

1

Mana Hawai'i: An Examination of Political Uses of the Word Mana in Hawaiian

Noenoe K. Silva

I want to begin by acknowledging that I am not in the field of anthropology, nor have I made a long study of the concept of mana. I am entering into this conversation from my standpoint as Kanaka Hawai'i, or Native Hawaiian, as a scholar whose focus is on Hawaiian-language historical and literary texts, and whose PhD is from and whose location is in a political studies department. Matt Tomlinson and Ty Kāwika Tengan, in their introduction, suggest that 'a reorientation [to mana as a concept] might begin with a genealogical exploration of mana's transformations in particular locales'. As a scholar outside of the discipline of anthropology, this is perhaps where I can make a contribution.

What I will talk about here is how the word and concept 'mana' has been used in select Hawaiian texts historically, and I will touch briefly on the contemporary uses and appropriations of the term. What I have to say is confined to specifically Hawaiian uses of the term and, as Tomlinson and Tengan point out in their chapter, 'mana has diverse meanings across the cultural, historical, religious, and political contexts spanning the Pacific'.

What I have found in my research is how the word *mana* appears in constitutions and laws as well as in some religious essays. It is performative—it takes speech in order to produce action, and that action constitutes and/or creates, increases or decreases *mana*. The word is used often to describe a *collective* rather than individual good. ‘*Mana*’ emerges in various political contexts, for example in the conversion to Christianity, in constitutional crises, and in comparisons of Hawaiian practice with the US Civil War. Its significations occur at different levels and the word is often ambiguous, as Hawaiian is characterised by its frequent language play. Good writers in Hawaiian seek out ambiguity for punning, allusions, metaphors, and so forth.

Let me preface my discussion with a short history of Hawaiian-language newspapers because they are crucial to any research into Hawaiian historical, cultural or linguistic topics. Newspapers in our native language began in 1834 with the paper of the secondary school Lahainaluna Seminary, established by Congregationalist missionaries sent to Hawai‘i by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. By the 1840s, the Hawaiian Kingdom was sponsoring a newspaper in Hawaiian. Until 1861, all Hawaiian-language papers were controlled by Congregational missionaries or ex-missionaries (Silva 2008). From 1861 on, Kanaka Hawai‘i produced their own independent papers, and served as writers and editors of papers of various churches. In the 1880s and 1890s, there were five or more different Hawaiian-language papers in publication at any given moment (Silva 2004). After the US took over Hawai‘i and imposed English in more domains, the newspapers dwindled, but the last did not go out of business until 1948 (Chapin 1984; Mookini 1974).

Kanaka ‘Ōiwi were literate in great numbers. Newspapers were very popular as sources of entertainment and news, but also for political organising. All issues of the day were thoroughly debated in the papers. Histories were published and critiqued, as were genealogies, geographies, songs, and the merits of this or that religion. Well-educated readers posed difficult puzzles for each other, some requiring knowledge of several languages to solve. These included discussions and questions about specific words in Hawaiian. In these thousands of pages, we can read and formulate some questions and do some analyses of what our ancestors thought about almost any topic or word. Because of digitising projects, it has recently become easier to access much of this archive; in addition to the microfilm rolls in

use since the 1970s, we now have the Papakilo Database as well as the Hawaiian Nūpepa Collection. These newspapers are the main sources of my research for this chapter.

As Tomlinson and Tengan point out, Claude Lévi-Strauss identified mana as a ‘floating signifier’, one that may have attached to it any number of ideas. They critique misuses of Lévi-Strauss’ point because, in reality, it should not mean that mana can mean simply anything. My point is to anchor some of those meanings in actual documents and essays in Hawaiian and to show how the uses of the word significantly shifted in Hawaiian-language political discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. In the early newspapers, which were highly focused on converting Kanaka to Christianity, mana was almost exclusively used in conjunction with Jehovah. Missionaries appropriated Hawaiian words to convey their religious concepts, so mana was used for the various powers of God.

Here are some examples. This first one was written by a missionary, a teacher of Lahainaluna in the school paper.

No ka mana o ke Akua.

