
FORUM

HE LANI KO LUNA, A SKY ABOVE

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MY REMARKS ARE WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO A PAPER by Vilsoni Hereniko and Philipp Schorch entitled “The Canoe, The Wind, and The Mountain: Shunting the Rashomon Effect of Maunakea.” This paper is not intended to be an academic response, it serves simply as an opinion piece from an oceanic wayfinder with forty-three years of canoe sailing experience. I use the favored grammar practice of Hawaiian linguists of spelling all proper names as a single word; hence, “Maunakea” and not Mauna Kea. I write this paper while the Supreme Court of Hawaii is deliberating on the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) appeal to decide whether to hold valid the award of a Conservation District Use Permit to TMT by the Board/Department of Land and Natural Resources.

There are five sections to the Hereniko and Schorch (VH/PS) paper:

1. The Rashomon Effect
2. The Maunakea Controversy
3. Our Position
4. The Canoe as a Metaphorical Method
5. A Way Forward

My approach in responding to the VH/PS paper is to make comments pertaining to each section.

The Rashomon Effect

The Rashomon effect is named after the 1950 Akira Kurosawa film *Rashomon* in which four people describe a single murder from four very different perspectives and in the process offer different interpretations of the same event. This effect has been represented on the Hollywood big screen in movies featuring Ben Affleck in *Gone Girl* (2014), Denzel Washington in *Courage Under Fire* (1996), and Kevin Spacey in *The Usual Suspects* (1995).

The events surrounding Maunakea and in particular TMT have been characterized as a “controversy” in the VH/PS paper; however, when segments of society express opinions that come from differing corners of the same compass, I would not characterize the discussion as controversial, rather I would describe it as healthy community debate reflecting different perspectives. Yes, it has been heated, emotional, and vocal, but not controversial. The VH/PS article correctly points out that similar debates occur throughout Oceania and beyond. As long as developing communities continue to live and grow together, there will always be tension between those who support growth and those who want to preserve. That process is not controversial, and I am happy that we live in a society that, through hearings, affords the community an opportunity to express differing perspectives.

The Maunakea Controversy

On the issue of whether Maunakea and TMT is exclusively a Hawaiian debate, I agree with the VH/PS opinion that “everyone could and should be able to engage with the issues” whether they are Hawaiian or not. There were a few non-Hawaiian litigants that took part in the contested case hearing, demonstrating that the debate over TMT is not based solely upon race, rather the process was open to the greater community. Concerning the name Maunakea, for all of my adolescent and young adult life I believed that the literal translation of Maunakea was White Mountain because of its periodic snow covered slopes. Over the past fifteen years, I have heard the mountain referred to as *Mauana-Wākea* because of its genealogical connection to *Wākea*, “Sky Father.” Two noted Hawaiian historians, Pua Kanahale and Kepā Maly, have cited historical and cultural sources that support this tradition. I believe that the cultural belief that Maunakea is genealogically connected to *Wākea* is historically accurate and should always provide the cultural framework for understanding the mountain and its relationship to Hawaiian people.

On the use of “sacred mountain” to describe Maunakea I would argue that Hawaiians saw all places, i.e., summits, valleys, coastlines, and seas, as being sacred, each possessing its own special *mana*. Although it is not done in the VH/

PS paper, it would be worrisome to designate Maunakea as the *most* sacred place in Hawai‘i, as others have done. If it becomes the most sacred place, then what is the second most sacred place? The third? I don’t want to fall into the trap of ranking our *wahi pana*. Let’s just agree that all spaces are sacred to Hawaiians.

The authors, Hereniko and Schorch, have summarized the second section of the paper well in its treatment of Maunakea’s environment and stewardship, the astronomy taking place there, and the historical record of the debate over Maunakea and TMT. No further comment is warranted.

Our Position

This section of the VH/PS paper outlines the process and methodology they used for analyzing the TMT/Maunakea debate. Their process focused on the issue using three approaches:

1. To converse with a large number of academic articles, essays, videos, and other materials.
2. To focus on a specific debate, location, and history to understand its implications for other situations where different perspectives for the same event exist.
3. To explore a methodology that reconciles different perspectives in a way that is respectful of different points of view.

