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The Last *Kapu*: Limits in the Modern Hawaiian Practice of Tolerance

Abstract: Why study the concept of tolerance in Modern Hawaii? It is my thesis that once we accept the aloha spirit as equivalent to the definitions of tolerance, several anthropological insights are possible:

- We realize that for Hawaiians the present depends upon the values from the past.
- We discover that a discrepancy exists between past and present views of aloha.
- We discover that the meaning or value of aloha differs in contemporary society and is influenced by the sovereignty movement.
- We learn that Hawaiians view time differently: "The Future is in the Past."
- To resolve conflict in values, we observe that Hawaiians can either change the past to meet the requirements of the present or change the present to correspond to the tradition of the past.
- We recognize that modern Hawaiians highly value ethnic diversity. The social contract that unites these disparate groups is the "historical past" that provides a Hawaiian identity.
- The bond between past and present always exists and is sacred, i.e., kapu. What is not tolerated and therefore "forbidden" is ignorance, inaccurate revision, malicious criticism, or disrespect of the ancient past.

Keywords: aloha, balance, harmony, Hawaii, kapu, tolerance

Ostatnie *kapu*: granice we współczesnej hawajskiej praktyce tolerancji

Streszczenie: Dlaczego badać koncepcję tolerancji na współczesnych Hawajach? Moja teza jest następująca: jeśli przyjmiemy, że duch aloha jest równoważny definicjom tolerancji, wówczas możliwe stają się pewne ważne intuicje antropologiczne:

- Uświadamiamy sobie, że dla Hawajczyków teraźniejszość zależy od wartości zakorzenionych w przeszłości.
- Odkrywamy, że istnieje rozbieżność między dawnymi a współczesnymi ujęciami aloha.
- Odkrywamy, że znaczenie i wartość aloha różnią się we współczesnym społeczeństwie i są kształtowane przez ruch na rzecz suwerenności.
- Dowiadujemy się, że Hawajczycy inaczej postrzegają czas: „Przyszłość znajduje się w przeszłości".
- W obliczu konfliktu wartości zauważamy, że Hawajczycy mogą albo zmienić przeszłość,

aby odpowiadała wymogom teraźniejszości, albo zmienić teraźniejszość, aby była zgodna z tradycją przeszłości.
- Dostrzegamy, że współcześni Hawajczycy wysoko cenią różnorodność etniczną. Kontraktem społecznym, który jednoczy te różnorodne grupy, jest „historyczna przeszłość" stanowiąca podstawę hawajskiej tożsamości.
- Więź między przeszłością a teraźniejszością zawsze istnieje i ma charakter sakralny, czyli kapu. Tym, czego się nie toleruje, a więc co jest „zakazane", jest ignorancja, nieprecyzyjna reinterpretacja, złośliwa krytyka lub brak szacunku wobec starożytnej przeszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: aloha, równowaga, zgodność, Hawaje, kapu, tolerancja

1. Introduction to the Issues of Hawaiian Tolerance

To what extent do modern Hawaiians practice tolerance and accept the concept? It is curious that in all the existing Hawaiian dictionaries there is no translation of the noun "tolerance." In the Mary Kawena Pukui Hawaiian Dictionary the adjective "tolerant" does include an example of its usage in a Hawaiian sentence. In the same dictionary the verb "tolerate" only contains the instruction to "See endure." (Pukui 1986, 547.)

Synonyms for "tolerance" include "endurance," "liberalness," "respectfulness," "openness," "acceptance," "impartiality," and "lovingness." Hawaiians use synonyms such as *ho'okipa*[1] (hospitality), *lokahi* (unity, harmony), and *kuleana* (responsibility) - each of which are commonly acknowledged to describe modern Hawaiians who in the vernacular possess an "*aloha spirit*." The term "*aloha"* is perhaps the most used and can be understood in myriad ways: "love," "affection," "compassion," "mercy," "sympathy," "kindness", etc. - as well as a greeting.

Hawaiian culture and peoples are at least 1,000 years old and most likely many years longer. Even though isolated from foreign influences for most of its history, Hawaiian beliefs and behaviors must have evolved over time. Today "ancient" Hawaiian culture is viewed as that encountered during the first official European contact by Captain James Cook in 1778. Since no system of writing was ever developed and archival records do not exist before contact, knowledge of older myths, beliefs, or customs are based on *mo'olelo* (legendary oral accounts) gathered and recorded after European contact.

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[1] Given the audience of this article is international, I decided to italicize all Hawaiian words, even the common ones such as aloha and kapu. Words like aloha, lei, hula, etc. are now also English words. Nevertheless, the goal is to highlight Hawaiian vocabulary and concepts. Brackets [] or parentheses () are periodically used to provide translation.
The representation of the Hawaiian language in written form continually improves. Older publications may not use diacritical marks, such ‘*okina* (glottal stop) or *kahakō* (vowel lengthening) where newer ones do. I have included most where I could, but for more common words like ‘Hawai'i' I still maintained the older spelling ‘Hawaii' for consistency.

Hawaiian society and culture underwent cataclysmic changes during the nineteenth century, starting, in order, with the military unification of the eight Islands by King Kamehameha, the lifting of the *ai'kapu* (prohibition of women eating with men) by Kamehameha's successor son that resulted in a revision of ancient sacred practices, the subsequent arrival and introduction of Christianity, an increase of international trade, constant threats of European and American colonization, creation of a new constitution, the introduction of a new legal system - including the apportionment of land ownership known as the "*Great Mahele*," waves of new immigration from various Asian and European countries in order to support the growing sugar industry and finally, the eventual annexation of the territory to the United States. But even more dramatic was the depopulation of the Hawaiian peoples due to disease introduced by the European contact. By the end of the nineteenth century, it is estimated that possibly up to 90% of the original population succumbed to various diseases.

In one sense, whatever "Hawaiian" means in modern times, it is a miracle any remnant of the ancient Hawaiian culture exists. The teaching of the original Hawaiian language was discontinued in the education system introduced by the United States in the early twentieth century and its usage discouraged in society. Immersion in the Hawaiian language in elementary schools only resumed in 1987 as English had previously provided an introduction to the world both inside as well as outside of the archipelago (Dudley 2003, 101-2).

For those who wish to preserve the "Hawaiian culture," who extol its merits, or who are proud of its heritage, this can present a challenge. On the one hand, we know that an ancient culture and an independent society existed. On the other hand, modern Hawaiian culture differs greatly from many of those ancient elements - even though it is based on them. The ancient ways are continually re-interpreted by modern Hawaiians who adopt some of the old customs and ignore others. Ultimately, if Hawaiians wish to preserve their culture or achieve sovereignty, these ancient traditions paradoxically need to be modernized to consciously form a new Hawaiian culture.