Eia kona mana, i ka hana ana
i ka lani a me ka honua, i ka
hana ana i ka mea o ka lani,
o ka la a me ka mahina, o ka
hoku a me ke ao; i ka hana ana
i na mea a pau o ka honua, i na
laau a pau, i ka wai, i ka ai, i
ke kapa, i ka holoholona, i ke
kanaka, i ke kai a me ka ia.
No kona mana, ua malama
ia mai kakou a hiki ia nei.
Nolaila, e huli ae kakou ma
kona mana. Malaila kakou
e pakele ai i ka inaina o ke
Akua e kau mai nei. (*Ka Lama
Hawaii* 28 February 1834: 3)

Concerning the mana of God.

This is his mana, the creation
of the heavens and the earth,
making the things of the
sky, the sun and the moon,
the stars and the earth/light;
making everything of the
earth, all the plants, water,
food, coverings, animals,
people, the sea, and the fish.
Because of his mana, we have
been cared for until now.
Therefore, let us turn (convert)
to his mana. It is there we shall
escape the wrath of God that
is coming to pass (or is coming
down).¹

1 All translations are my own unless specified otherwise.

Page four of that paper was reserved for student contributions, and here is an excerpt. The students at Lahainaluna included adults and young adults, like Davida Malo and Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau, both of whom became important figures in Hawaiian government, politics and other arenas.² Many of the student essays concerned the changing nature of ‘pono’, or what was right, good, ethical. This is an excerpt from one of those essays.

... he **mana** ko ke Akua nui
o ka lani, no ka mea, lohe no
ia ia ka pohaku ke olelo aku,
a me ka wai, a me ka Moana,
a me na kuahiwi, a me na puu,
a me ka lani, a me ka honua,
a me na mea a pau loa. Lohe
no ia ia na mea pepeiao ole,
a me na mea uhane ole, aka o
ke kanaka, aole hoolohe i ka
ke Akua olelo; hoopaakiki ka
naau. (*Ka Lama Hawaii* 14
March 1834: 4)

... The great God of heaven
has **mana**, because these listen
to him when he speaks: the
rock, the water, the Ocean,
the mountains, and the hills,
and the heavens, and the
earth, and everything. Things
without ears listen to him, and
things without spirits, but
people do not listen to what
God says, the na‘au (mind/
feelings) is stubborn.

The contrast between how the haole (white American) missionary uses the word *mana* and how the Kanaka student uses it is striking. For the missionary, God’s *mana* exists regardless of whether or not anyone believes in him; we understand him as powerful because he created the heavens and earth. People should be fearful of God, and only turning to his *mana* will allow anyone to escape his wrath. For the Hawaiian student, in contrast, God has *mana* because a variety of sentient beings, whom we would classify as inanimate, *listen to him when he speaks*. God’s *mana* is conceptualised as performed in speech, and is dependent on someone listening. This idea is related to the Hawaiian word for religion: *ho’omana*. *Ho’o-* is a causative prefix, so in some sense the word means to give *mana*. Deities do not have *mana* unless some being(s) interact with them in some way. In Hawaiian thought, these other beings that the student mentions—the ocean, waters, hills, etc.—are our relatives. It seems to me that this Kanaka convert has brought that sensibility into his understanding of the *mana* of God.

2 Malo was important to the Christian mission, having assisted in translation of the Bible. Kamakau, in addition to prolific history writing, served as a judge as well as legislator.

In this same era, *mana* is used to describe weapons and the power of the *ali'i* (rulers). This example is from a news report about a dispute between some sailors from Borabora (a.k.a. Bora Bora, currently part of the Society Islands) and their captain, concerning their pay. The sailors took a small boat and carried it onto shore. Another person went to tell Hoapili, the *ali'i nui* (ruler), about the theft. Hoapili ordered them to return the boat. They didn't, and Hoapili then pronounced them in violation of the law and sentenced them to hard labour at road repair. The person reporting the incident wrote this:

Eia kekahi manao. He hoailona keia, he mea e hoike ai i ka **mana** o na alii. Ina haalele ia mau Borabora i ka Hoapili olelo a hoopai ole oia ia lakou, malaila paha e akaka ai ka hemahema o ke kanawai (Ke Kumu Hawaii 24 December 1834: 2).

Here is another thought. This is a sign that demonstrates the **mana** of the *ali'i* [plural]. If the Borabora men rejected Hoapili's word and he did not punish them, the weakness of the law would be seen there perhaps.

Here again we see that the *mana* of the *ali'i*—which is performed in speech—is being discussed as requiring practice and a certain kind of follow-up with action. If Hoapili failed to follow through with punishment for a violation, then his original speech would lack *mana*. This took place at a time prior to written laws.

