Political Reviews

Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015
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managed to get through its election-year controversies despite two by-elections still possibly in the cards. With the fifty-year sovereignty celebrations now underway, it is likely that further political disruptions will be pushed to the backburner until all celebrations have been completed.

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References


FRENCH POLYNESIA

Politics in French Polynesia during the year under review was dominated by a profound leadership struggle between veteran politician Gaston Flosse, who lost his position as president of the country, and his successor and former son-in-law Edouard Fritch, who successfully freed himself from his former mentor’s overbearing influence. Yet it came at the price of breaking up the solid majority arising from the 2013 election and throwing the country into a new period of political instability.

It all started in July 2014, when the French justice system finally started catching up with Flosse’s various cases of corruption after decades of ineffective handling. On 23 July, the Paris Court of Cassation, a court that examines prior cases for procedural errors, confirmed a previous criminal conviction that Flosse had first appealed, to no avail, and then re-appealed. While the court suspended Flosse’s jail sentence, it confirmed a fine of 125,000 euros (US$138,000) as well as a deprivation of his civil rights. The president was thus legally barred from voting or serving in an elected office for a period of three years (Tt, 23 July 2014).

The substance of the charges was the so-called fictional employment affair, going back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, when various politicians and trade union leaders had been given paid jobs at the presidential office without ever working there, a
scheme of corruption popular among French politicians.

Under normal circumstances, Flosse would immediately have been notified of the final sentence and removed from office. However, his lawyers tried to use any and every means to evade the sentence, first by asking yet another court to reexamine the sentence; second by filing a complaint with the European Human Rights Court (if either court would rule in Flosse’s favor, it would lead to a suspension of his sentence); and finally by petitioning French President François Hollande for a presidential pardon (TI, 23 July 2014). Similarly, Teva Rohfritsch of the small pro-French opposition party A Tia Porinetia (ATP) expressed being “shocked” at what he perceived as a plot by the French government to protect Flosse (RNZI, 6 Aug 2014).

As a matter of procedure, French High Commissioner Lionel Beffre was notified of the sentence and tasked with enforcing it by formally declaring Flosse ineligible and therefore removed from office. However, Beffre first refused to do so, arguing, on shaky legal grounds, that the demand for a presidential pardon had to be heard first. This was interpreted as an indication that Flosse’s protective network was still operational. It was indeed unheard of that a convicted criminal, whose conviction has been confirmed for a third time, could evade his sentence simply by asking for a presidential pardon. The more usual procedure would be that a pardon would be pronounced afterward and might, for instance, lead to an early release from jail or, in Flosse’s case, might reinstate his civil rights earlier than originally intended.

The high commissioner’s stalling tactics scandalized the local opposition. Opposition Union Pour La Démocratie (UPLD) leader and former President Oscar Temaru argued that Beffre’s behavior undermined the rule of law, stating that with this precedent, all convicted criminals could now refuse to accept their sentences by asking Hollande for a presidential pardon (TI, 29 July 2014). Similarly, Teva Rohfritsch of the small pro-French opposition party A Tia Porinetia (ATP) expressed being “shocked” at what he perceived as a plot by the French government to protect Flosse (RNZI, 6 Aug 2014).

While still acting as though the confirmed conviction did not exist, Flosse undertook at least one positive step when he dismissed the controversial former French overseas minister, Brigitte Girardin, from her position as the country’s “special representative in Paris,” admitting that the post was superfluous (TI, 6 Aug 2014)—a fact that had been pointed out numerous times before by the opposition and by independent observers.

Later in August, President Hollande commented on the pardon petition, stating ambiguously that “the decisions of the Judiciary should be applied” (TI, 23 Aug 2014). Beffre interpreted this as a refusal of Flosse’s demand and at last initiated Flosse’s removal from office. On 6 September, the president was thus declared removed by decree of the high commissioner and prohibited from holding any political office for the next three years (DT, 6 Sept 2014).

With Flosse’s party Tahoeraa Huiraatira holding a two-thirds majority in the Assembly of French Polynesia, there were initially no surprises in managing Flosse’s succession. Following Flosse’s directions, his former son-in-law, Assembly Speaker Edouard Fritch, was elected to the
country’s presidency on 12 September (TPM, Oct 2014). Unlike Flosse the year before, Fritch was able to gather an ultra-majority of 46 votes (out of a total of 57 assembly members) since the ATP caucus supported the new president. This seemingly confirmed rumors already spread during the 2013 elections that, despite its opposition rhetoric, ATP was nothing but a “fifth column” of Tahoeraa. Fritch’s new cabinet remained for the most part identical to that of his predecessor, with Nuihau Laurey continuing as vice president. Former cabinet minister and Flosse confidant Marcel Tuihani succeeded Fritch as assembly Speaker (TI, 15 Sept, 16 Sept 2014).