It is my thesis that "tolerance" as defined and practiced by modern Hawaiians differs from the practices of the ancient Hawaiians. This difference exhibits itself in many ways and may even result in contradiction, particularly when modern practices are based on ancient cultural views. Regardless of the differences, one element that remains the same between the old and new is the notion of *kapu*, which is defined as "sacred" and "subject to prohibition," often translated as "taboo" in English and "tabu" in Polish.

I wish to demonstrate that even though modern Hawaiians may be one of the most tolerant people who practice "*aloha spirit*" in the world, this does not mean their tolerance is without limit. In fact, just as in ancient times, modern Hawaiians continue to practice a form of *kapu* - but in a very specific way. To understand this modern *kapu*, we will focus on the issue of historical past and how the worldviews of Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians contrast.

2. The Bifurcation and Unification of Ancient versus Modern Hawaiian Culture

What is "ancient Hawaiian culture"? This can be defined as what existed on the Hawaiian Islands prior to European contact in 1778, including demographic composition, social structure, religion, language, agriculture, law, and art. What is "modern Hawaiian culture"? Each of these elements have changed dramatically - for better or worse - so consequently what is "Hawaiian" now may not be what was "Hawaiian" before 1778.

Naturally, this observation can be made about most cultures: what is believed and practiced today is not the same as that from 200 years ago. If one is to practice historical anthropology, then continuity from the past should be recognized.

> "Anthropologists rise from the abstract structure to the explication of the concrete event. Historians devalue the unique event in favor of underlying recurrent structures. And also paradoxically, anthropologists are as often diachronic in outlook as historians nowadays are synchronic. Nor is the issue, or this essay, nearly about the value of collaboration. The problem now is to explode the concept of history by the anthropological experience of culture" (Sahlins 1985, 71).

This recognition of structure suggests today's beliefs and practices could (and should) be understood through history.

What makes the study of Hawaiian culture fascinating is **not** the fact that an anthropological or historical method, i.e., a "scientific method," dictates an approach to the past. What makes Hawaiian culture distinctive is that the affinity to the past is encompassed within the natives' own view of their culture. In other words, contemporary "Hawaiians" regard their ancient history as a defining component of their own present culture. The strength of this belief, for example, is reflected in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement that arose in the 1970's and remains a political force in Hawaiian society to this day.

The fundamental belief of the sovereignty movement is that "Native Hawaiians" deserve their own nation and should disassociate themselves from American colonial rule - even after statehood. This is the political goal. It is also the empathetic view of many contemporary Hawaiians - even if sovereignty is deemed unfeasible. This belief is based on a native interpretation of history after first European contact that emphasizes the gradual acquisition of the islands by foreign immigrants.

The anthropological significance of the sovereignty movement is, however, not political. It is my thesis that the meaning of the sovereignty movement - and the Hawaiian cultural renaissance in general - comes from the fact that "Hawaiian nationhood" is based on the values and customs of the ancient past:

> "The solution to the Hawaiians' problems lies in their return to the land and in their reclaiming and developing their traditions and their lifestyle" (Dudley 2003, 89).

To return to the question what is "modern Hawaiian culture," the definition of "Hawaiian" has become more than a study in anti-colonialism. The meaning of "Hawaiian" is one where the extensive ethnic diversity of the state has become united in the respect and reverence of traditional values and customs, i.e., the ancient past. The ancient Hawaiian term for respect, reverence, sacredness, and appropriate behavior is commonly referred to as *kapu*.

3. The Meaning of the Concept of Tolerance Today and Yesterday

From the anthropological view, the concept of "tolerance" presents a special challenge because its meaning differs between ancient and modern times. It is my assertion that *aloha* represents the best synonym for tolerance, given that its large number of dictionary meanings encompass most of the synonyms of tolerance cited above. It is also today's most well-known "Hawaiian trait." Although the spirit of *aloha* may be most equivalent to tolerance, it is, however, still subject to many interpretations.

The most well-known references to modern *aloha* spirit come from travel guides. One typical description includes the following:

> "*Aloha*. It's a word that does not translate easily, yet it defines and encompasses a race of people. In Hawaii, it's a common word, used in greeting and farewell. Taken to its roots, *alo* means "in the presence of "and *ha* means "the breath of life," with its implications of divine gift.
>
> Egged on by well-meaning tour guides, tourists delight in drawing out the word "A-looooooo-HA." They are seldom told that *aloha* is not just another way saying hello. When you say "*Aloha*" to someone you are acknowledging that the two of you are standing in **the presence of God**[2], and so all your words, thoughts, and deeds should be virtuous.
>
> It is a tender word that has the power to shape a life. It is **the single word that sets Hawaii apart from any place else in the world**, enabling **many races to come together** in one place, and live peaceably side by side, not just in tolerance, but in muted appreciation and celebration…
>
> The *aloha spirit*, while carefully nurtured by the tourism industry because it works, comes naturally to most people. It is layered over every transaction and relationship like the mist that clings to the mountains bearing life-giving water. It **binds the whole diverse Hawaii** into one brilliant mosaic of life" (Ariyoshi 2003, 10-14).

[2] All bolding in this study is for emphasis and is mine alone.

Elements within this description of *aloha* are often repeated in contemporary popular literature. Regardless, it should be noted these traits of *aloha* did not exist in the past. For one, ancient Hawaii, as discovered by Captain James Cook, did not include "many races" - only the Polynesian one. Nor did ancient Hawaii have a "God" - rather many gods, who were revered in a very different manner. Finally, ancient Hawaii was not bound by an "*aloha spirit*," but rather *kapu* that defined sacredness and a well-recognized set of rules of prohibited behavior. The concept of *aloha* that existed pre-European contact very likely had other meanings.

Historically speaking, one could argue that ancient Hawaiians before European contact were actually intolerant. If we define tolerance to mean "a fair, respectful, and permissive attitude or policy toward people whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own or from those of the majority" or one of "freedom from bigotry and from an insistence on conformity" (dictionary.com), then we would need to reconcile these definitions with the well-accepted sacredness of the *kapu* - and that breaking such a *kapu* normally resulted in severe punishment, including death. The custom of *kapu* was not debated or questioned by Hawaiians. Could this be the reason why Hawaiian dictionaries do not have a distinct term for the word "tolerance"?

It has been argued that tolerance and "*aloha spirit*" - at least as we understand it today - was not prominent in ancient Hawaii. Modern historians such as Daws have suggested that *aloha* as a concept was never a part of Hawaii's history (Daws 1974, 394). Or course, it was always used as a greeting or farewell.