Mana in Hawaiian Constitutions

I note here that in the first Constitution of Hawai'i in 1840, the word *mana* was never used. That document set out the structure of the government, including the roles of the *Ali'i Nui* (King), his/her executive called the *Kuhina Nui*, an upper house of a legislature called the '*aha'olelo o na ali'i*, a lower house of representatives elected by the populace, island governors, judges, and Supreme Court judges. In all of this, the word used to denote power/s is '*olelo* rather than *mana*. The word '*olelo* signifies speech, language, word, statement, as well as to say, to tell, etc. (Pukui and Elbert 1986: 284). Probably the most often quoted proverb in Hawaiian is this one: *I ka 'olelo no ke ola, i ka 'olelo no ka make* (In '*olelo is life, in '*olelo is also death*). This proverb*

expresses how seriously verbal pronouncements were taken by our people—they literally could mean that a person would live or die, as we shall see later.

In the 1840 Constitution, the section detailing the upper house names the ali'i who are appointed, and says 'Na lakou nei kekahi olelo o ke aupuni. ... O keia poe nae ka poe hooholo i ka olelo. Aole e hana ia kekahi kanawai no ka aina me ko lakou lohe ole' (Some 'ōlelo of the government belongs to them. However, these are the people who decide on the 'ōlelo. No law can be made for the land without their hearing it) (*Ke Kumu Kanawai a Me Na Kanawai O Ko Hawaii Pae Aina* 1994: 5). Wherever authority or decision-making is indicated, the word 'ōlelo seems to be used, never mana.

By the 1850s, however, we begin to see the word mana used for governmental powers. In the 1852 Kumukānāwai (Constitution), the word is used to delineate the powers of the three branches of government. For the first time now we are seeing the government using language very reminiscent of the US and less like the native language. Why does the word mana emerge at this time? Perhaps the reason is because they are translating from English.

NO NA MANA. Pauku 23.
E maheleia ka **mana** o ke
Aupuni i ekolu Apana okoa, oia
hoi ka **Mana** Hooko, ka **Mana**
Kau Kanawai a me ka **Mana**
Hookolokolo; e ku kaawale
ia mau **mana** ekolu; aole hoi
e huiia na **mana** hope elua
iloko o ke kanaka hookahi,
a iloko o ka Aha hookahi paha.
(Kumukanawai 1852)

OF POWERS. Art. 23.
The Supreme **power** of the
Kingdom, in its exercise, is
divided into the Executive,
Legislative and Judicial
branches; these are to be
preserved distinct; the two last
powers/branches cannot be
united in any one individual
or body.

Coincidentally, one of the words for branch is mana, so the word used for the three branches of government is also mana. In Hawaiian, the other sense of the word mana as power and authority would be heard along with the sense of branch. There would be no separating it, as Hawaiian listeners at that time would not have been accustomed to the English-language phrase, branches of government. Hawaiian speakers, readers, and listeners would also expect such language play and ambiguity as I explained earlier.

The years between the 1840 and 1852 constitutions saw a significant shift in the balance of power among the *mōʻī*, the *aliʻi*, and *haole*—missionaries and colonialist career-seekers like William Little Lee. The *mōʻī*'s control over all the land was divided in a *māhele* with the other *aliʻi*, which was followed by the Kuleana Act of 1850 that attempted to fairly distribute some of the land to *makaʻāinana* (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992; Perkins 2013). The intent was to allow private ownership of land as was the custom in Europe and the US. This change in land tenure reflected the attempts of the *aliʻi* to prevent colonisation by any of the *Mana Nui*, or Great Powers, such as Great Britain, France, or the USA. The 1852 Constitution continued this trend, borrowing language and philosophy more from Great Britain and the US than the 1840 Constitution did. The excerpt above shows how explicitly the concept of the tripartite division of powers of government was adopted from the US, whereas the 1840 Constitution simply laid out the new structure of government (Osorio 2002: 87). The most major change was the curtailing of the power of the *mōʻī*: in the 1840 structure the *mōʻī* 'was at once the executive, a member of the House of Nobles, and chief judge of the Supreme Court ... The [1852 Constitution] consigned the king ... to a more limited role as the kingdom's chief executive' (Osorio 2002: 87). This came about because changes in the law allowed both naturalised male citizens and male denizens of age to vote for the House of Representatives in 1851. According to Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio's history, seven of the 24 representatives elected were *haole* (Osorio 2002: 67–69). Kamehameha IV, Alexander Liholiho, educated in English at the Royal Chiefs' Children's School, governed with this Constitution from 1854 until his death in 1863.