Having thus barely been removed from local politics, Flosse reentered it a few weeks later through the back door when on 26 September the Tahoeraa assembly caucus hired him as “special consultant” and placed a luxury office in the assembly building at his disposal using a legal loophole, since his conviction forbade the holding of an elected office but not a job as an employee of a political institution (TI, 26 Sept 2014). As Flosse apparently continued to exercise significant influence over the government, many people asked the question, reiterated on the October cover of Tahiti-Pacific Magazine next to a picture of Flosse and Fritch, “Who is the real president?” (TPM, Oct 2014).

As a consequence of the confirmed conviction, Flosse also lost his seat in the French senate, which he had held since 1998. This was rather a formality, however, since the term expired at the end of September and Flosse had not planned to run for another term.

The senatorial election of 28 September—which is done indirectly by an electoral college of 714, consisting of the territory’s three French national assembly members, the 57 members of the assembly of French Polynesia, and delegates from all 48 municipal councils—was won as anticipated by the Tahoeraa ticket consisting of Iriti Teura and Vincent Dubois, the latter being another son-in-law of Flosse. Since several Tahoeraa electors had worn their party colors during the vote, which is prohibited under French law, UPLD filed a complaint demanding an annulment of the election results (TPM, Oct 2014).

Senator Richard Tuheiava of UPLD, who had been elected as Flosse’s ticket mate when Tahoeraa and UPLD were allied in 2008, missed being reelected. The pro-independence opposition thus lost an important voice in Paris, as Tuheiava had been a very active advocate of the territory’s decolonization, both nationally and internationally, and it was mainly thanks to his efforts that the country won reinscription as a non-self-governing territory by consensual decision of the United Nations General Assembly in 2013. In various follow-up meetings of the decolonization committee and other UN agencies, Tuheiava had always been present to represent the pro-independence section of the country’s population, often in tandem with ex-President Temaru.

In early July, Tuheiava had first attended the UN Decolonization Committee meeting in New York, where he testified, together with Temaru, in favor of more UN scrutiny over France’s administration of the territory (OTR, 1 July, 2 July 2014); he then represented the territory at a meeting of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear
Non-Proliferation and Disarmament in Switzerland, where he delivered a speech calling for the nuclear powers to take up their responsibilities for the people victimized by their thousands of atomic weapons tests, including France in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1996 (otr, 20 July 2014).

Shortly thereafter, on 25 July, the UN secretary-general released the long-awaited report on the effects of nuclear testing in French Polynesia that had been announced in a previous General Assembly resolution of December 2013. The report was rather a disappointment, as it did not contain any new research but instead only summarized old reports on the topic, including one by the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1998 that is heavily biased toward the then official French position that the tests were “entirely harmless” and a more recent one by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that is generally critical of nuclear weapons and admits heavy health impacts deriving from test explosions (United Nations 2014b). References to the detailed reports produced by French Polynesia government agencies during Temaru’s five presidencies were not included. Despite this disappointment, the fact alone that negative health impacts of nuclear testing are now part of the official UN record pertaining to the territory should be seen as a step in the right direction.

Losing his senate seat did not discourage Tuheitia from continuing his UN decolonization work, as he and Temaru once more went to New York to address the General Assembly’s Fourth Committee in October (otr, 22 Oct 2014). Partly influenced by their testimony, the General Assembly passed another resolution on French Polynesia on 5 December, in which it once more denounced France’s lack of cooperation with UN decolonization agencies—including Paris’s continuing refusal to submit information on the territory as is obligatory under article 73e of the UN Charter—and reaffirmed its call for the French and territorial governments to collaborate with UN agencies in educating the people of the country about their right to self-determination (United Nations 2014a).