I respect the VH/PS attempt through this paper to contribute to an important conversation from an academic and islander perspective. The intersection of what we consider to be sacred and secular will always be cause for community debate. I would have titled this section “Our Approach” and not “Our Position.”

The Canoe as a Metaphorical Method

Here VH/PS treats the debate by analyzing the problem and comparing it with three different sections of a double-hulled canoe; (1) the twin hulls, (2) the deck platform, and (3) a shunting sail. The intent is to understand the debate and to demonstrate how each section of the double-hulled canoe can be used to provide a different perspective and lens to navigate a solution.

Sacred and Secular Hulls

The metaphor of the twin hulls of a double canoe for approaching the problem of TMT/Maunakea proposes that each hull represents its own perspective,

that differing perspectives can coexist, and that both hulls are committed to the same destination. The use of this metaphor implied by VH/PS suggests that some kind of complementary resolution is possible even if your view comes from a different hull perspective. In this view, hulls of differing or opposing perspectives, sacred or secular, can coexist because they are metaphorically connected together to become a single vessel with a common destination.

I contend that the twin hulls of a canoe are aligned to a singular purpose and that opposing hull perspectives cannot exist if the intent is to arrive at a desired destination. Hulls work synergistically, with common performance characteristics, joined together with cross pieces that unify complementary sections into a single stable craft. The intent of VH/PS is to draw attention to the belief that different hull perspectives can coexist and result in an agreed upon solution to a problem. My forty-three-year experience tells me that hulls don't work that way, they work together, unified to become a singular craft, with one intent, to arrive at a predetermined destination. Sacred and secular is one belief and not two.

The Platform That Separates and Connects

VH/PS makes a metaphorical comparison of the double-hulled canoe deck platform serving as a bridge and a method translator, an interpreter that can both speak to the sacred and the secular. They admit that this mythical interpreter that is skilled in translating the sacred and the secular may not always exist, and that if they do that person may carry with them personal biases that may influence their objectivity. They are accurate in pointing out that finding the right person to serve in the role of a method translator may be difficult, but that person is necessary and vital if you expect a resolution that all parties can support. The role of the method translator is to find common ground, but in my observation, resolution is not always possible. In any debate, there will always be those that effectively argue their case and those that fall short of communicating their cause persuasively.

I am lost in the suggestion that we allow Maunakea to serve as a method translator, that we listen openly to a conversation that the mountain may want to participate in. The debate around the mountain is people centric, people speaking for the mountain, whether they support construction of a new observatory or support no further development. The conversation is between people, all of whom purport to know what is best for the mountain.

VH/PS uses the example of navigator Nainoa Thompson of the iconic double-hulled sailing *Hōkūleʻa*, navigating through his *naʻau* (his belly), where Pacific islanders believe truth resides. Truth, as described in the VH/PS narrative, is not a result of intellectual knowledge, it is a result of intuitive knowing. Nainoa's successful navigation in moonless and starless conditions, in shifting

wind episodes, and in the absolute confusion of the storm is intuitive, but that intuition is derived from previous experience. It comes from familiar past experiences, remembrances of previous situations. Intuition is attached to previous experience, and like a reservoir it continues to fill and build upon past experiences. I suspect that there is an aspect of an islander's intuition that is a part of our Oceanic DNA, I just don't know how to measure or quantify that repository that we call Oceanic intuition.

The use of the poem "Let the Mountain Speak" suggests that we should listen to our na'au to resolve and find answers to the TMT/Maunakea debate. The paper recognizes our human tendencies to prefer to speak rather than listen intently. But humans have difficulty relieving themselves of hard held beliefs. The VH/PS narrative encourages an open ear by both sides, which could lead to discovery of a new perspective and a shift away from an individualistic mindset to a broader community centric attitude. In the ideal world, the suggestion of VH/PS is noble; it calls for a broader dialogue and an openness to hear different perspectives; however, the debate over TMT/Maunakea has been ongoing for several years; the arguments are well defined; and the only resolution lies in the Supreme Court.