When Kamehameha IV died and Lota Kapuāiwa took the throne as Kamehameha V in 1864, however, a constitutional crisis ensued. Kamehameha V wanted a new constitution and instead of convening the legislature that had just been elected, he had new elections held for delegates to a convention (*'Aha 'Elele*). This precipitated a *'ninau mana* or a *'mana question* in the newspapers. Did this *'Aha 'Elele* have the *mana*, or legitimate authority, to create a new constitution?

After several delegates to the convention produced resolutions questioning the *mana* of the *'Aha*, on July 14, 1864, the sixth day of the convention, the *Mōʻī* (King) reiterated his belief in this process, using the word *mana*. Here is an excerpt from his speech:

Ua hoakakaia mai ka manao ma keia olelo hooholo, aohe **mana** o keia Ahaolelo [n]ui e hoololi i ke Kumukanawai. [O] Ko'u manao ... eia na **mana** ekolu o Ko'u Aupuni iloko o keia Keena. Mai na **mana** hea la i loa mai ai ke Kumukanawai o ka A. D. 1852 ? Ke olelo nei Au a me Ko'u mau Kuhina, na Kamehameha III.

Ina he mea **mana** kekahi e hana i ke Kumukanawai i ka A. D. 1852, alaila, aia no ia **mana** iloko o na palena o keia Aupuni mai Hawaii a Niihau. A ina aole ia **mana** iloko o keia Keena, alaila, aia la i hea. Ke manao nei Au, eia no ia ia nei. He Moi no o Kamehameha III ma Kona ano Alii mai o ka wa Kahiko, aole ma ka **mana** i haawii iaia ma ke Kumukanawai. (Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, 16 July 1864: 2)

The opinion explained in this resolution is that this 'Aha'ōlelo has no **mana** to change the Constitution ... my opinion ... is that the three **mana** (branches) of my Government are here in this Office. From which **mana** was the 1852 Constitution obtained? I and my cabinet are saying, it was Kamehameha III.

If there were some other **mana** to make the 1852 Constitution, then, that **mana** would have been inside the boundaries of this Government, between Hawai'i and Ni'ihau. If that **mana** is not in this Office, then where is it? I think it is here. Kamehameha III was a Mō'ī in his position as an Ali'i from ancient times, not through any **mana** given to him in the Constitution.

As it turned out, Kamehameha V's convention did not exercise the mana the Mō'ī believed it to have. The Mō'ī eventually cancelled it and he and his cabinet wrote the new constitution. According to Osorio, one of the points of disagreement that caused the convention to stall was the disenfranchisement of the poor and landless. Osorio says, 'That meant that Hawaiians' disposition toward sharing and charity ... had to be actively discouraged' (Osorio 2002: 120). I bring this up because our most eminent historian and genealogist of the nineteenth century, Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau, began writing his important historical work just two years after these political struggles. He had always been concerned about how Kanaka 'Ōiwi were being represented in histories, especially those written by foreigners, and he had been trained in historiography and oral history gathering by the missionary Sheldon Dibble at Lahainaluna. He was concerned about the changes in the economic system that pitted people against each other and resulted in poverty and homelessness.

His series on Kamehameha I ran for about one year in *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* (until September 1867), after which he continued it to cover the reigns of Kamehameha II and III, for the following two years, until October 1869. At the end, Kamakau dwells upon how our kūpuna (ancestors) made peace after battles, and were concerned for the welfare of people. For example, in a war, if one side is winning and the other is being utterly destroyed:

... ina i ka wa kua nui ...
 make ka Moi o kekahi aoao,
 a luku wale aku ka aoao
 lanakila i ka aoao pio, alaila,
 kukala mai la ka Moi o ka aoao
 lanakila i ke kanawai o ke ola,
 a ua ola ka aoao pio, ua pau
 ka luku (Kamakau 7 October
 1869: 1).

