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FORUM

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THE CANOE, THE WIND, AND THE MOUNTAIN: SHUNTING THE  
“RASHOMON EFFECT” OF MAUNA KEA: AN ALOHA AINA RESPONSE

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THE WORLD IS NOT DUAL, WE JUST THINK IT IS. Maunakea is not a polemic discussion, we just make it one. Thus, begins this response to *The Canoe, the Wind, and the Mountain: Shunting the “Rashomon Effect” of Mauna Kea*, written by Vilsoni Hereniko and Phillip Schorch.

The philosophical duality set up in this discussion (secular/sacred) of the Maunakea controversy is a beautiful and poetic attempt to bring understanding to this issue. This dynamic tension, detailed as hulls in a *wa’a kaulua* (or double-hull canoe), links through a platform, the connecting principle between two opposite ideas. The metaphor works to bridge what appears to be necessary—two opposite hulls—to work as part of the structure of a sailing vessel purposed for movement. In this way, maybe the authors are suggesting the inevitable evolution of perceived duality, the predictable conflict of sacred and secular, is the wholeness of its purpose. Maybe not.

Maunakea has been painted a controversy with both sides perceived in polemic discourse. I have learned to call these ideas “false-dualities,” especially this one, and to speak instead about their purpose and function in the evolution of our collective consciousness. What exactly then is the purpose of conflict? How do we productively engage wholeness in this process, and what does consciousness have to do with understanding the priorities of an indigenous mind? How does all this help us evolve as a society? Here is where I think Hereniko

and Schorch wants us to sail to—the Isle of Humanity where both extremes become useful in helping us land on the shores of our own awareness. Then we can be honest about the dynamics of power within a capitalistic world and sound out the purpose of why indigeneity is now vital for our world.

Another idea drawn to help us think about Maunakea differently was shunting, the flipping of a sail to one or the other hull to capture wind more productively and for a desired outcome. Shunting, a synonym for relational flexibility, was a metaphor to harness conflict productively. Relational flexibility helped detail a more flowing capacity to remain ready to change course, capture the benefits of a good wind, and to work efficiently within the context of a given environment. One needs only a good navigator or translator. For the Protectors/ Navigators (*Na Ao Koa*) of Maunakea, this idea can best be described through the practice and discipline of a Kapu Aloha.

A Kapu Aloha, the reverence and practice of compassion, has been called by Nā Ao Koa—by the Warriors of Light, to help protect Mauna a Wakea. It is a spiritual rejuvenation for the world. It helps us re-center *Aloha Aina* once again so we can see, really see, the beauty that nourishes, inspires and teaches us how to best be in the world. Mana Moana, let us rise to this practice of compassion and reverence! *Ku kia'i mauna!* (Media summary of Kapu Aloha, April, 2015)

Here, believe it or not, is a segue into cultural empiricism and why relational flexibility is not a synonym for compromise but for deeper and more purposed intentionality. This method translator, or expert navigator, is drenched in experience, practice, and lessons learned within vast and diverse contexts. This kind of knowing can indeed be fine-tuned into intuition, our *ike na'au*. Couple that with cultural priorities, principles, and the knowledge of history, however, and you have why the Kapu Aloha continues to awaken, direct, and guide those interested back into the practice and purpose of Aloha Aina. To love land. To love water. To love ocean. To love the natural world. To love. This is why “listening to the mountain” is the practice of listening to ourselves. We do not want to be “equal” to rocks. We are Maunakea! There is no such thing as “more or less” in the mathematics of loving.

Kapu Aloha is a compassionate commitment to *pono*.  
*Luana Palapala Busby-Neff, Aloha Aina Practitioner*

Aloha Aina is not a “narrow and confining individualistic perspective.” It is a synonym for Indigeneity, or “that which has endured,” or my favorite synonym: continuity. Hawaiians are still here because of the wisdom and practices of our

people, regardless of whether some no longer connect to its efficacy. Many do, however, and many more will always hold love of land and care of people as the central operating principle of their lives, regardless of ethnic distinction. Yes, we are evolving, but Aloha Aina is the clearest priority we have, and it is the hand we must play.

And yes, older Hawaiians are not the only ones who view Maunakea as *Mauna a Wakea*. It is a discipline of awareness not linked with age as with experience, recognition, and absorption of concepts such as Aloha Aina/Aina Aloha, and Kapu Aloha. We have many names for one idea, it is the function of language to be literal, multiple, and esoteric. The wind is shifting. Our lands are degraded, our water table is compromised, our streams are polluted, and our trust in government wains. Care for land is no longer a mainstream cultural affair, it is secondary to the needs of the economy and science. Here are two pillars of capitalism that continue to hold different priorities than the people of place. *Na kua'aina* who know where food is planted, who care for kupuna bones, and who's stories are shared and danced and debated throughout starry nights with food, music, and memory.

There is a movement throughout the world to awaken to the needs and priorities of our beloved aina and to see how our decisions affect every nuance of her mood, health, and capacity. It is not about whether science or culture cannot exist together. Wrong focus. False duality. Hawaiians have always been scientists. We are profound in our interest of heavenly bodies and how they link to our world. It is simply time to be clear about our priority so that continuity does not become a game of Russian roulette. We remain for a reason.

Love of land is this reason.