Meanwhile, at home, the ongoing UN debate on decolonization and nuclear testing effects was having unforeseen and profound impacts on local politics. Once locked out of the presidency, Gaston Flosse, who as recently as June 2014 had insulted significant sections of the population by ordering the removal of the monument commemorating the nuclear-test victims from a prominent position in a Papeete seafront park, suddenly rediscovered his anticolonialism. Following Hollande’s refusal to grant him a pardon, Flosse first publicly proclaimed that he felt entitled to such a pardon because he had served French national interests by supporting the nuclear-testing program. Then, to protest against the way he was treated, he returned his Legion of Honor medal (the highest order of merit of the French Republic) in an open letter to Hollande, whom he blamed personally for his removal from office (TPM, Oct 2014). From then on, Flosse’s discourse turned increasingly hostile toward the French government, to the point of rhetorically outdoing UPLD.
The release of the UN report, as weak as it was in substance, helped to put the plight of former test workers suffering from radiation-caused illnesses back in the headlines. The so-called Morin Act of 2010 that provides compensation for health damages caused by nuclear testing has been largely ineffective, since only fourteen individuals have as yet received compensation under its terms. A new version of the law that supposedly facilitates compensation claims was passed in 2013 but was only enacted by decree of French Prime Minister Manuel Valls on 15 September 2014, and nuclear-testing victims’ association Moruroa e Tatou spokesperson Roland Oldham stated that he was doubtful whether the new version would be any more effective than its predecessor (TI, 17 Sept 2014).

Meanwhile, Flosse, through his protégé Tuihani, had discovered the nuclear issue as a new warhorse. In mid-October, President Fritch traveled to Paris on his own and met with French government officials to obtain new funds for the permanently bankrupt territorial government without coordinating these efforts with Flosse beforehand (TPM, Nov 2014). Flosse felt bypassed, and the display of good relations with Paris by his successor added insult to injury. By November, tensions among Flosse, Tuihani, and the majority of Tahoeraa assembly members on one hand and Fritch and his cabinet on the other, had reached such heights that Flosse was ready to topple his successor and break up the party.

On 21 November, Tuihani thus introduced a resolution asking France to pay the territory compensation for the environmental damage caused by the tests, in addition to the yearly lease plus interest for the land on which the testing facilities were built, which France had never paid. In total, the resolution asked for 90.4 billion CFP francs (US$900 million). Unrealistic as the demands were in substance, Flosse’s political goal was to introduce a resolution in line with UPLD’s anticolonial rhetoric that would be too tempting for Temaru and his supporters not to vote for, while his own Tahoeraa members would be forced to vote for it out of loyalty. The plan worked; on 27 November the resolution was adopted with a majority composed of 25 Tahoeraa members as well as the entire UPLD caucus, while 11 Tahoeraa members (those loyal to Fritch) and members of ATP voted against. To increase pressure on Paris, Senator Iriti Teura, another Flosse loyalist within Tahoeraa, introduced a written question to the French government that was identical to the assembly resolution. High Commissioner Beffre called the resolution an “unfriendly gesture” toward the French state (TPM, Dec 2014).

Flosse had thus reached his first goal of severely annoying Paris in a spirit of revenge for his dismissal. His second goal—to create a new majority out of his Tahoeraa loyalists and UPLD based on a common anticolonial rhetoric (as he had already done in 2007–2008) in order to topple Fritch—was more difficult to reach, as Temaru was not ready to commit to such an alliance.

In late December, Flosse was offered another opportunity to sideline Fritch when a pay raise for the president came up in the assembly’s finance
committee. In 2013, Flosse had his presidential salary cut in half due to a new French law limiting the salary a senator could receive for local political offices held concurrently. This had the effect of having the president paid only 380,100 CFP francs (about US$3,500) per month, while his cabinet ministers were paid 680,580 CFP francs (about US$6,300). Not being paid a senator’s salary concurrently, Fritch considered this situation unjust. While the Tahoeraa majority in the committee, likely on Flosse’s directives, voted against the pay raise, UPLD refused to vote with them, arguing that Fritch was justified in being paid the same as his ministers (TI, 18 Dec, 19 Dec 2014). The fact that UPLD supported the president against Flosse was the first indication that Flosse’s plan to forge an alliance with UPLD was indeed not working. Barely two months later, the assembly’s permanent committee voted unanimously to adjust the president’s salary as originally planned (TI, 5 Feb 2014).

While at first glance the salary adjustment appears a just cause, it was in fact symptomatic of the country’s political elite living in a luxury world completely disconnected from the common people. Instead of “adjusting” Fritch’s salary to that of his ministers, it would have been far more useful to “adjust” their salaries to the 2013 level of the president’s salary, which is clearly no small amount. Furthermore, the argument that, unlike Flosse before, Fritch had to survive on the “meager” presidential salary alone was also flawed, since Fritch, while not a senator, still concurrently holds a second salaried office as mayor of Pirae and would thus have earned more than enough even if the presidential salary had been kept at the lower level. Lastly, the fact that UPLD, as a supposedly anticolonial party working toward establishing a sovereign country not dependent on French subsidies, evidently supports extravagant elite salaries that the country could never afford if it were independent sheds a bad light on the party’s credibility.