If in the time of a great war,
 the Mōʻī of one side died,
 and the winning side was
 destroying the losing side,
 then the Mōʻī of the winning
 side would declare the law of
 life, and the losing side would
 live, and the destruction
 would be stopped.

Prisoners would be released and could not be detained, and no prisoners could be made into slaves, or condemned to the group known as kauā. Kamakau then gives specific examples of when such a law was used, such as at the battle over the 'ai noa (end of the kapu system). Kamakau writes:

O keia mau hana naauao a ka
 lahui Hawaii i ka wa kahiko
 a hiki i ke au o Kamehameha
 I ame Kamehameha II ame
 Kamehameha III.... Na wai i
 ao mai i keia lahui i keia mau
 hana naauao aloha i ka wa
 kahiko, na ka baibala anei?
 (Kamakau 7 October 1869: 1).

These were wise actions of the
 lāhui Hawai'i in ancient times
 until the eras of Kamehameha
 I, II, and III. Who taught
 this lāhui these wise merciful
 actions in the ancient times,
 was it the Bible?

He answers the last question no, since in the Bible prisoners are kept as slaves. He goes on to say that only in Hawai'i did a King willingly implement a constitution. He further asserts, 'O ke aloha o na alii i na makaainana, a o ke aloha o na makaainana i na alii, oia ke kumu i kukulu ia ai ke kumukanawai Hawaii' (The aloha of the ali'i for the maka'āinana [people], and the aloha of the maka'āinana for the ali'i was the reason or foundation upon which the Hawaiian constitution

was built (Kamakau 7 October, 1869: 1)). This is a continuation of Kamakau's critique of western governance and religion, and advocacy of the value of Hawaiian practices.

Kamakau goes on to say that each *mō'i* has had a *kumukānāwai* (constitution); Kamehameha I's *kumukānāwai* was the *kānāwai Māmalahoa* (Law of the Splintered Paddle). He says it consists of just one sentence, 'however, its nature was multiple, and the most important characteristic of it was life' (Kamakau 7 October 1869: 1). Several months later, in a new history of Hawai'i that Kamakau was writing, he meditated on the nature of Kamehameha's *mana*. This section was never put into the 'history' translation called *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, but instead went into the book called *The People of Old*, which focuses on religion and other works of *kāhuna* (ritual specialists) (Kamakau 1992; Kamakau 1991).³ It appears under the heading of 'He Kanawai Mamalahoa'. Here Kamakau tells the story of how Kamehameha had been beaten with a club or paddle by some fishermen, and afterwards proclaimed the law: 'E hele ka elemakule a moe i ke ala, e hele ka luahine a moe i ke ala, e hele ke keiki a moe i ke ala' (Kamakau 24 March 1870: 1), 'Let the old men, the old women and the children sleep [in safety] on the highway' (Kamakau 1991 (trans.): 15). Because of this story, the law came to be known in English as the Law of the Splintered Paddle. Kamakau then asks how the *Māmalahoa* law became a law with *mana*. He answers:

Ua ae like na Kuhina na 'lii a
me na kahuna, a me na mea
mana a pau, a ua ae like
lakou a pau e lilo ke kanawai
Mamalahoa he kanawai
kuakoko no ko Kamehameha
la hanau ana mai ka opu mai o
kona makuahine. (Kamakau 24
March 1870: 1)

It was because the counselors,
the chiefs, the kahunas, and
all the **powerful** persons had
agreed that the Mamalahoa law
was Kamehameha's birthright,
from the time he came from
his mother's womb. (Kamakau
1991 (trans.): 15)

And he explains that similar laws existed before Kamehameha and such laws of life were well-known to our people. What is important in this passage is the collective decision-making about this law. No *ali'i*

3 In other contexts, *kāhuna* also includes experts in any profession, male or female, including house locating and building, ocean vessel construction, medicine, etc. (Pukui and Elbert 1986).

is a dictator; he or she is surrounded by these ‘powerful persons’ or people with mana. Without them, Kamehameha would not have had this law ascribed to him.