Kamakau, perhaps the greatest Hawaiian historian, who wrote in the nineteenth century and documented ancient times from the rule of Chief Umi starting in the fifteenth century, only once mentions the word "*aloha*" in a chant for the Hamakua district of Maui. Associated with this word is kinship love:

Quote	**Translation**
Aloha, Aloha	Affectionate longing, affectionate longing
Aloha wale o'u maku - a la - e o'u makua	Affection for my (foster) parents, my parents
Aloha wale o'u makua	Affection for my parents
Mai na 'aina Hamakua	Who belong to Hamakua
He mau 'aina Hamakua elua	The two districts of Hamakua

(Kamakau 1992, 112-113).

If one were to presume the meaning of *aloha* in ancient times, the "love" it purports to espouse would have been more applicable to kinship relationships rather than a general societal one:

> "In ancient Hawaii *aloha* probably referred to "love for kin" given "our understanding of the natural affinity that human beings have for their offspring and our knowledge of the kinship structure in Polynesia" (Kanahele 1992, 470).

Aloha may have also described the special hierarchical relationship the people had with their chief:

> "… the unique beauty of the chief institutes a relation of attraction and coherence that is not only centered or hierarchical, but makes the subordination of those who behold it an act of love. The name of the political relationship in Hawaii is *aloha*. *Aloha*, 'love', is the people's consciousness of their servitude. It is how they describe their obligations and justify their loyalties to the chief. Reciprocally, the chief should have *aloha* for his people" (Sahlins 1987, 17).

In addition, there were multiple usages of *aloha*, such as "*aloha alii*" (royal love described above), "*aloha akua*" (love of god), "*aloha makua*" (love for elders), "*aloha 'aina*" (love of land), etc.

Perhaps the more important question about *aloha* in ancient times concerns the significance of its value in society in relation to all other values. Given *lokahi* (balance) of man, gods, and nature, *kuleana* (responsibility) of people to maintain this balance, and the prevalence of *kapu*, *aloha* was not necessarily a central value. Other values, such as "*kupa'a*" (loyalty), may have been more critical:

> "One of the first questions we asked concerning the extent to which *aloha* might have been a central value in traditional Hawaiian society… *Aloha* is only one of those values, among many, although it is an important one… We could probably make an equally good case, or an even stronger one, for several values other than *aloha* as being central in Hawaiian society before 1778. For example, loyalty, or *kupa'a*, unswerving allegiance to a chief or family, was a central value" (Kanahele 1992, 478-479).

Nevertheless, there are modern Hawaiians who believe that *aloha* was, in fact, the most significant of all ancient Hawaiian values. If, in fact, there is a disconnect between the value of ancient *aloha* and modern *aloha*, then the modern Hawaiian who wishes to practice *aloha* and simultaneously honor the past, might feel conflicted. **There exist two resolutions of this conflict: either reinterpret the past or negate *aloha's* value in contemporary society**.

Since the actual meaning of *aloha* in the past has not yet been resolved, and given the importance of the past to validate today's customs, the tendency to "rewrite" the past can be strong. In fact, if a value such as *aloha* is assumed to be central to society today, it might be assumed it was central always, which would consequently validate the practice today. The validation, therefore, becomes circular. Reference to the past, in whatever form the past may have taken, becomes common practice, even when evidence to support a custom is lacking. I argue this has become a common practice, because the past itself is *kapu* and consequently immune to criticism as well as partially inscrutable.

An example of assumed history happened in the 1920's:

> "One of the first questions we asked concerned the extent to which *aloha* might have been a central value in traditional Hawaiian society. Some modern Hawaiians believe that it was the most important of all ancient Hawaiian values. For example, the Reverend Akaiko Akana, for many years the pastor of Kawaiaha'o Church until his death in 1932, stated '*Aloha*, the very kernel of the Hawaiian ethics, the very core of Hawaiian life, unsurpassed by anything of modern ethics, was the dominating law which regulated the domestic and civil conduct of old Hawaii.' Unfortunately, neither he nor others who believe that idea have provided satisfactory support for it based on historical data and observations. **Instead, they seem to have reasoned that, since modern Hawaiians are so well known for their *aloha spirit* they must have inherited it from their *kupuna* [elders] who, therefore, must have considered it very important**" (Kanahele 1992, 478-479).

The alternative to this potentially circular validation is to criticize or ignore the concept and practice of *aloha* in today's society. Criticism of its practice sometimes comes from the point of view of the sovereignty movement. The primary criticism is usually based on the tourism industry:

> "Tour guides are part of the machinery of tourism that has come to define Hawaii. Residents and visitors alike are inundated with the notion of Hawaii's '*aloha spirit'*, which supposedly makes Hawaii paradise on earth. Hawaii's economy revolves around tourism and the tropical image that beckons so many… The word *a'ole* ['no, never, no'] is a demand that has not been equally heard, although it too has been uttered since the earliest overreaching and staying in this place [Hawaii]" (Aikau 2019, 1.10).

Many well-known historians sympathetic to the native Hawaiian point of view have come to a similar conclusion:

> "The Hawaii Visitors Bureau, trying to establish what was so attractive about the islands, concluded that the word '*aloha'* was crucial. It was a Hawaiian word, and it could be used as an affectionate greeting, or as an expression of good will or love… Just the same, those with a sense of the past might have been forgiven for suggesting the true *aloha*, however it was defined, had been notably absent from Hawaii's history" (Daws 1974, 394).

The modern meaning of *aloha* remains open to various interpretations and ongoing debate, regardless of its historical interpretation:

> "It is hard to think of another word that over so many decades has aroused more public attention, sometimes even controversy, among both Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians than *aloha*. Opinions of all shades and fervor, ranging from the ridiculous to the exalted, have been expressed on the subject. These include such notions as *aloha* is: "undefinable," "sheer nonsense," "a monumental hoax," "the

summum bonum of life," "Hawaii's social cement," "unique to Hawaii," "the power of God," "a priceless style of human interaction," "something like the Holy Ghost," and "both fact and fiction"… As with so many other things from our past, the etymology of *aloha* is shrouded in mystery. Its origin goes back to the very beginnings of the Polynesian people in Kahiki…" (Kanahele 1992, 467.470).

Beliefs of the meaning of *aloha* as reflected in the popular literature today do vary considerably. In fact, the "elusiveness" of the concept is celebrated and adds to "secrets" of its allure. These are just a few compiled examples as cited by numerous individuals:

"I've learned you need to feel – and live - *aloha* in order to begin to understand what it truly means" (Ellman 2010, xxii).

"'*Aloha Spirit'* is the coordination of mind and heart within each person." Hawaii Revised Statutes [5-7.5] (Ellman 2010, xxiv).

