

Unit 1

Sense of Place

One Hanau—"The Sands of Your Birth"

The concept of "sense of place" stems from an understanding of and an interaction with the land we call our home. It's an important concept which all Native Hawaiian people should heed to and have a clear understanding of. The following is a narrative by Uncle Calvin Hoe, longtime resident, kumu, and kupuna from Hakipu`u, and his thoughts on "sense of place."

"Sense of Place" by Uncle Calvin Hoe

"The idea of sense of place is that it's always important, especially to the Hawaiian people. Kinda like when you introduce yourself, you would say who you are and then you (would) say where you come from. 'Cuz, that's important...where you come from. It's the place that's important. And then you talk about who you know, and basically you almost get into genealogy, talking about your father, or your auntie. And you try and get some kind of commonality so people know who you are, where you come from, and who your family is. And that's the important thing."

"My own personal experience as far as sense of place, which is what I know the best, is when I introduce myself I always say I come from Hakipu`u. I was born and raised in Hakipu`u. I go on to say I was actually born there 'cuz when I was born, in 1945, us guys were born at home. That's important to me too because in Hawaiian terms they say *one hanau*, the sands of birth, where you were born. And for me, because my family has lived in Hakipu`u for hundreds of years, this is important too because my ancestors come from there. And my ancestors ARE there. The Hawaiian traditional thought of ancestors is not like they're dead and gone away some place; they're there you know. They're just there. And so my ancestors are there (at Hakipu`u). I was talking to somebody and they were saying their ancestors were the trees. And not only the trees, but the rocks... everything. If you look at it in this other word, this Hawaiian word, which is *Lōkahi*... to be in harmony, to be one with... that concept, that idea, is about being a part of. I guess Christians say 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust' and that's the same idea. They go back to the place where they came from. It's a cycle, a physical cycle; when a person is born and especially if they live in one place and eat the taro and the fish from that place, and their waste goes right back in to the soil, and when they die they go right back in to the soil, you are the soil. You are the place, and that's who you are. It's just one continuous cycle, you plant and you just go around and around."

"Now, I don't know myself about...I've never heard Hawaiians talking about reincarnation, about coming back as a tree or grasshopper or one pueo, or as another person. Although, I am... I say that I am my grandfather, I am my mother. Physically I am, because their genes and, I was born of them, and their ideas, the cumulative cultural knowledge that I have is from them. And so, my son is me, and my grandson is me. And we all come from this place called Hakipu`u because that's where we come from and that's who we are. For me, when I pass on, I would like





to just go back in the dirt over there. I really don't wanna go to a cemetery, you know, in one cut box. Like you see in Samoa, the family, yeah, they in their front yard and they stay sleeping right on top of the tombs and stuff like that. But they get concrete now, but there's an idea of closeness. And to me that's a really good thing because you're with your ancestors, yeah. You're with your mother, your father, you're with your grandparents. Sociologically, it's really good to be from one place. You know, in Hakipu`u we're kinda fortunate because all the old families are still there, and I'm related to everybody over there. There's this kinship and everybody takes care of each other because you're family. And we're lucky we have that, and... not everybody has that."

"You know, people move. The Hawaiians came from far away at one time. They weren't here forever. They were from the Marquesas and Tahiti, and they had to come over here and establish themselves and begin to be from some place. And so there's always new beginnings to me. That's why (to) new people in the community, I don't say, 'You don't belong.' You can belong. And I look for commitment. I look for people who want to be there. I prefer people that want to be there for a long time. In Hakipu`u there's a family that bought (a home) from one of my cousins, and in a few years they sold (it). And in a few years the people who bought (it) sold again. You know, they're just there to make money and they gone, you know. But it's the guys who stay and make the commitment, you know, and so everything is there. Sociologically, that's very good, because if you have da kine people that (are) coming and going all the time, you don't know who is who, what their history is, you know, there's no accountability. When you're going (to) live some place for generations, you gotta take care. You gotta, um, you gotta make sure your reputation is good, because there's no hiding... you no can just disappear. You can, but it's not as good as the guys that you know they've been there for a long time. If you shame yourself, you shame your family, and sociologically that's very important."