Kamakau further explains:

O ke kanawai
Mamalahoa, oia
kona **mana** p[a]
lena ole ma kona
Nohoalii Moi ma
kona aupuni, aole
kekahi mea poino
a pilikia a pio, a
luku, a hookahe
koko, a ua kau
ia ke kanawai
Mamalahoa, ua
laa ia no ke ola a
no ka pomaikai.
(Kamakau 24
March 1870,
Ke Au Okoa: 1)

The Māmalahoa
law was his
boundless **mana**
in his rule as Mōī
over his aupuni:
no one was [to
be] abused,
oppressed,
imprisoned,
destroyed or
have blood shed,
and when the
Māmalahoa law
was invoked, it
was dedicated
to life and
good fortune/
blessings/
prosperity.
(my translation)

The *kanawai*
Mamalahoa gave
him unlimited
power while
ruler of his
kingdom. Anyone
so unfortunate
as to be taken
captive and
about to be killed
could be saved
by Kamehameha
pronouncing the
Mamalahoa law;
it was consecrated
to the saving of
lives and fortunes.
(Kamakau 1991
(trans.): 15)

Here Kamakau says that the Māmalahoa law constituted Kamehameha’s mana. Pukui translates the sentence as the law giving Kamehameha unlimited power, but the sentence is not actually constructed using any of the words for ‘give’, rather it is an existential structure, an equational sentence in Hawaiian grammar. Part A, the *kānāwai Māmalahoa*, ‘equals’ or actually *is* Part B, Kamehameha’s mana.

Kamakau illustrates this with the story of the decisive battle for the island of Hawai’i between Kamehameha and his rival Keōua. Keōua had been lured to a supposed meeting for a truce, but was killed instead, and offered as a sacrifice at Kamehameha’s new heiau, Pu’ukoholā. Among Keōua’s followers was a son of Kamehameha himself, Ka’ōleiokū. The ‘ohana of the ali’i were completely intertwined and close relatives often found themselves on opposite sides in battle. Kamehameha’s

circle of ali'i and advisors strongly suggested killing all of Keōua's people, but Kamehameha instead insisted on proclaiming the kānāwai Māmalahoa, which saved them all, including his son.

Thus Kamakau seems to be saying that the power to grant life, to refrain from killing, was Kamehameha's kumukānāwai, and was the basis for his boundless mana. Kamehameha's pronouncement of the law, or his performance of it, constitutes his mana. Kamakau is reinforcing that this was a kumukānāwai, a foundation for laws that protected lives.

While mana ali'i is undoubtedly bound up with genealogy and hierarchy—the higher the rank the closer to divine status and thus the greater an ali'i's initial mana—this explanation or theory of Kamakau's complicates matters (in a good way) for us. Kamakau explains elsewhere that rank alone does not make an ali'i successful, and we have many stories of ali'i who behaved poorly or weakly and lost their lives because of it (see Pukui 1995: 74–77, 131–33).

Because the US Civil War was still very fresh in Hawaiians' minds—they received weekly news reports and some of the missionary sons and a few Kānaka had fought on the side of the Union⁴—Kamakau was also making a point about mana and pono. He wrote a few paragraphs at this time explaining that while the ali'i did war against each other, peacemaking always followed, and never were people imprisoned afterwards, nor were they ever made into slaves, bought, sold, or traded. It is evident to me that Kamakau is making a statement about the value of the old ali'i system and the dangers of following western models of governance, war and even religion.

I think what Kamakau was most concerned about was the welfare of his people and he used this point about the Māmalahoa law to illustrate that it was peacemaking as much as winning battles that made Kamehameha Ka Na'i Aupuni, or the one who created one government over the whole archipelago.

The original Congregational missionaries also waged discursive battles against Catholicism (to which Kamakau converted) and Anglicanism, and Kamakau rages against this senseless warring. He writes, for example:

4 For more on Hawai'i individuals involved in the US Civil War, see *Hawai'i Sons of the Civil War*, a planned documentary film. Online: hawaiisonsofthecivilwar.com/ (accessed 5 October 2015).

A o ka hoolilo ana o na aoao
 hoomana Akua ia Hawaii
 nei i kahua hoouka kauan
 ka lakou mau olelo, i lilo na
 keiki a ka lahui Hawaii, i
 lahui akamai i ka hoopaapaa,
 e haalele ana i ka **mana** o ka
 olelo a ke Akua. Ka inoa o ka
mana o ka olelo a ke Akua
 ka mea nana e hoohuli i ka
 naau o ka lehulehu, eia ka!
 o ka hookolekole waha—ea.
 (Kamakau 7 October 1869: 1)

And the different Christian
 denominations converting/
 transforming Hawai'i into
 a battlefield over their
 dogma, caused the children
 of the Hawaiian people to
 change into people skilled in
 argument, abandoning the
mana of the word of God.
 I thought the **mana** of the
 word of God was the thing
 to convert the hearts of the
 people, but! it is rude talk.