"*Aloha* style means: Slowly, gently, with peace in our hearts, softly, with love…" (Ellman 2010, 9.)

"*Aloha* is the generous spirit of the Islands" (Ellman 2010, 10).

"I think being open to making new real friends encompasses the *Aloha Spirit* for me" (Ellman 2010, 13).

"*Aloha* means caring and treating someone the way that you would like to be cared for or treated…" (Ellman 2010, 14).

"*Aloha* is much, much more than a word. It is the free spirit within me (my inner child)…" (Ellman 2010, 15).

"To us, *aloha* means home" (Ellman 2010, 16).

"To me, *aloha* means having consideration for the land." (Ellman 2010, 17).

"*Aloha* to me is unconditional; it is many things put together" (Ellman 2010, 19).

"*Aloha* is the practice of positive communication and fostering harmony and peace in all relationships" (Ellman 2010, 30).

"'*Aloha'* and '*ohana'* [family] to me are synonymous" (Ellman 2010, 42).

"Although *aloha* means the 'breath of life', to me it means comfort" (Ellman 2010, 55).

"*Aloha* is a state of mind. It is a sense of well being" (Ellman 2010, 103).

"In my view, *aloha* is not just a thought. It is the path" (Ellman 2010, 109).

"*Aloha* is an action verb that places everyone else ahead of you" (Ellman 2010, 116).

"*Aloha* is spiritual and cultural – a way of life here in Hawaii" (Ellman 2010, 197).

"'*Aloha'* was a recognition of life in another. If there was life there was mana, goodness, and wisdom, and if there was goodness and wisdom there was a god-quality." - Queen Lili'uokalani (Ellman 2010, 209).

"*Aloha* is to look into the face of another and find oneself" (Ellman 2010, 216).

> "*Aloha* is the divine presence of our essence as the breath of spirit, the breath of truth, the breath of our authenticity in the consciousness of love and oneness" (Ellman 2010, 217).
>
> "To me, *aloha* is Hawaii's version of the Golden Rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you)" (Ellman 2010, 218).

Regardless of *aloha's* history, and disregarding the motivation for its propagation as a practice, the question arises is the *aloha spirit* real for the modern Hawaiian? From the perspective of practical psychology and therapy, this "value" appears to be well established. "Hawaiian psychology" integrates traditional Hawaiian concepts and values such as *aloha* to allow for therapy and healing:

> "Traditional Hawaiian belief is that by saying and feeling *aloha* one shares one's inner spiritual essence (*alo*) through one's breath (*ha*). *Aloha* is given without expectation of return and is nurtured when other people similarly share their *aloha* without expectation of return. A *lei* (garland, wreath) of unconditional love is thereby woven and spiritually binds the two beings.
>
> Should *aloha* consistently go unnoticed, unappreciated, be taken for granted, or, worse, abused, the giver of *aloha* will be emotionally drained, hurt, or offended, and can even become ill from the unestablished or broken *lei* of love. Unfortunately in today's world, modern Hawaiians perhaps need to learn when, and with whom, to share their *aloha* - a truly un-Hawaiian thought but seemingly a sad necessity… *Aloha* is central to Hawaiian values and permeates Hawaiian thoughts and feelings" (Rezentes 1996, 20-21).

The importance of identifying Hawaiian values (such as *aloha*) in the effort to improve mental health and behavioral issues in Hawaii is emphasized by Benjamin B. C. Young when analyzing Hawaiian culture (McDermitt 1980, 5-24).

Understanding the role of modern *aloha spirit* is also reflected in the clinical experiences of psychologists who treat native Hawaiians to resolve conflict within families:

> "One of the specific practices is a complex system for maintaining harmonious relationships and resolving conflict within the extended family; this system is called *ho'oponopono* (pronounced, ho'o pono pono), which means 'setting to right'. Within the last ten years this concept has become popularized and a number of individuals, mostly within social service programs, have attempted to use this traditional family concept and practice" (Shook 1995, 1).

The goal of therapy is to retain harmony in the family - and the role of *aloha* is viewed as the best exemplification of this harmony:

> "Perhaps the importance of harmony in relationships can best be summed up by the attributes of the word *aloha*. This often-used Hawaiian word expresses love and also is a greeting and farewell. More subtly, it suggests the highly valued character traits of generosity, friendliness, patience, and productivity. The spirit

> of *aloha* carries with it an understanding that the ability to soothe and prevent conflicts, shame, and other disruptive occurrences is important, and that if the harmony has been disrupted, one should have the courage to ask for and give forgiveness" (Shook 1995, 7).

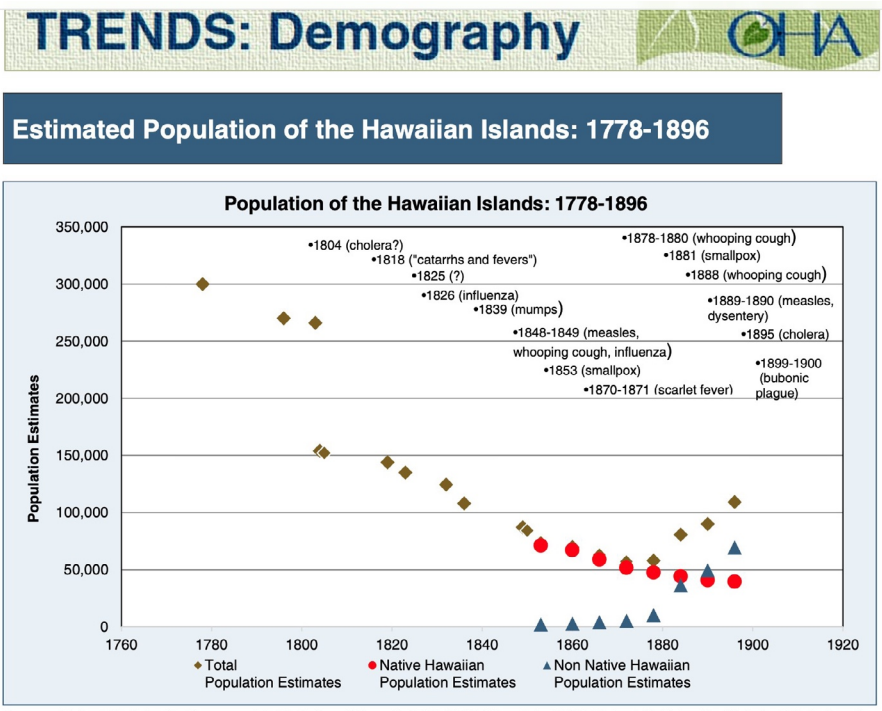
This association with the family, by the way, can support the view that *aloha* in ancient times may have been more confined to kinship.

