

OLA KA 'ŌLELO  
KANAKA MA  
PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA  
THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE THRIVES IN  
PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

NA J. HAU'OLI LORENZO-ELARCO

Mama 'ō sit atop the mountains on a hillside at Pūhāhonu  
Moe, Mokuānāhau - Photo: Kaitiaki 'ō Wai'anae

**W**ith the honor of the ancestral islands, greetings of aloha to each of you from Ha'eha'e on Hawai'i Island to Hi'olani on Hōlanikū (Kure Atoll). As a representative of the Papahānaumokuākea Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG), I humbly offer a bundle of limu to each of you, as a reminder of the delicacies of the Hawaiian language throughout our entire archipelago.

In 1917, it was printed in the Hawaiian language newspaper *Ka Puuhonua o na Hawaii* that, "I ikeia no ke kanaka no keka-hi lahui ma kana olelo..." (One is identified as belonging to a particular people by their language...). In this way, a people may also be seen as belonging to a certain place through the language used to describe it. This includes names, poetry, and proverbial sayings. Language has been used both as a tool and a weapon to honor, claim, erase, and rewrite the history of a space.

Focusing on names for spaces and species, this article illuminates two of the many ways a thriving Hawaiian language has mapped and memorialized land and ocean in the region of the Hawaiian archipelago known as Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM).

#### ABOUT PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

PMNM is one of the largest marine protected areas on the planet, spanning 582,578 mi<sup>2</sup>, comprising ¼ of the archipelago and the entirety of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The area is home to several marine and terrestrial species, many endemic.

Affectionately referred to as the Kupuna Islands, PMNM is historically, culturally, politically, and spiritually important to Kānaka. Despite its size and importance, the islands and atolls within Papahānaumokuākea were nearly forgotten under forced amnesia due to the colonial project that supplanted traditional place names and narratives with non-native ones.

#### ISLAND NAMES

Generally, one might know that there are eight "main" Hawaiian Islands (MHI). Almost 3,000 miles away from Hawai'i, the landlocked city of Las Vegas is often cited as the ninth island. Some also point to Washington State as the tenth island. These foreign places receive such designations based on the large number of Native Hawaiians now living there in diaspora.

Though terms like this are seemingly an innocent act of placemaking, these ideas actively work to erase from human consciousness the many other islands that comprise the Hawaiian archipelago, such as Paokalani, Mokupuku, Molokini, Mokoli'i, Popo'a, Mānana, Kāohikaipu, Moku'ua, Moku'aia, Mōkapu, Ōkala, Huelo, Lehua, Ka'ula, and others. Though these places can be easily seen from the MHI, contemporary society does not count them as standalone entities but extensions of the larger, human-inhabited islands, grouped within imaginary county boundary lines.

Nonetheless, we know these are storied Hawaiian places because we can physically see them, and we possess historical language that describes them. But, with erosion, sea-level rise, and climate change, what will happen to our memory of the rarely seen or spoken of islands and atolls of Papahānaumokuākea when they reach the end of their life cycle and fully return to the ocean?

There are 10 islands and atolls within Papahānaumokuākea. Starting closest to the MHI, some may be vaguely familiar with Nihoa and Mokumanamana (Necker Island). These islands retain their identity as Hawaiian places simply through names that recall stories of primordial deities, voyaging chiefs, and ritual worship.

Moving northwest, the identity of the islands noticeably shifts, with Hawaiian histories completely washed over by foreign names. To date, there have been two important efforts to recover the Hawaiian identity of these elder islands. First, in the 1990s, the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee developed names for each island. Secondly, several years later, Dr. Kekuewa Kikilo (CWG co-chair) returned lost traditional names to these islands by matching their physical characteristics to an 1835 written composition by a Lahainaluna Seminary student named Kaiikawaha, who described the islands of the Hawaiian archipelago.

The islands and atolls of Papahānaumokuākea – except for Nihoa and Mokumanamana – now hold at least three names: two Hawaiian and one foreign (see map). Today, these names



Hōlanikū. Kure Atoll. • Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMNP

are used interchangeably. Excitingly, there is a conscious shift away from the English epithets to the Hawaiian ones.

#### NĀ INOA MEA OLA

The Hawaiian language also thrives in Papahānaumokuākea through species names. Seabirds reign in the millions within PMNM. Hawaiian bird names are often onomatopoeic, named for the sounds they make. It is in Papahānaumokuākea that one can hear the courtship song of the mōli, the cawing of the 'ao'ū, and the chattering of the 'ua'u. But, for a handful of species that inhabit this place, Hawaiian names have been lost to time or never given.

