  town name in Hāmākua, Hawai‘i (Pūkuʻi et al. 1974)
Honomū  land section of Hilo, Hawaiʻi (Parker 1922)
hō‘ike hula  hula performance
ho‘ookaualewa  a technical term meaning to balance something (Hale Kuamoʻo 2019)
ho‘ookaulike  to balance something, can be metaphorical
ho‘okipa  to entertain, to host strangers (Andrews 1865)
ho‘okupu  tax, tribute, offering
huakaʻi  journey, trip, voyage, mission to travel
huaʻōlelo  word (Hale Kuamoʻo 2019)
hukilau  a method of fishing in which a large number of persons drive the fish into a net by means of ropes hung with leaves (Parker 1922)
humuhumum  to sew, of many or continuously
iwi  bone
Kalapana  land section in Puna, Hawaiʻi (Parker 1922)
Kahalulu’u  | land section in North Kona, Hawai’i  
            | (Parker 1922)
Kalaupapa  | flat leaf of land, land section in Ko’olau, Moloka‘i; site of the leper settlement  
            | (Püku‘i et al. 1974)
Kanaka Maoli | full-blooded Hawaiian person (Känaka Maoli, plural)
kāhili  | feather standard, symbol of royalty
Kāne’ohe  | land section in Ko‘olaupoko, O‘ahu  
            | (Parker 1922)
kapa  | tapa, as made from wauke or māmaki bark
Kaua‘i  | name of one of the Hawaiian islands
kapala  | printing, stamping, blot, daub, to stain
kaula  | rope, cord, string, line, strap
kama‘aina  | contemporary term for residents of Hawai‘i; native-born, *lit.*, land child
kaona  | hidden meaning, as in Hawaiian poetry; concealed reference, as to a person, thing, or place; words with double meanings, might bring good or bad fortune
kapu  | taboo, prohibition, special privilege or exemption, forbidden, sacred
kaula  | rope, cord, string, line, strap, thong, lash
kaulana  | famous, celebrated, renowned, well-known
ka‘ao  | legend
keiki  | child, offspring, descendant, progeny, boy, son
Kīlauea  | active volcano on the flank of Mauna Loa, Hawai‘i  
            | (Püku‘i et al. 1974)
kino  | body, person, individual
kinolau  | a body form of a deity
kīpuka  an “island” of land where there may be greenery left surrounded by a lava flow; a clear place in a lava field

Kohala  district in northwest Hawai‘i (Pūku‘i et al. 1974)

kolohe  mischievous, naughty, unethical, rascal, prankster, comic, lecher

Kona  leeward districts on Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, Moloka‘i, Ni‘ihau, and O‘ahu (Pūku‘i et al. 1974)

konohiki  headman of an ahupua‘a land division under the chief

kukui  candle nut tree

kuleana  right, privilege, concern, responsibility, authority

kumu  teacher, source, origin

kumu hula  hula instructor

Kumulipo  origin, genesis of life, mystery; name of the Hawaiian creation chant

kūpe‘e  bracelet, anklet; an edible marine snail (*Nerita polita*); shells used for ornaments

kupuna  grandparent, elder, ancestor (plural: kūpuna)

ku‘u lei makame  my precious lei

lau  leaf, frond, leaflet, greens

leo  voice

lua pele  volcano, crater, volcanic pit

lū‘au  Hawaiian feast, named for the taro tops always served at one

mala‘ai  a taro patch or food garden

Maui  name of one of the Hawaiian islands

mauka  direction toward the mountain; inland

Maunakea  mountain on Hawai‘i Island
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mahalo</td>
<td>thanks, gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makamae</td>
<td>precious, of great value, highly prized, darling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mālama i ka ʻāina</td>
<td>care for the earth</td>
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<tr>
<td>malihini</td>
<td>stranger, foreigner, newcomer, tourist, guest, company</td>
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<tr>
<td>mana</td>
<td>supernatural or divine power, miraculous power; a powerful nation, authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manaʻo</td>
<td>thought, idea, belief, opinion, theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maʻalili</td>
<td>to have cooled down from being hot, as food or anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mele</td>
<td>song, anthem, chant, poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mōʻī</td>
<td>sovereign, ruler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moʻolelo</td>
<td>story, fable, myth, history, tradition, literature, legend, fable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moʻopuna</td>
<td>grandchild, grand-niece or -nephew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moʻos</td>
<td>abbreviation for moʻopuna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muku</td>
<td>a measure of length from fingertips of one hand to the elbow of another arm, when both arms are extended to the side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nui</td>
<td>large in size, plenty, plentiful, great, grand, important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niho</td>
<td>tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oli kāhea</td>
<td>a chant of greeting and welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oli komo</td>
<td>a chant that asks permission to enter, as a hālau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palaoa</td>
<td>sperm whale, ivory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>papa</td>
<td>flat surface; in lei humupapa, the papa is the flat base to stitch upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāpale</td>
<td>hat, head covering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paʻahana</td>
<td>busy, occupied, attached to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pāʻina</td>
<td>party with food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pā‘ina Pani Kau  End of Semester Party
pāʻū  women’s skirt, sarong, hula practice skirt
Pele  volcano goddess; also used to describe lava flow, volcano, eruption; lava rock of any kind
pili  to cling to, stick, adjoin, associate with, close relationship
pilina  association, relationship, union, connection
pola  bowl, cup, mug
pono  goodness, uprightness, correct procedure, appropriate, equity
poʻo  head
pua  flower, blossom
Puna  a district in southeast Hawai‘i Island
pūʻolo  bundle, bag, container, parcel, packet
tūtū; Tūtū  grandparent; grandma or grandpa; affectionate name for grandparent
tūtūkāne  grandpa
wai  water or liquid
Waimanu Valley  one of seven isolated coastal valleys of the north side of Kohala Mountain, in Hāmākua Hawai‘i (Pūku‘i et al. 1974)
Waimea  town on Hawai‘i Island
Waipiʻo  lit., curved water; land section in Hāmākua, Hawai‘i; one of seven isolated coastal valleys on the north side of Kohala Mountain. (Pūku‘i et al. 1974)
wahi  place, location, setting
wahi kapu  sacred place; special or spiritual location
wahi pana  storied place
ʻāina  
land

ʻaumakua  
family or personal gods, deified ancestors who might assume the shapes of animals

ʻauwai  
ditch, canal, small water course

ʻili  
soft bark, skin

ʻohana  
family, relative, kin group

ʻohe  
all kinds of bamboo

ʻohe kapala  
piece of bamboo carved for printing tapa; lit., bamboo stamp

‘ōlapa  
dancer

‘ōlelo  
language, speech, word, quotation, statement, utterance, to speak, to talk

‘ōlelo Hawaiʻi  
Hawaiian Language

ʻuhane  
soul, spirit, ghost

ʻūniki  
graduation exercises, as for hula, lua fighting, or other ancient arts
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