Many, if not most, modern Hawaiians believe in or practice the *aloha spirit*. To understand tolerance in modern Hawaii, the focus of my study has not been how *aloha spirit* is practiced, but rather why it is predominant - especially if connections with ancient Hawaii are tenuous or non-existent. Part of the answer lies in the changes of demographic composition in Hawaii.

4. The Role of Demographic Changes in the Development of Aloha Spirit

Population estimates of the Hawaiian Islands at European contact in 1778 vary dramatically, depending on the method of estimation and the source. Previous common estimates ranged from 400,000 to 1,000,000 (Noyes 2003, 11). This is one example of other common assertions: "The population in Kamehameha's time was nearly 800,000, and by 1836 it had fallen to 107,954" (Beamer 2014, 125). There are many varying estimates, including numbers that go as low as 110,000, depending on the techniques used.

I will use The Office of Hawaiian Affairs as one authoritative source, which recognizes the number as approximately 300,000. For purposes of this study the original population matters less than the fact that the native population decreased at a dramatic rate over the course of the nineteenth century while at the same time the population of non-Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians began to dramatically increase.



Source: Robert C. Schmitt. *Demographic Statistics of Hawaii: 1778-1965.* (Honolulu,1968). Robert C. Schmitt. *Historical Statistics of Hawaii.* (Honolulu,1977).

Migration to Hawaii began for several reasons, not the least of which was Christian missionary work. But the overwhelming mass of non-Hawaiian population arrived in successive waves, mostly from Asia, to support the growing sugar industry, and consisted of the following ethnic groups:

Nationality	Kingdom of Hawai'i						Republic of Hawai'i
	1853	1866	1872	1878	1884	1890	1896
Natives (Hawaiians)	70,036	57,125	49,044	44,088	40,014	34,436	31,019
Half-Castes (Part-Hawaiian)	983	1,640	2,487	3,420	4,218	6,186	8,485
Chinese	364	1,206	1,938	5,916	17,939	15,301	13,733
Americans	692	2,988	889	1,276	2,066	1,928	2,266
Hawaiian born of foreign parents	309		849	947	2,040	7,495	1,538
Britons (British)	435		619	883	1,282	1,344	912
Portuguese	86		395	436	9,377	8,602	75
Germans	81		224	272	1,600	1,034	8,232
French	60		88	81	192	70	216
Japanese	—		—	—	116	12,360	19,382
Norwegian	8		—	—	362	227	22,329
Other Foreigners	80		364	666	416	419	409
Polynesian	4		—	—	956	588	424
Total	73,138	62,959	56,897	57,985	80,578	89,990	109,020

Source: Thrum's Hawaiian Almanac and Annual.

By the time of annexation in 1898 Native Hawaiians comprised less than one-third of the total population of the islands. Immigration, combined with periods of disease that reduced the number of Hawaiian people, completely changed the original culture. These ethnic groups at the beginning had nothing in common with ancient Hawaiian traditions.

After annexation, waves of additional immigrant groups continued to arrive, most notably from the Philippines, starting in 1906. By the year 2000, Filipinos represented over 20% of the state's population.

Filipino Population in Hawaii, 2000*

State & County	Number	% State/County
Hawaii (total population=1,211,537)	275,728	22.8
Oahu (City & County of Honolulu)	191,393	21.8
Big Island (also Hawaii)	31,354	21.1
Maui	34,445	26.9
- Molokai	1,979	26.7
- Lanai	2,007	63.4
Kauai	18,522	31.7

Source: *U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder*. Data for "Filipino alone or in any combination" (mixed races), 2000.
*In 2005, the Filipino and part-Filipino population is 290,705 or 23.5% of Hawaii's population (1,238,158), according to the 2005 American Community Survey (www.hawaii.gov/dbedt/info/census/acs_hi_2005_folder/acs_hi_2005_select_pop_profiles_files/Filipino_alone_or_in_any_combination.pdf).

Mass immigration to Hawaii began to end with the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted immigration from many countries, particularly those from Asia. For Hawaii mass immigration became a cultural crisis, given that none of these new ethnic groups were familiar with traditional Hawaiian beliefs and practices. In the midst of this whirlwind of tumult and disorder, the result became a mosaic of race, ethnicity, religion, custom that produced the Hawaiian society we experience today.

The question for this study is twofold: Is Hawaiian tolerance, which I have proposed to be represented by concept of *aloha*, the result of these dramatic ethnographic developments, or is today's *aloha spirit* the extension of *Hawaii's* ancient past? Or is it both?

The connection between past and present *aloha spirit* has been discussed above: it is tenuous. Given the described demographic changes, one could assume that ethnically diverse groups would find some accommodation and embrace of the *aloha spirit*. Obviously, this is not a given.

General academic consensus inclines toward thinking that **both history and demographic changes** have resulted in the *aloha spirit*:

> "Few of us perhaps realize how large a part the spirit of *aloha*, which is our common heritage from **the Hawaiian civilization**, is playing in the harmonious

evolution of the social consciousness in our community of **many races**" (Handy 2017, 308).

To go one step further, the proposition has been made, particularly within the sovereignty movement, that the *aloha spirit* has actually been *strengthened* by ethnic diversity because previous generations (elders) made the conscious decision to embrace these foreign cultures with intermarriage:

> "Like our *ali'i* [chiefs] and *kupuna* [elders], we [Hawaiians] continue to exercise our agency as we change out Hawaii… **Knowledge of the political and cultural past of '*Oiwi* [Native Hawaiians] has reached a mass of people** to a degree unprecedented since the overthrow of our nation. This leads me to believe we are on the cusp of a wave of great change for Hawaii, when individual groups and gatherings will come together as a unified collective… **'*Oiwi* are arguably some of the most ethnically diverse people in the world**. Our *kupuna* intermarried with other ethnicities and embraced other cultures in ways that are remarkable. The result is an ethnically diverse and productive society that has endured over a century of assault and coercion with peace and *aloha*" (Beamer 2014, 228-229).

If '*Oiwi* (Native Hawaiians) can be ethnically diverse, especially given the forced circumstances of mass immigration placed upon the original Hawaiians, then what is the best way to define the "we Hawaiians" mentioned above? I wish to explore this question in the next section.