That Flosse was by no means more principled and insisted on austerity in this case only in order to score off Fritch became clear when the ex-president and his partner Pascale Haiti were arrested and detained on 12 December on charges of theft of public goods after being accused of having taken custom-made china and silverware from the presidential palace to their private home (RNZI, 12 Dec 2014). Apparently, since Flosse was unable to ally with Temaru to overthrow Fritch, he could at least humiliate him by blocking his pay raise and leaving him without the luxury presidential dishes and silverware, while symbolically maintaining a “presidential” lifestyle for himself.

For a few months, the situation remained calm, but on 29 January, Tuihani introduced a proposal to amend the organic law of French Polynesia, including an increase in the country government’s prerogatives as well as a passage allowing a nonmember of the assembly to be elected president. This was clearly meant to enable Flosse to regain the presidency while his rights to vote or run for office remained suspended, and it led to severe criticism not only by the opposition parties but also by pro-Fritch members of Tahoeraa (TI, 29 Jan, 30 Jan 2015).
Tensions between Flosse and Fritch further increased when, on 6 February, the French Constitutional Council ruled in favor of the opposition’s complaints from September and declared the senatorial election invalid. As a consequence, Senators Teura and Dubois were removed from office and a by-election was called for May (DT, 6 Feb 2015). Flosse immediately assembled the Tahoeraa steering committee to have Teura and Dubois reconfirmed as senatorial candidates, while Fritch, seeing the upcoming election as a chance to increase his own power, suggested Vice President Laurey and assembly member Lana Tetuanui as candidates. A meeting on 20 February between Flosse and Fritch, who had not personally communicated since September, was held only to put a good face on the matter and did nothing to ease their steadily deteriorating relationship (TI, 20 Feb 2015; TPM, March 2015).

The assembly session of 2 April became another test for the changing political majorities. The assembly voted to accept a convention signed between Fritch and the French government at the end of the previous year, under which the French state would financially contribute to the social solidarity scheme provided by the country government. UPLD voted with ATP and 16 Fritch supporters for the resolution, giving it a strong majority of 35 votes (TI, 2 April 2015). Once again Flosse’s strategy to use UPLD to form an antigovernment majority with his Tahoeraa loyalists had failed.

During the next few weeks, Flosse attempted to strengthen his influence by using a heavy-handed approach toward party discipline. Insisting on a strict application of Tahoeraa’s by-laws, an extraordinary meeting of the steering committee expelled Laurey and Tetuanui from the party because they refused to comply with orders to withdraw from the senatorial race and were thus considered running on an opposing ticket. This was later formally confirmed by the party leadership (TPM, May 2015).

In early May, the split between the two factions of Tahoeraa became finalized. At the senatorial by-election of 3 May, the Laurey-Tetuanui ticket won a clear majority in the first round, as not only electors of the Fritch wing of Tahoeraa but also many ATP and even some UPLD electors voted for them (TI, 3 May 2015).

Strengthened by this clear verdict, Fritch and his supporters formed a new assembly caucus named Tapura Huiraatira (“People’s List”) on 3 May. Fifteen assembly members joined the new group, while twenty-three remained loyal to Tahoeraa. In coordination with the two opposition caucuses, the members of the various assembly committees were newly constituted and filled proportionally (TI, 7 May 2015). Of Flosse’s loyalists, only Assembly Speaker Tuihani was able to hold on to his position, since the Organic Law of French Polynesia provides for the election of a new Speaker in between terms only in the case of the incumbent’s resignation. Of the five parliamentarians representing the country in Paris, only National Assembly member Jonas Tahuaitu remained loyal to Flosse, while, besides the two new senators, the two other National Assembly members, Maina Sage and Jean-Paul Tuaiva, were also supporters of Fritch.
A few days later, the Tahoeraa steering committee expelled all founding members of the new caucus. President Fritch, on the other hand, was a more complicated case because he was last elected deputy leader of the party by a convention in 2014, an election that according to Tahoeraa’s by-laws can only be nullified by another party convention (T1, 12 May 2015). While Flosse repeatedly called on Fritch to resign, he refused to do so.