The Nomenclature Hui, a subcommittee of the CWG is tasked with investigating the names of spaces and species within Papahānaumokuākea. Leaning on archival materials and ancestral naming practices, the committee researches, repatriates, and develops names. Thus far, the hui has given 74 names to fish, seaweeds, corals, plants, and birds of PMNM.

New names for newly discovered species are not just created through a committee structure. With the power of technol-

**M**e ka hanohano o nā āina kupuna, mai ka lā puka i Ha'eha'e o Hawai'i Nui Kuauli a hiki loa aku i ka lā ho'i i Hī'olani o ka moku kua'au 'o Hōlanikū, aloha nui iā kākou a pau. Eia hou mai nei he 'elele o nā hoā āina o Papahānaumokuākea (CWG) e waiho ha'aha'a nei he pūpū limu aloha nui 'ia na 'oukou pākahi, i wahi ho'omana'o no ka 'ono o ka 'ōlelo Kanaka o ko kākou pae āina.

I ka MH 1917, ua pa'i 'ia ma ka nūpepa 'ōlelo Hawai'i 'o *Ka Puuhonua o na Hawaii*, "I ikeia no ke kanaka no kekahi lahui ma kana olelo...". Inā pēlā, 'ike pū 'ia nō ke kanaka no kekahi āina ma kāna 'ōlelo, e la'a ho'i me nā inoa, nā mele, a me nā 'ōlelo no'ēau no kekahi āina. No ka 'ōlelo, ua lilo ia he mea pono a mea kua ho'i no ka ho'ohanohano 'ana, ka ho'okolonaio 'ana, ke kāpae 'ana, a me ka haku hou 'ana i ka mo'olelo o kekahi āina.

Ma ke kīā'ana i nā inoa pana āina a me nā inoa mea ola, ma o ka 'ōlelo Kanaka, e ho'omana'o 'ia ana nō ia māhele nui o ka pae āina nei, 'o ia ke Kīāho'omana'o Kai Aupuni 'o Papahānaumokuākea.

### NO PAPAHAANAUMOKUĀKEA

'O Papahānaumokuākea kekahi pu'uhonua kai nui loa i ho'omalū 'ia o ka honua nei no ka pono o nā 'ano mea ola 'ōiwi a 'āpa'akuma ho'i e noho nei ma laila. He 582,578 mile kua ka nui, a he 'ekolu hapahā nō ia o ka pae āina nei, a aia nō i laila nā mokupuni a pau o ka 'ākau komohana o Hawai'i.

Kapa 'ia nō ma ka inoa 'o nā Kupuna Islands, he ko'iko'i loa pū nō 'o Papahānaumokuākea no ka lāhui Hawai'i ma ka mo'omeheu, ka 'ao'ao politika, a me ka 'ao'ao pili 'uhane pū kekahi. I loko nō na'e o kona 'ano nui a ko'iko'i, ua 'ane pōina loa kekahi hapa loa o ko ke au nei i ia mau moku o loko o Papahānaumokuākea ma muli o ka hehu 'ia o nā inoa ku'una a me nā mo'olelo e pili pū ana e nā kolonaio no ke kanu a ho'oulu hou mai i nā inoa 'ē a me nā mo'olelo 'ē.

### NĀ INOA PANĀ 'ĀINA

Ua laha loa nō paha nā inoa Hawai'i o nā moku "nui" he 'ewalu o Hawai'i nei. Ma kahi o 3,000 mau mile mai Hawai'i aku, kuhi pinepine 'ia ke kiwikā kai 'ole 'o Las Vegas, 'o ia ka moku 'ēiwa o Hawai'i, a no kekahi, kuhi 'ia ka moku āina 'o Wakinekona, 'o ka 'umi ia. Kuhi 'ia nō pēlā no ka nui o nā Hawai'i i ha'ālele iā Hawai'i no ka noho hou 'ana ma ia mau wahi mamao.

'Oia'i he mau inoa kapakapa wale nō paha ia e hō'ōia ana i kekahi pīlina kanaka me kona āina, he ala nō ia e ho'opoina mai ai kākou i nā mokupuni 'ē a'e o Hawai'i pae moku, e la'a ho'i me Paokalani, Mokupuku, Molokini, Mōkōli'i, Popo'a, Mānana, Kāohikaipu, Mokulua, Moku'aula, Mōkapu, 'Ōkala, Huelo, Lehua, a me Ka'ula mā. I loko nō na'e o ka hiki ke 'ike maka aku i ia mau mokupuni mai nā mokupuni nui o Hawai'i nei, 'a'ole mana'o 'ia, he mau mokupuni kū 'oko'a nō ia mai ia mau mokupuni nei mai. He mau mokupuni wale nō na'e in o ia mau mokupuni nei i ho'ohui 'ia i loko o nā palena āina a nā kalana Hawai'i i kaha ai.