5. Determining the Definition of the "Modern Hawaiian"

In a "standard study" of tolerance of another society, a reversion to history might not be necessary. Even if the meaning of the concept altered over time, it would not be surprising that changes occurred or that current meaning would be affected. Society, culture, and values change naturally. But the changes in Hawaiian culture in the nineteenth century were cataclysmic, particularly regarding demographics, and this resulted in values that are currently reexamined and contested. Besides the concept of "tolerance," the nature of what it means to be "Hawaiian" changed:

> "Is being Hawaiian dependent upon having some Hawaiian blood? If so, how much Hawaiian blood? Does it mean looking like a Hawaiian? What physical features, then, are acceptable as being Hawaiian? Is the ability to speak the language important? Does one have to believe in the old gods and myths to be truly Hawaiian? Is it also a matter of eating *palu* - or *poi*, kalua pig, *laulau*, and other traditional foods? Does it mean displaying such skills as dancing the *hula*, *lei* making, *lau hala* weaving, canoe paddling, and so on? Can one be a real Hawaiian and yet be part-Japanese, or Filipino, German, Portuguese, or Korean? Is not

> modern Hawaiian a different creature from the Hawaiian of old? The responses seem to go on and on, without end" (Kanahele 1992, 2).

If we wish to answer the question whether modern Hawaiians are tolerant, the first question should be what do we mean by Hawaiians? The government definition is straightforward: it is they who reside in Hawaii and have registered as such, voting in state elections and paying state taxes. According to the 2020 Census the total population of the state is above 1.4 million people. Ethnically it is the most diverse state with no single group in the majority. Native Hawaiians who did not declare any other racial heritage represent a little over 10% of this total, according to official accounting.

The cultural definition of modern Hawaiians, based on our study in tolerance, is, once again, twofold: If Hawaiians are defined by a*loha spirit*, as has been suggested by the demographic analysis, then ethnicity does not matter; if Hawaiians are defined by blood, then their roots going back in generations are a distinctive factor.

> "Native Hawaiian: Usually describing someone of 50 percent or more Hawaiian blood, this **culturally divisive term** has its roots in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 which used blood quantum to limit the number of Hawaiians qualifying for homesteads" (Rezentes 1996, 16).

For many reasons, including alleged racist categorization, blood began to be excluded from census counts.

Too few non-ethnic Hawaiians have remained, and their societal impact has lessened. The last definitive census that still differentiated Hawaiians from part Hawaiians was in 1930 when non-ethnic Hawaiians totaled 22,000. In 1980 The Hawaii Health Surveillance Program estimated under 10,000 natives. By the year 2000 citizens self-identified their race, and the category of part Hawaiian was eliminated in the census and substituted with "Native Hawaiian". (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Research Division, Demography, 2017).

> "In academic terms of today, this awareness of identity is called 'ethnicity'. Professor George De Los defines it as 'a subjective sense of continuity in belonging'. In other words, it is our **'historical memory'** - not so much of a set of events, artifacts, or things, but, rather, it is a set of feelings, expectations, patterns of emotion and behavior, symbols, and values, that separates us from other groups… This knowledge of ourselves [Hawaiians] not limited to the past, although apparently those who have studied and written about Hawaiians have devoted more of their attention to history" (Kanahele 1992, 3.5).

After annexation in 1898 attempts were made to Americanize Hawaiians. The Hawaiian language was forbidden in schools and slowly began to be ignored in homes. Hawaiians adopted American names and were taught to pledge allegiance to the United States. History was taught through the American point of view. "If there is any hope for Hawaiians to continue 'as Hawaiians', it must lie in their ability **to reidentify with their roots** and to develop a 'modern Hawaiianness' on that foundation" (Dudley 2003, 87). This assimilation caused psychological problems for native Hawaiians:

> "Hawaiians have suffered from negative and positive stereotypes. It's not uncommon to hear disparaging comments made toward Hawaiians… Unfortunately, in the case of the Hawaiians, many have struggled and are still struggling to find a place in the new culture. Not until the recent upsurge of cultural pride in being Hawaiian has the shift taken place" (McDermitt 1980, 21).

Hawaiians' interests in ethnicity and heritage began in a revival of Hawaiian traditions in the 1970's, officially recognized as the Hawaiian Renaissance. It was triggered by the voyage of the double-hulled canoe Hokule'a in 1976 from Hawaii to Tahiti. This maiden voyage proved that traditional navigation with stars, waves, birds, etc. by the ancient Polynesians was possible.

This renewed pride spilled over to cultural, economic, and political areas, evidenced by the creation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in 1978. These developments coincided with the rise of the sovereignty movement which began to view all Hawaiian history from the point of view of Hawaiians. Once nineteenth century history began to be understood from the colonized perspective, the study of history also began to be viewed as the study of resistance.

> "Finally, although this book is primarily a study of resistance, two other themes emerge here. First, the *Kanaka Maoli* [native Hawaiians] of the nineteenth century, in addition to strenuously resisting every encroachment on their lands and life ways, consciously and continuously organized and directed their energies to preserving the independence of their country. Second, throughout the nineteenth century, print media, particularly newspapers, functioned as sites for broad social communication, political organizing, and the perpetuation of the native language and culture" (Silva 2004, 13).

Regardless of motivation, whether emotional, psychological, or political, it is my thesis that the one common anthropological element that unites all contemporary Hawaiians is an interest in ancient values. This necessitates a reliance and belief in the value of the past that is specific to a Hawaiian concept of time.

6. The Hawaiian Concept of Time Examined Culturally and Politically

At the beginning of this study, I made a bifurcation between ancient Hawaii and modern Hawaii. The concept of tolerance was made equivalent to the *aloha spirit* and a difference was noted between the value of *aloha* in the past and in the present. I also argued that the present value of *aloha* was dependent on the past value because the past has been treated as *kapu*, i.e., sacred.

This type of approach makes several assumptions. First, it assumes the present cannot also be *kapu* and that present values cannot be superior to past values. Second, it assumes

Hawaiians were never in control of their own destiny and that a gradual evolution of cultural values did not occur. Third, it assumes a nature of time that is synchronic and sequential. Fourth, and finally, it does not distinguish between different kinds of past, such as "ancient" and "recent."

Regarding the first assumption, the political objection has been made that if legitimacy of indigenous claims is based on age, then no legitimacy of present claims can be taken seriously. This argument has been presented by the sovereignty activist Emalani Case when a makeshift *hale* (house, meeting hall) and *ahu* (altar, shrine) used by protestors on Mauna Kea in 2019 was taken down and destroyed by government authorities:

> "When the structure was taken down, Kanuha called the desecration an act of 'cultural erasure'. He was right. What I felt that morning, though, and what still tugs at my gut, is the fact that this particular type of erasure is one that seeks to control the ways we are allowed to exist in the world. The attorney general's statement about 'traditional and customary significance' was really a statement of age. Because the *hale* and *ahu* were not 'ancient', they were not important. In the eyes of the settler state, they were not sacred. They were not deserving of protection, care, or even respect. **Thus the logic of erasure employed was one that essentially denies our right to exist as Indigenous peoples in the current time**. What is terribly destructive about this is that it both relegates us as *Kanaka Maoli* [Hawaiians] to a state of perpetual infancy, in which we are never allowed to move beyond 'newness', while also constructing time as the primary measuring stick for 'authenticity'. If time could be used as proof that the *hale* and *ahu* were not 'authentic' or 'traditional', having not been precontact (or even postcontact, but with sufficient time to deem them 'old enough') then our claims to them - whether political, cultural, or spiritual - could be disregarded as irrelevant. In the process, we could be disregarded as irrelevant" (Case 2021, 66).