Kamakau was also a great critic of how capitalism creates poverty, and holds up the old Hawaiian system as one in which no one goes hungry. That is another obvious meaning of the Māmalahoa law for us today, as we watch our brothers, sisters, kūpuna and keiki (children) try to survive on beaches and sidewalks.

Fast forward: Mana in the present day

Between Kamakau's time and ours, American culture has become hegemonic in Hawai'i nei. Hawaiians have become a minority in our own land, and almost all media is now in English rather than Hawaiian. No newspapers in Hawaiian are sold on the streets of Honolulu. As Haunani-Kay Trask trenchantly observes, Hawaiian culture is prostituted for tourist dollars. This is reflected in some contemporary appropriations of the word *mana* (Trask 1999: 136–47). The *Huffington Post*, for example, recently ran an essay called '5 Hawaiian Words to Redefine Health, Happiness and Power in your Life' (5 September 2013), which assumes that Hawaiian words and values can be appropriated for the already privileged. The article seems aimed at the wealthy who live part-time or vacation regularly in Hawai'i. While all of their short paragraphs describing each word are worth ignoring, the last one, 'mana', draws on one of the multitude of books on the fake Hawaiian religion, *huna* (see Hall 2005: 411). They say, 'Mana is a life energy that flows through all things and is highly individual', which I would contrast with the collective, reciprocal and

performative nature of mana described in the Kanaka Maoli writings I have discussed. Then the *Huffington Post* illustrates this with a rather lecherous photo of a young Senator Daniel Inouye, calling him 'one of the best examples of mana' (5 September 2013).

In the Hawaiian community, movements for sovereignty and social justice have been continuous since they first arose in the 1970s (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Hussey and Wright 2014). The concept and word mana is gaining new favour: we have a new political organisation called MANA (Movement for Aloha no ka 'Āina), and a glossy magazine called *Mana*. I do not think, however, that mana has really been a keyword for us as we continue to face challenges to maintaining or creating a resurgence of Hawaiian life in our islands. Having done this research on how this word mana was used by our kūpuna, I now think that mana should be revived as a keyword. Its connection to the Māmalahoa law could be made more well-known among all our people. Perhaps we should endeavour to build mana collectively, based upon the life-affirming principle of Māmalahoa. Some activists are using the kānāwai Māmalahoa in their calls for justice now. The photo below shows Hawaiian activists deploying the kānāwai Māmalahoa when the City and County of Honolulu was evicting (De)occupy Honolulu from a public sidewalk. (Occupy Honolulu was inspired by Occupy Wall Street, and its name was changed to (De)occupy Honolulu after Hawaiian activists became involved.)

Further, outside of movement politics, I see Kānaka everywhere engaged in positive projects for our people, in education, voyaging, language revitalisation, hula, etc. Is this mana we are already building together?



Figure 7. De-occupy Honolulu, 2012.

Source: Photograph by H. Doug Matsuoka, used with permission.

In 1905, Joseph Moku'ōhai Poepoe published a history of Kamehameha I in his newspaper called 'Ka Na'i Aupuni'. In the introduction these words appear in capital letters: UA PAU NA LANI MOI, AKA, KE OLA NEI NO NA HULU MAKAAINANA, A O [LA]KOU NA KOO O KA NA'I AUPUNI (The monarchial ali'i are gone, but the precious remnants of Maka'āinana still live, and they are the supports of Ka Na'i Aupuni) (Hooulumahiehie 1905: 1). It seems to me that 'the supports of Ka Na'i Aupuni' means two things: one is that Ka Na'i Aupuni—Kamehameha's government—metaphorically is the Hawaiian islands and the Hawaiian people. More mundanely, it is the name of the newspaper and Poepoe wanted people to support it. He was, however, a huge supporter of Hawaiian language and lifeways. The important part is that even though the native government has been gone for some time now, we, the common people, can still support each other and the life of the lāhui.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed some instances of the word and concept mana in a selection of Hawaiian-language contexts. The word was most commonly used in early Hawaiian writing in conjunction with Jehovah as Congregationalist missionaries converted the first generation of Hawaiians. In the first written Hawaiian Constitution, where we might have expected the word mana, we see instead the word 'ōlelo to express the exercise of power. 'Ōlelo, the spoken word, implied action would follow; for an ali'i to say something was enough to make it so. In such contexts, mana is seen to be performative and collective, and not to signify individuals amassing and exercising power. In later constitutions, we do see the word mana where we expect it, likely because of translation from English, which was becoming increasingly dominant. The ali'i nui were all being educated in English in the Royal Chiefs' Children's School, and English-language speaking advisors to the Mō'ī were common. In the writings of Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau in the 1860s and 1870s, it appears that he was more concerned with the concept of pono than with mana. Today, the word mana has been (mis)appropriated in touristic and New Age rhetoric.