'Ike le'a nō na'e kākou, nā Hawai'i, he mau āina Hawai'i nō ia mau mokupuni lili'i no ko kākou 'ike maka 'ana i ia mau moku a me nā mo'olelo Hawai'i kahiko e pili pū ana. Eia na'e, no ka 'a'al āina 'ana, ka pī'i kai 'ana, a me ka huli 'ana o

ke au nei, e aha ana lā nā mokupuni a me nā moku kua'au o Papahānaumokuākea i 'ike pinepine 'ole 'ia, ke ho'i piha hou aku ma lalo o ke kai?

He 10 mau moku o Papahānaumokuākea. Ua kama'āina paha kekahi i nā mokupuni 'o Nihoa a me Mokumanamana, nā mokupuni kokoke loa i nā mokupuni nui loa o Hawai'i nei. Mau nō ka mau Hawai'i o ia mau āina ma nā inoa e ho'omana'o mai ana iā kākou no nā mo'olelo o nā akua kumu, nā ali'i holomoana, a me ka ho'omana kahiko.

I ke au 'ana a'e i ka 'ākau komohana, kōli'uli'uli ka mau Hawai'i o nā moku, oki loa i ko lākou mau inoa 'ē. A hiki i kēia, ua kō he 'elua hana ku'upau e ho'ā hou a'e ai i ia mau Hawai'i o ia mau moku.

'Akahi, i nā MH 1990, ua haku ke Kōmike Hua'ōlelo i kekahi mau inoa no kēia moku me kēia moku. 'Alua, i kekahi mau makahiki ma hope mai, ua ho'ōla hou 'ia kekahi mau inoa pana moku kahiko e Kekuwa Kikilo'i (ke po'o ku'i o CWG) ma kona 'imi noi'i 'ana i nā hī'ohi'ona āina o ia mau moku me ka ho'opili pū nō o ia mau hī'ohi'ona me kekahi palapala kākau o ka MH 1835 a kekahi haumāna o ke Kulanui 'o Lahainaluna, 'o Kaitakawaha kona inoa, nāna i mo'olelo mai no ka pae āina o Hawai'i.



Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP) teams working on a large ghost net at Manawai. - Photo: Andrew Sullivan-Haskins, PMDP

Koe na'e 'o Nihoa me Mokumanamana, 'ekolu inoa nō o kēia me kēia moku o Papahānaumokuākea: 'elua inoa Hawai'i a ho'okahi inoa 'ē (e nānā aku i ka palapala āina i pāku'i 'ia). I kēia au e ne'e nei, 'ōlelo 'ia nō ia mau inoa a pau, a 'o ka mea mio a nani loa, 'o ka lohe nui 'ia nō ia o nā inoa Hawai'i ma mua o nā inoa 'ē.

### NĀ INOA MEA OLA

Oia pū nō ka 'ōlelo Kanaka ma Papahānaumokuākea i nā inoa mea ola. He mau miliona nō ka nui o nā manu kai o Papahānaumokuākea. 'O ka ma'amau ma ka 'ōlelo Kanaka, he inoa ho'opili'ili leo ko kekahi mau manu Hawai'i, 'o ia ho'i, ua kapa 'ia nō kekahi lāhui manu ma kona kani. Ma laila nō ma Papahānaumokuākea, hiki nō ke lohe 'ia ke mele ho'oiipo'o o ka mōli, ka 'ua'ua'ua'ana o ka 'ua'u kani, a me ka 'ao'ao'ao'ū 'ana o ka 'ao'ū. No kekahi mau mea ola na'e e noho ana ma laila, ua nalowale aku ko lākou inoa, a i 'ole, 'a'ole i kapa 'ia aku.

Ua ho'okuleana 'ia 'o Nomenclature Hui, he lalo kōmike o



## OLA KA 'OLELO KANAKA

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ka CWG, e nolī noelo i nā inoa pana 'āina a me nā inoa mea ola o Papahānaumokuākea. Ma ke kālele piha 'ana ma ka waihona palapala 'ōlelo Hawai'i o ka wā ma mua a me nā loina kapa inoa ku'una Hawai'i, nolī, ho'ōla, a kapa aku ia hui i nā inoa. A hiki i kēia, he 74 mau inoa a ia hui i kapa aku ai no kekahi mau pana 'āina, 'a, lima, ko'a, mea ulu, a manu ho'i o Papahānaumokuākea.