Addressing the second assumption, it is interesting to note that merely making a distinction between ancient and modern could also hurt the independence movement. It assumes natives could not change with the times and only shackled themselves by honoring a traditional past:

> "I believe that native appropriation is possible… A prerequisite for accepting this argument is to accept that the *ali'i* [chiefs] were able to adapt to foreign systems while maintaining their Hawaiianness. Those who think a people must act identically to their ancestors to preserve their identity may have serious problems with my argument and conclusions. I value and trust traditional sources of knowledge such as *oli* (chant), *mele* (song), and *mo'olelo* and find them to be critical sources of knowledge. I also believe that preserving and practicing our culture is of greater importance than theorizing about practicing culture. But I do not consider myself or my analysis to be traditionalist. I believe that living

> cultures are dynamic and always in a state of change. **I believe the dichotomies of the traditional and modern, with all their connotations, are false**. They compose the conceptual shackles that preserve European hegemony and often reinscribe links between the colonizer and the colonized, occupier and occupied" (Beamer 2014, 13-14).

When there is no clean break between the past and present, that is, the dichotomy is recognized as false, then the idea of continuity can surface and resistance to colonization can be considered a continual phenomenon that developed throughout the last two hundred years:

> "To trace how Hawaiians placed themselves in the ideas of global geography they were creating, this book takes a long range view stretching from the period before Cook's arrival and into the second decade of the twentieth century.
> A long range view is essential to resist two fallacies: that it was Captain Cook in 1778 that introduced *Kanaka* to the idea that a world beyond their shores existed, and second, that annexation to the United States in 1898 brought an end to the *Kanaka* people, *Kanaka* resistance, or Hawaiian history. *Kanaka Maoli* thinking about the nature of the world started long before Cook arrived at Kaua'i… In fact, this book is in itself an intervention into the politics of Hawaiian global geography. It takes part in **the centuries-long process that it describes: a process of emphasizing that Hawaiians can and should understand their world from their own Hawaiian perspectives**, not those of their colonizers, and that Hawaii is best understood as a land deeply rooted in the Pacific sea of islands, not merely a peripheral dependency of some other power (notably the United States)" (Chang 2016, viii).

Regarding the first two assumptions, I posit that in whatever way the past is regarded, it is still important for Hawaiian culture and therefore is relevant to the concept of tolerance. It must be acknowledged, however, that while the past remains *kapu*, the present can also be *kapu*. And while the bifurcation between the past and present may not be so clear, there still exists a role for the traditional past and *aloha*:

> "With dignity, patience, and *aloha*, '*Oiwi* [Native Hawaiians] have endured successive attacks on our national identity, our lands, and our language. This adversity has forged a stronger degree of determination and resolve within the *lahui* [nation]. Many '*Oiwi* simply have refused to allow the Hawaiian past to be obliterated. Through the reclamation of our collective past and a surge of political and cultural awareness, the national consciousness has reemerged" (Beamer 2014, 227).

While the first two assumptions of time are basically political, the third is cultural and philosophical. Thinking of time sequentially, the past comes before the present which comes before the future. This type of reasoning implies that that present day life in Hawaii would

simply be improved if the ancient skills and arts such as fishing, planting, and medicine would be remembered and restored. While this may be true about skills, Polynesian cultures, including the Hawaiian, are like the Maori and think in another order:

> "And if anthropology then inherits a collection of myths from the participation of battle, it is because the Maori, who think of the future behind them, find in a marvelous past the measure of the demands that are made to their current existence… This relation of class to individual is the very notion of descent, i.e., of the relation of ancestor to descendent, and is well-known the whole universe is for Maori a comprehensive kindred of common ancestry. Such being the ontological case, we should be wary, as Johansen cautions, of imputing to Maori our own ideas of the individuality of event and experience: '**We find it quite obvious that once an event has happened, it never returns; but this is exactly what happens'. Hence the very experiences of the past are the way the present is experienced**…" (Sahlins 1987, 55.59).

What we experience in the present is based on the past, consequently the past cannot be excluded from understanding the present.

> "Hawaiian history is surely not unique in the demonstration that culture functions as a *synthesis* of stability and change, past and present, diachrony and synchrony" (Sahlins 1987, 144).

In other words, Hawaiian culture "is precisely the organization of the current situation in the terms of the past" (Sahlins 1987, 155). A value like *aloha spirit* cannot be separated from the past if this value is considered part of the structure of modern Hawaiian culture. Whether the ancient value of *aloha* is like the modern value is another question.

Hawaiian understanding of time is reflected in a well-known proverb: '*I Ka Wā Ma Mua, Ka Wā Ma Hope*', which means 'The Future is in the Past'. When time is viewed diachronically (structurally), as it is by Hawaiians and most Polynesians, the future becomes a repetition of the past. Consequently, studying the past helps to predict the future - perhaps even shape it. This type of cultural thinking helps to explain statements such as the following: if Hawaiians wish to preserve their culture or achieve sovereignty, they "will have to modernize their ancient traditions and then consciously form a new culture, a new society. **Firmly based in their cultural heritage, the modernized culture will be truly Hawaiian**" (Dudley 2003, 99). Paradoxically, modernization involves a return to ancient ways. To some this might appear backward looking. But based on this approach, modernized Hawaiians must return to the past to remain modern:

> "Thus we see that research into an ancient culture has power to transform life in the present, both the life of the students himself, and the life of people to whom his work has significance" (Handy 2017, 307).

If the future can be shaped based on the past, then logically the past can be selected for the values that are necessary to create the future. In this Hawaiian worldview the past to some extent is malleable - not immutable - but *kapu* nevertheless:

> "Crucially, past, present, and future are tightly woven in '*Oiwi* [Native Hawaiian] theory and practice. We adapt to whatever historical challenges we face so that we can continue to survive and thrive. As we look to the past for knowledge and inspiration on how to face the future, we are aware that we are tomorrow's ancestors, and future generations will look to us for guidance. The concepts of continuity and relationality go together in '*Oiwi* thought: together they form the *kuamo'o* (backbone) of Hawaiian culture, and they are fully encapsulated in the term *mo'oku'auhau*. In its narrowest sense, *mo'oku'auhau* often translated as genealogy, refers to biological continuity and biological relationality… **It bears saying that everything we consider a tradition was once an innovation… '*Oiwi* are the judges of what is culturally significant for us**, what should be conserved for posterity and prosperity, and when innovation is desirable or undesirable" (Wilson-Hokowhitu 2019, VII-VII).