We are seeing a rise, however, in the use of the word mana among sovereignty and self-determination activism. This is cause for optimism as we work to bring our lives into a state of pono through collective action. My hope is that this chapter might contribute in some small way towards that cause.

References

Digital repositories

Hawaiian Nūpepa Collection. *Ulukau: Hawaiian Electronic Library*.
Online: nupepa.org/ (accessed 5 October 2015).

Papakilo Database. Online: papakilodatabase.com/main/main.php
(accessed 5 October 2015).

Books, journal articles, and chapters

- Chapin, Helen Geracimos. 1984. Newspapers of Hawaii 1834 to 1903: From 'He Liona' to the Pacific Cable. *Hawaiian Journal of History* 18: 47–86.
- Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Noelani, Ikaika Hussey and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright (eds). 2014. *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty*. Narrating Native Histories. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hall, Lisa Kahaleole. 2005. 'Hawaiian at heart' and other fictions. *The Contemporary Pacific* 17(2): 404–13.
- Hawai'i Sons of the Civil War. n.d. Planned documentary film. Online: hawaiiisonsofthecivilwar.com/ (accessed 8 October 2015).
- Hooulumahiehie. 1905. 'Kamehameha I.: Ka Na'i Aupuni O Hawaii'. *Ka Na'i Aupuni*, 27 November.
- Huffington Post. 2013. 5 Hawaiian words to redefine health, happiness and power in your life. 5 September. Online: www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/03/hawaiian-health-and-happiness_n_3854391.html?ir=Australia (accessed 8 October 2015).
- Kamakau, S.M. 1869–1870. 'Ka Moolelo Hawaii'. *Ke Au Okoa*.
- Kamakau, Samuel Manaiakalani. 1991. *Ka Po'e Kahiko = the People of Old*, ed. Dorothy B. Barrère, trans. Mary Kawena Pukui. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publication 51. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Kamakau, Samuel Manaiakalani. 1992 [revised ed.]. *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*. Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Schools Press.
- Kame'eleihiwa, Lilikalā. 1992. *Native Land and Foreign Desires: How Shall We Live in Harmony (Ko Hawai'i 'Āina a Me Nā Koi Pu'umake a Ka Po'e Haole: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?)*. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Ke Kumu Kanawai a Me Na Kanawai O Ko Hawaii Pae Aina*. 1994 [reprint]. Green Valley, NV: Ted Adameck.

- Mookini, Esther. 1974. *The Hawaiian Newspapers*. Honolulu: Topgallant Publishing Co.
- Osorio, Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoole. 2002. *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Perkins, Mark Umi. 2013. Kuleana: A genealogy of native tenant rights. PhD dissertation. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Online: search.proquest.com.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/pqdtft/docview/1430295574/abstract/EE935508F7964E90PQ/1?accountid=27140 (accessed 8 October 2015).
- Pukui, Mary Kawena. 1995. *Folktales of Hawai'i He Mau Ka'ao Hawai'i*. Bishop Museum Special Publication 87. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.
- Pukui, Mary Kawena and Samuel H. Elbert. 1986 [revised and enlarged edition]. *Hawaiian Dictionary: Hawaiian-English, English-Hawaiian*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Silva, Noenoe K. 2004. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Silva, Noenoe K. and Iokepa Badis. 2008. Early Hawaiian newspapers and Kanaka Maoli intellectual history, 1834–1855. *Hawaiian Journal of History* 42: 105–34.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay. 1999 [revised ed.]. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

This text is taken from *New Mana: Transformations of a Classic Concept in Pacific Languages and Cultures*, edited by Matt Tomlinson and Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, published 2016 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.