"Psychologically, that's very important too... this sense of place... who am I? You know, everybody needs to know who they are. So, they need to know where they come from, who their ancestors are, who their family is. That's very important. It's important to me, you know... I went to school and, my major was Psychology and I also got a teaching certificate. I studied education and mind/child development, that kind of stuff, and who you are, you know, is very important. Your sense of self is very important. So 'dis kine sense of place, is psychologically very important. When I came home to Hawai'i from the Peace Corps in 1970, Hawaiians were in bad shape. And to me, the thing that we had to do was to understand who we are, to develop that positive self-image. And... that's the time of all the Vietnam (issues) and also all the Blacks... you know, da kine, 'Roots.' Yeah, that was all important things. You know, 'Black is beautiful.' I was going around... I was teaching at Kamehameha Schools in 'Explorations' and I was going around teaching the kids up there, 'this is your guy's place, you know, and Brown is beautiful.' And at that time, (if) you Hawaiian, you lazy. The self-image was very poor, uh, 'Primo Warriors,' that was the self-image at that time. You know, everybody drinking 'Primo' and 'go lick some Haoles.' That was the idea of who you (were) as a Hawaiian. But uh, the Maoris they look at the mountains, the river, and the ocean, and 'you're a part of that.' That's you, and that's important. We need to instill that, to me, in this... in what we're trying to teach about taking care of the ocean. We need to instill (those) concepts of place ... where you are. And so you gotta know

your mountain and you gotta know about your mountain. You need to know the stories of your place, you know. For us at Hakipu`u, we're Kamapua`a kine people. You know, there's the mountains ... Pu`upe`e, that's where Pele chased Kamapua`a. You need to know Mokoli`i, you need to know Moli`i, you need to know Kaneho`alani, you need to know `Ohulihuli, you need to know Pu`upueo. And you need to know the stories. You need to know the story of Maui, you need to know the story of the rocks. As much as you can, you need to know, because that's how you know yourself, as you are that place. And then you going take care of that place, of course. And that's what is *mālama*, you know, 'mālama Kane`ohe Bay,' take care of that. So, that sense of place is very important, 'cuz you are that place, and that place is you."

"You know, your place, the earth, in Hawaiian concepts, you never owned the place. That was just your right to take care of this place. And the idea of buying and selling has been really detrimental to Hawaiian people. (There's) so many homeless Hawaiians now, 'cuz no more land, and no can compete. We just... our style, we can compete, but we need to go outside of our style to make money very important. And that's the only way. But the idea of buying and selling has been bad for us, and we were taken advantage of... but that's alright, I not going cry about it. But, what are we going to do about it? To me, we shouldn't, as much as possible, not sell land. You know, I'm talking to my kids and saying, 'Let's put 'em in trusts so that nobody can sell.' Who knows? You get divorced, brah, and 'boom' you gotta sell. But if you're in one trust, no can. The idea of buying and selling... you know, the dirt... the earth, is 'Papa.' Mother Earth is Papa. Who can own, who can buy, who can sell? With the Hawaiian people it worked well for a long time... hundreds and hundreds of years, thousands of years with that kind of idea. But two hundred years and the thing changed, and 'boom,' we're at the bottom. We gotta learn how to live in this western world, but we cannot forget where we come from because there's good, sound thoughts of how to do things... these ideas of place and respect. Protect it. Take care of it, because that's what's going to feed you. And if you don't, you're gonna be in trouble. Right now, we can go Safeway, but that's a very dangerous situation that all of our food comes from far away and gotta come on the ship, with gasoline. The buggah get disrupted and we're in bad shape. We get resources here, but we gotta take care. And at Hakipu`u, at Hakipu`u Learning Center that's important concepts. That's why we have ocean studies things, 'cuz we gotta learn how to take care of that ocean. Otherwise, we have to depend on Safeway. We gotta learn how to take care of the `aina, we gotta learn how to plant. We gotta have that *Lōkahi*, that sense of 'oneness' with all of our surroundings. You gotta be careful you no pollute 'em. You know, they pollute the wells, like in Wahiawa, and you no can use the place. And that's real dangerous. So, we gotta take care, 'cuz to me, this sense of place plays into all of that... where you come from. I think that wherever people are, they can do that. You know, even if you had to move some place, even if you come from a foreign country and you come over here... come take care. If you no like take care, I'd rather you go find someplace else. But if you like take care, we going help each other... and I don't mind. But if you here to just take what you can and be gone, better you be gone the sooner the better. Make room for people who like take care. But, the idea is to teach, the idea is that all of these things have to be taught, and that's what we're trying to do. To teach people how to take care."