After a short period of stability of approximately two years, the country thus descended back into a political chaos without clear majorities. Instead of the two-thirds majority stemming from the May 2013 assembly elections, the president now only held a minority of fifteen members. Referring to the constant changes made in the electoral system in order to create stable majorities, to no avail, an observer commented sarcastically that “no matter what the French do to create stability, our politicians manage to turn it into instability” (anonymous, pers comm, 25 June 2015).

With Fritch thus being a president without a majority, it came as little surprise that on 27 May he formed a coalition government with ATP, whose pro-French, anti-Flosse platform is almost identical with his own, and ATP leader Teva Rohfritsch joined the cabinet as minister for economic affairs (T1, 27 May 2015).

The coalition with ATP gave Fritch eight additional assembly members, but with twenty-three members total it is still a minority coalition and would need the support of either UPLD or Flosse’s “rump-Tahoeraa” to pass laws and resolutions. As a reconciliation between Fritch and Flosse seems increasingly unlikely, UPLD has thus become a courted party that tips the scale, forming ad hoc alliances with either the Tapura-ATP government or the opposition Tahoeraa remnant depending on the circumstances. According to a local journalist, UPLD is thus enabled to play a “subtle game of liar’s poker” (T1, 3 July 2015).

While another switch in majorities cannot be ruled out for the near future, Flosse’s plan to woo UPLD with anticolonial rhetoric into a permanent coalition and overthrow Fritch in a no-confidence motion has not worked out so far. Considering the political culture of the country and its dynamics, it appears a far more likely scenario that further Tahoeraa members will cross the floor if offered ministerial portfolios or other offices by Fritch. This already happened in early June, when another Tahoeraa member crossed over to join Tapura, increasing its strength to sixteen (T1, 9 June 2015).

Fritch—who like the other historical Flosse-dissident presidents, Alexandre Léontieff and Gaston Tong Sang, is not as charismatic a leader as either Flosse or Temaru—clearly entered the presidency only by particular circumstances, and whether he will be able to maintain himself in the face of possible intrigues by others is far from sure. Whether Flosse, now 83 years old, will ever regain the presidency remains to be seen, but his longevity, both physically and politically, should not be underestimated, as so far he has returned in full force each and every time the end of his political career seemed imminent.

With the most able political leader a notoriously corrupt figure like Flosse
and with few emerging politicians with leadership qualities yet in sight, French Polynesia finds itself in a deep-seated leadership crisis. This can be observed not only in politics but in other fields as well, such as sports, where one of the saddest failures of leadership has occurred. Fédération Internationale du Football Association (FIFA) official Reynald Temarii, former professional football player and then minister for sports and youth under Flosse in the early 2000s, became one of the few Tahitians ascending to a high-profile international role when he was appointed FIFA vice president a decade ago. However, being a true product of the political system of French Polynesia, as an international sports official Temarii has done nothing but be involved in corruption affairs. In the latest FIFA scandal about the bribes that attended the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, Temarii was once more summoned and interrogated as a major suspect and ended up being suspended from any association football activities for eight years by the FIFA ethics commission (TI, 13 May, 30 May 2015; TPM, June 2015).

Leadership failures also became evident in the virtual inaction of government institutions in the face of the Chikungunya epidemic that ravaged the country during the review period. Imported from Africa via other French overseas territories, the mosquito-borne disease was already affecting over 11,000 people in November (TI, 21 Nov 2014). Efforts to curb the epidemic by eradicating the invasive mosquito species responsible for its spread were done only perfunctorily. By the end of the year, there were more than 130,000 cases (out of an overall population of 270,000 for the entire country) and 14 deaths (PIR, 9 Jan 2015).

The deaths included famed singer Barthélémy Arakino, who passed away on 16 February at the age of 59 from Chikungunya-derived complications (TPM, March 2015). Also among those who joined the ancestors during the review period were veteran pro-independence leader Tetua Mai of Huahine, who died at the age of 76 (TPM, June 2015), as well as Papa Mape of Moorea (age 82) and Coco Elacott of Bora Bora (age 64), two prominent experts of Polynesian tradition and ancestral knowledge, which, unfortunately, is less frequently passed down to younger generations as time goes on (TPM, Dec 2014, Jan 2015).

What exactly the future will hold for the country seems less clear than ever, but the French colonial “motherland” is so crisis affected itself that it appears increasingly unable to contribute to the territory’s economic development. If anything promising can be seen on the horizon in that sense, it will most likely be intensifying economic relations with China. In early June, President Fritch, after having consolidated his power base for the time being, visited various parts of China to negotiate investments in tourism and other industries (TI, 4 June, 6 June 2015).