Regardless how time is treated - whether in a diachronic or synchronic manner - the nature of modern Hawaiian tolerance needs to be viewed from the ancient past because the native view is that all the values of modern culture are based on ancient values (whether true or not).

Finally, understanding the past has assumed that all of the past is ancient. In fact, this is a common assumption. Once again, there exists a tendency towards historical revisionism because of the belief that the validity of modern mores or customs is normally based on traditional values. And yet, what is considered "traditional Hawaiian" today may not have even existed in the ancient past.

A good example that is considered "Hawaiian" and is not ancient is Hawaiian music. Hawaiian music as we recognize it today has developed for over two centuries. Of course, no recordings exist from pre-contact times. Musical scores or notes were not kept. "The history of Hawaiian musicians since 1778 shows that almost everything that is now considered Hawaiian was originally *haole* (non-Hawaiian)" (Kanahele 2012, 403). Without any certain continuity from the ancient past, it is even difficult to define what "Hawaiian music" is:

> "The most telling point of all, however, was the unresolved question of 'What is Hawaiian music'? Ironically the first standing committee set up by the foundation in 1971 was instructed to deal with that question… When the committee eventually issued the report, its definition emphasized Hawaiian lyrics as an identifying trait but evaded the whole issue of whether Hawaiian music has its own musical, i.e., melodic/rhythmic, character" (Kanahele 2012, ix).

In addition, what are considered today as typical Hawaiian instruments, such as the steel guitar and ukulele, did not exist in ancient Hawaii. The steel guitar was invented in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Kanahele 2012, 788-789). The ukulele was introduced by Portuguese immigrants also in the late 1800's (Kanahele 2012, 788-789).

Perhaps the best example of "ancient" historical appropriation is the dance of "*hula*," including the chants. We know, based on many accounts, that *hula* was performed in ancient times. But the form, meaning, and ritual only became standardized many years later. The history of *hula* is complicated, and there were many attempts to eradicate the practice, mostly for religious reasons. Nonetheless, although ancient, no evidence of pre-contact dance examples exist:

> "An attempt to document any rituals associated with the *hula* in ancient - that is to say pre-historic, or pre-1778 - Hawaii is impossible. What may remain today of any older rituals is based on late-19th century training practices, and on chants and dances that survived the attempted extinction of the *hula* as an entertainment form in the earlier part of that century… Also in the 1860's the rulers and chiefs of the kingdom openly reverted to the old custom of having *hula* people, *po'e hula*, available to provide entertainment, both at home and during their travels about the islands. There was thus a nucleus of *po'e hula* who kept the art alive, and from them have come the traditional 19th-century *hula* that some call 'ancient' today… Many of the *hula* danced today are revivals or revisions of those composed and performed during the Kalakaua years [1880's]… As in the past, a few chanters, dancers, and teachers among the *po'e hula* kept alive the more traditional forms, and with the flowering of the 'Hawaiian Renaissance' in the 1970's their knowledge and dedication became a foundation for revitalizing the older forms" (Barrère 1980, 1-2).

It is very possible that the concept of *aloha spirit* may be rooted in the past, but not the ancient past. In such a case the rise of modern *aloha spirit* could coincide, I believe, with the demographic changes of the nineteenth century. This distinction needs to be explored more and is beyond the scope of this study. As the ages pass, the identification of what is "Hawaiian," such as music or dance, will change and yet continue to be validated by references to a past that will always be *kapu*.

7. Conclusion and Resolution

The main question in this study has been the status of tolerance from ancient times compared to the modern *aloha spirit* in Hawaiian culture. This connection between past and present is important to validate the significance of *aloha spirit* as a Hawaiian cultural trait. If *aloha spirit* did not exist in ancient Hawaii, or if it had another meaning, today's *aloha* could not depend on its past. Worse, *aloha* may be presumed to have existed in ancient times even when it did not – a form of historical revisionism.

It is my thesis that ancient Hawaiians in fact were intolerant of opposing beliefs within their own social system because the rules of *kapu* did not allow for disagreements in custom

or debate about worldviews. And yet, if modern Hawaiians were to continue this tradition of intolerance, this would violate the modern *aloha spirit* where many disparate ethnic cultures co-exist and function together in harmony. This results in a contradiction of values.

Independent of contemporary assessment regarding the source and value of *aloha* in modern society, it is my contention that the resolution of this contradiction is to make the past itself *kapu*. **What is tolerated in Hawaii today is ethnic diversity. What is not tolerated and therefore "forbidden" is ignorance, inaccurate revision, malicious criticism, or disrespect of the ancient past.**

The limit of Hawaiian tolerance involves Hawaii's traditional past - which must always be honored.

When modern Hawaiians agree the past is sacred, this unites them. More importantly, this tacit consensus - or "social contract" - among Hawaiians affects their present behavior because of the belief that the past affects the present. Finally, and most importantly, it continues ancient Hawaiian culture and its development through the proxies of more recently arrived immigrant groups, all originally considered *haole* (foreigners) and now *kama'aina* (native born). This respect towards the past is what ultimately united the disparate ethnicities that knew nothing of Hawaiian culture yet adopted its ancient values.

The abolition of *kapu* was well under way with the beginning of the rule of Liholiho (Kamehameha II) in 1819. The reason for this abolition is debated and not in the scope of this study, but it is important to point out two relevant themes. First, the *kapu* system was already under question before the arrival of Christianity in 1820. Second, it demonstrates that significant changes to traditional Hawaiian society could be performed by native Hawaiians independent of European agents or influence. The significance of these developments was augmented by the resulting civil war over this issue that ended in the defeat of the traditionalists in the Battle of Kuamo'o. The abolition of the *ai'kapu* in particular triggered the nullification of many other *kapu* once it became clear no retribution would occur from either the gods or the chiefs. The Hawaiian conversion to Christianity by missionaries as well as exposure to other foreign religions and cultures through immigration eventually dismantled *kapu* as a social system.

One custom, however, was never dismantled: the idea of the "sacred" and the "prohibition of profane behavior" has always remained. As proof that the past never disappears, it is the past itself that has become *kapu*. Perhaps this *kapu* of the past is the last one to provide cohesion and stability to a Hawaiian culture that because of cataclysmic changes and colonization nearly vanished forever.

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