

Introduction

Craig Howes

Jon Osorio and I had the idea for the first *Value of Hawai'i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* on October 29, 2009, while jogging and talking in Mānoa. I had arrived twenty-nine years before as a young assistant professor of English who knew nothing about where I now lived. Over the years I became part of Hawai'i's literary and theatre scenes, its young adult library programs, and eventually the university's Center for Biographical Research, which I still direct. Since its mission includes telling the stories of Hawai'i's people, I had also become a co-producer of the *Biography Hawai'i* television documentary series, and the principal scholar for several Living History programs, which meant identifying and getting the best informed people involved in public projects. Over time, my belief in the power of Hawai'i's stories and testimonies, and my wish to contribute what I could to creating a future shaped by such visions, steadily grew. In the process, I came to know many interesting and inspiring people. And Jon knew many more.

Published in 2010, the first volume had its contributors identify the origins of the troubled state of affairs at that time, and offer points of departure for a Hawai'i-wide discussion on the future. We organized over sixty events after the book appeared to have those discussions. Four years later, *The Value of Hawai'i 2: Ancestral Roots, Oceanic Visions* continued the conversation, gathering fresh voices together to share their inspiring work and ideas for creating waiwai—value—for ourselves, and coming generations. Among those voices were the editors, Aiko Yamashiro and Noelani Goodyear Ka'ōpua, who urged all of us to turn our gaze “to the watery world of Oceania” and “to commit truly to imagine and practice less fearful or judgmental ways of being together.” They too made sure that many conversations inspired by their volume's contents took place.

On April 3, 2020, Jon and I were wearing masks, walking in the lower campus parking structure of a locked-down University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. When Jon said it was time for a third *Value of Hawai'i*, my immediate though unspoken response was that this was a terrible idea. We then tried to figure out how we might do it.

We decided two things that morning. The collection had to be online and free, and we needed Aiko Yamashiro and Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua to join us as co-editors. In his invitation email to them, Jon described the project as “an update of the *Value of Hawai'i* series in which the authors would write shorter assessments of where we are in this new decade and in the throes of the virus.” As we Zoomed

over the next few weeks, we thought about who we wanted to hear—former contributors to the first two volumes, thinkers and doers, new and different voices. Hundreds came to mind. We also sought out poets, who have their own compelling ways of offering and celebrating value, and whose contributions appear at key points throughout the collection. Though this volume has twenty more contributors than either of the first two, we still didn’t have enough space for all the people we wanted to ask.

Guidelines went out on June 1. We offered our writers a number of possible options and points of departure. Look to the future. Make it personal. Think about “value” or “waiwai”—what do we need, respect, cherish? Tell stories. Write for everybody. And make sure it is about Hawai‘i. Because we wanted the pieces to survey an issue and create sparks rather than provide comprehensive coverage, 1,500 words was the limit—though we doubled it for a few specific jointly-written pieces. This proved a challenge. People had so much they wanted to say! But the length also provided focus. Aiko’s concluding piece for this volume suggests how intense and productive the conversations between editors and writers could be.

Production matters were also being resolved. After a meeting with Interim Director Joel Cosseboom, we could tell our contributors that the University of Hawai‘i Press would publish the collection, making it freely available locally and internationally on a range of online platforms. At the Center for Biographical Research, Managing Editor Paige Rasmussen took charge of the copyediting, proofreading, and interior design. By the first week of September, the collection was complete—five months from the idea to what you are now reading.

With regard to the editing, although we aimed for internal consistency in the individual essays, we left some latitude overall. For example, some people call the mauna so important to so many essays “Mauna Kea.” For others it is “Maunakea,” and for still others, “Mauna a Wākea.” Some writers want “Moloka‘i,” others insist on “Molokai.” We’ve respected their wishes.

As for the Hawaiian language, we are following common contemporary editorial practice. Except for emphasis, we do not italicize it—‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is not foreign to this place. We also let the writers decide how much or how little they would translate Hawaiian words, phrases, and paragraphs—not translating can also make a point.

Though the volume came together quickly, events unfolded even faster. Because some essays refer to the number of infections and deaths due to COVID-19, one of our grimmer editorial tasks was updating those numbers right before going to press. As you read this now, those numbers are higher. Other essays should be read as snapshots of when they were composed—June of 2020. Their subjects guaranteed they could not avoid seeming dated in certain ways. Yet they still channel the energy of change, courage, and clarity that can take us into a better future.

In one of our May editorial meetings, Noelani suggested “Hulihia” should be the volume’s theme. We embraced the idea immediately, and the beautiful and powerful poem by Ku‘ulani Muise and Noelani’s own meditation on Kū‘okoa that open this collection both demonstrate why “Hulihia” is such an apt term for its contents.

We are also profoundly grateful for the striking and perfect cover image. The creation of Kapili‘ula Naehu-Ramos, “Liko Honua” captures the feeling of extreme, profound, destructive, and creative turning and change.

The green darkening toward blue at the edges invokes the ocean always surrounding us, extending for thousands of miles in every direction.

Water. Moana. Kai.

The white swirling where the green meets the dark yet glowing central shape is steam, rising in billows from where the lava meets the sea. Fire becomes earth, water becomes air. But the swirling also represents the waves, always approaching and retreating from the shore, hurling themselves into the air, then falling.

‘Ehukai.

The central red and black form’s surface is pebbled, each piece a different size and shape. But pōhaku by pōhaku, they come together into a bud. A sparkling raindrop. A tear. A mosaic.

And also a paradox. Is the surface being broken into pieces by the fierce glowing heat and liquid fire surging up from below, or are the fragments forming, turning dark as the lava cools, preparing to gather into ‘āina? Or both?

Hulihia.

At the center, lying still in a rising yellow aura, is a fetus, a keiki—and not just of a person, but of all living things. Hāloa. Then Hāloa.

The future, certainly. A womb, certainly. But also a kīpuka—a place where life is protected from harm during necessary times of convulsion, devastation, and transformation. Life waiting to emerge, to return, to flourish.

‘Āina momona.

A settler to these islands, I had to learn these things. They are valuable to me, and affect how I live here. But they are not mine, and much of what pulses on the cover remains invisible to me.

Kaona.

I can say with confidence, however, that all the essays in this collection respond to this time of hulihia. Here you will find people turning to face threats to our health, safety, and sense of right. People turning to new possibilities—different economic models, changed relations to ‘āina, solutions to problems that have plagued Hawai‘i for generations. People are turning to each other, knowing that only sharing the burdens will make lifting them possible. And we are all turning to the future, knowing that what is already truly valuable here—recognized, nurtured, preserved, and generously bestowed by the first and current ki‘ai—will be essential

to our efforts to improve the quality of our lives, and to save the lives of those for whom we will be the ancestors.

A proud 2020 graduate of Molokai High, cover artist Kapili'ula Naehu-Ramos is eighteen years old. She offers to us her vision of Hawai'i's waiwai, and its future.

Hulihia. The turning.

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