Meanwhile, two big projects financed with Chinese capital are already underway in the country. The first is the “Tahiti Nui Ocean Foods” complex on Hao Atoll in the Tuamotu Archipelago, a gigantic aquaculture farm to be funded through an investment contract of 150 billion CFP francs (US$1.5 billion) over fifteen
years by Chinese company Tian Rui International Investments, with construction officially inaugurated on 6 May (TPM, June 2015).

Second, Flosse’s last big pet project, a large-scale tourism development also to be funded from China named “Mahana Beach” in Punaauia, is in its planning stages. The envisioned mega-complex of hotels and resorts is meant to imitate that of Waikīkī in Hawai‘i, and the construction design was awarded to the Honolulu-based architectural firm Group 70 International. As it would surpass everything ever built on Tahiti before and include for the first time high-rises and a casino (both currently illegal under local laws), TPM editor Alex Du Prel called it a “pharaonic project” (TPM, Aug 2014). UPLD denounced the project as being too costly as well as discriminatory to the local population, as it is planned to suspend the local minimum wage on the construction site and bar local residents from visiting the casino (TI, 12 Sept 2014). Also, the profitability of the project is still doubtful, since the tourism industry in the country has been generally failing due to cheaper and more efficient competition on the part of other Pacific destinations such as Fiji, the Cook Islands, and Sāmoa, and as a consequence, dozens of hotels have closed in French Polynesia during the past few years.

In any case, the geopolitical reorientation of the Pacific Islands from the colonial and neocolonial West to East Asia and other emerging or reemerging non-Western powers such as India and Russia, as is most visibly articulated by Fiji and its neighbors in the southwestern Pacific, is becoming evident in French Polynesia as well. With its weakened economy, France itself is unlikely to remain an important player in the region. While a few years ago there were unconfirmed rumors about the United States building a military installation on Mangareva in the east of the country (TI, 12 July 2013), a recent move of the Teva I Uta municipality on Tahiti’s south coast to twin itself with the Russian town of Kronstadt appears quite interesting from a geopolitical perspective (TI, 24 June).

LORENZ GONSCOR

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Hawaiian Issues

This year has been a milestone for Native Hawaiians. New voices are emerging in the community, and the debate is no longer whether there will be a Hawaiian nation; the struggle now is over what form it will take. Key events included protests against the construction of new telescopes on Mauna Kea and Haleakalā, several important new publications by Hawaiian authors, and controversial efforts toward nation building and federal recognition.

On day 68 of the ongoing vigil to protect Mauna Kea, Ku’uipo Freitas, a student in the master’s program at Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke’elikōlani (the College of Hawaiian Language) at the University of Hawai‘i–Hilo and one of the young leaders of the vigil, wrote: “There’s a difference between protesting (western perspective) and aloha ‘āina (Hawaiian perspective). We love our ‘āina [land], our language, our culture, our keiki [children] and we will do whatever it takes to protect our future” (Freitas 2015).

No’eau Peralto is a scholar engaged in kuleana-based research and activism in Hāmākua on the island of Hawai‘i, his kulāwi (homeland). “We are the Mauna,” he proclaimed, “and our treatment of it reflects a deeply ingrained notion of the ways in which we now view and treat ourselves and each other. In neglecting our kuleana to màlama this ‘āina [our responsibility to care for this land], we ultimately neglect our kuleana to the future generations of our lāhui [our nation]” (Peralto 2014, 241).

Ku’uipo and No’eau are but two of the next generation of Native Hawaiians raised in aloha ‘āina and well schooled in contemporary politics and traditional values. They arise out of a legacy of Native Hawaiian activism that was the Hawaiian cultural and political renaissance of the latter half of the twentieth century. These children and grandchildren of the first aloha ‘āina warriors are showing up at rallies for Hawaiian independence, making impassioned pleas to the trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to stand with them in the struggle to regain control of Hawaiian lands, and, under the watchful eye of their kūpuna (elders), these young people are leading the movement to prevent construction of a thirty-meter telescope on Mauna Kea as well as the Daniel K Inouye Solar Telescope on Haleakalā. This review focuses on the resistance on Mauna Kea, but it must be noted that similar arguments are being made on both mountains concerning state stewardship of resources. (For more on the Haleakalā telescope project, see Associated Press 2015; Cocke 2013).

Much of the work of Native Hawaiian activism over the past sixty-five years is documented in A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, Hussey, and Wright 2014). This book is one of a number of groundbreaking works