The Sail That Needs Shunting

The shunting sail as an oceanic development represents a hallmark achievement by Austronesian mariners and the seafaring technology that enabled them to settle the largest expanse of ocean on planet Earth. Along with the shunting sail, a double ended canoe had to also be conceived to work in conjunction with the sail. A double ended canoe is one that has an identical bow and stern. It allows the sails to be shunted; that is, the sail can be switched from bow to stern and reverse sailing the canoe. Having an interchangeable bow and stern allows the canoe to maneuver into the wind, making upwind canoe progress possible. The ability to quickly maneuver the canoe into the wind makes the vessel highly versatile and enables the canoe to be sailed in any direction regardless of wind direction.

The metaphoric comparison that VH/PS contrasts with the shunting sail is described as relational flexibility, the ability to harness the power of differing perspectives. They assert that the wooden deck platform and the hulls are rigid and inflexible, while the sail provides the flexibility for the canoe to pivot in all directions, harnessing the power of the wind to provide forward propulsion. They are accurate in describing the ability of a shunting sail to provide propulsion in any direction, but the hulls, deck, cross pieces, and gunnels are designed to be flexible because of the lashings that hold the different pieces together. The lashings that are used to assemble the many small pieces of a sailing canoe into a

single vessel are a natural reliever of the total load placed upon a canoe; the load would be much greater if the canoe was constructed of one solid piece of wood. With vessels under sail, parts are always being stressed, to treat the stress you want to find ways to diminish the load. The way this is done is to sew a canoe together through its many lashings.

Although the idea of relational flexibility is offered as an antidote for the debate over TMT/Maunakea, I believe there are only two results that a shunting sail can produce. One tack takes you in the direction that allows TMT to be developed; the other tack takes you in the direction of keeping the mountain as it is. This may be an overly simplistic view, but given that we are awaiting a court decision, I see things in the reality of the true situation.

A Way Forward

Hereniko and Schorch offer the example of the shunting sail and the concept of relational flexibility as a metaphorical way forward in the TMT/Maunakea debate as well as for other situations in Oceania where the sacred and the secular intersect. I agree with the authors' assertion that in order to resolve and interpret the debate with clarity, making the differing perspectives translatable, you need expert method translators. The difficulty is locating effective persons that possess those interpretive skills. The message I take away from this paper and the treatment of the TMT/Maunakea debate is that a willingness to listen to the many perspectives surrounding the issue and a desire to act toward the broader consensus of community is encouraged; however, the debate is over and now we await a court decision.

Closing Personal Comments

I am a science literacy advocate; astronomy is but a field of science. My support of astronomy should not be misconstrued with my love for science. I have three reasons why I support astronomy:

1. I support the cross-pollination of new ideas that comes from interdisciplinary sciences acting in concert and working together in the development of technologies and instrumentation that support astronomy and advance greater society. When scientists and engineers work together, they develop new technologies in the process of the research they are carrying out. Innovations in mammography, CAT scans, communication platforms, computer technologies, etc., have all benefited from the science of astronomy.

2. Identifying Near Earth Objects (NEO). Some sixty-six million years ago a six-mile wide asteroid impacted the Yucatan Peninsula, wiping out 70 percent of all flora and fauna on the planet, and was solely responsible for the extinction of Earth's dinosaurs. I believe having an early warning system for identifying rocks and NEOs hurling in space toward our planet is a good thing.
3. Earth's demise is a scientific fact. Five billion years from now our yellow dwarf Sun will turn into a red giant, and the surface of the Sun will consume Earth's orbit. The Sun will finally exhaust the hydrogen that fuels its core, and it will collapse into itself. Our job as humanity is to ensure that the Earth lives a full and fruitful life. Long before that, our species will need to figure out if living in another part of the universe is possible. I support a science that will inform me about the options humanity has toward sustaining itself.