'A'ole wale nō na ke kōmike i kapa aku i nā inoa o nā mea ola hou. Ma ka pōmaika'i loa o ka 'enehana hou, e ho'opili pū 'ia mai 'ana nō 'o Papahānaumokuākea me ka po'e ma o ke kelealo 'ana. Ma kekahi o ia mau hanana, ua hana pū ko 'oukou mea kākau nei me Ocean Exploration Trust, nāna e 'imi nolī ana ma Papahānaumokuākea, no ka ho'olele 'iwa'ana i nā wikiō o ka papakū o Papahānaumokuākea no kekahi papa mālaa'o o ke Kula Kalapuni o Pū'ōhala.

Ma ia launa 'ana me nā haumāna, ua ho'olele a'e au i kekahi wikiō o kekahi mea 'ele'ele a poepoe i kōhu pāluna e pūlana ana ma luna iki a'e o ka papakū. A laila, hāma-ma a'ela ka waha nui o ia mea, a lua'i akula 'o ia i ke kai i piha ai i kona mau pāpālina 'uheke. Mai kona 'ano poepoe, wīwī malla kona kino a he 'ano puhi, a 'au akula, a 'o ka hū a'ela nō ia o ke aloha o ia po'e kamali'i i ka 'ike aku i ka hana 'ana o ia 'ano puhi, he *gulper eel* ka inoa.

Me kona waha nui, alapohe mai ia puhi i ke kai a nui a'e kona mau pāpālina no ke kūpale 'ana aku i nā mea pō'ino. 'A'ole 'ike 'ia he inoa Hawai'i o ia 'ano puhi. A laila,

nīnau akula au i ka po'e kamali'i, "he aha ka inoa o ia 'ano 'i'a?" Ua kupaianaha loa nō ka pane 'ane lōkahi 'ana o lākou, "he puhi waha nui!" Pēlā nō i ola ai kona inoa.

## HE 'OLELO OLA, HE MO'OMEHEU OLA, HE 'ĀINA OLA, A HE LĀHUI OLA

He wahi ola a mau Hawai'i nō 'o Papahānaumokuākea, a aia nō ko kākou pono i ka mālama pono 'ana i ia wahi no ko kākou 'ike le'a 'ana, no Papahānaumokuākea nō kākou, a 'o ko kākou kupuna nō ia, a 'o kākou kāna mamo. I ka noke 'ana aku o kākou ma kēia aukahi ho'ōla 'ōlelo a mo'omeheu ho'i, ke huliāmahi nei nā lālā o CWG me nā hoa ma ka mālama 'ana iā Papahānaumokuākea ma nā 'ano hana like 'ole, 'o ka ho'opuka a kapa inoa 'ana, ka nolī 'ana, ka ho'ohemo piha 'opalapala 'ana, ka haku mele a 'ōlelo no'ea'ana, a me ka ho'omohala ha'awina 'ana i loko piha nō o ka 'ōlelo Kanaka.

E like loa nō ho'i me ka puhi waha nui nāna i ho'oulu he pilina 'ōlelo Kanaka me ka po'e kamali'i o ka hanauna hou, lana a'e nō ka mana'o, e ho'oulu pilina kākou me Papahānaumokuākea, a ho'omana'o pono mai, 'a'ole he mau moku lē'ia wale nō ia o ka moana, akā he pū'uhonusa kapu, he kanaaho, he papa a'o, a he wahi 'imi na'auao nō ho'i e ho'ōia ana i ke ola mau loa o ka 'ōlelo a ko kākou pae 'āina. E ola nō 'o Papahānaumokuākea.

## He palapala 'āina o Hawai'i Pae Moku

A map of the Hawaiian Archipelago

Original  
Papahānaumokuākea Marine  
National Monument boundary

Expanded  
Papahānaumokuākea Marine  
National Monument boundary

■ Karai-kawaha  
genealogy names

■ Hawaiian Lexicon  
Committee names

■ Common names

## THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE THRIVES

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gy, we now bring Papahānaumokuākea to the people through video conferencing. For one such event, the author partnered with the Ocean Exploration Trust, conducting research in Papahānaumokuākea, to bring live footage of PMNM to a Hawaiian immersion kindergarten class at Pū'ōhala School.

During this interaction, I shared a video of a dark, balloon-like creature floating motionless above the deep seafloor of Papahānaumokuākea. Suddenly, it shook and twirled, opening its extremely large mouth and expelling water that bloated its cheeks. From its circular form, the creature slimed to a slender-shaped eel and swam away. The school children burst with excitement for this transforming organism

known as a gulper eel.

Its large mouth and extra cheek skin allow it to hold large volumes of water, vastly increasing its size as a defensive mechanism. This eel has no known traditional Hawaiian name. But, when I asked the Hawaiian-speaking children for the name of this creature, they immediately shouted in near unison, "he puhi waha nui" (a large-mouth eel). Thus, born was the Hawaiian name for the gulper eel.

### A LIVING LANGUAGE, CULTURE, PLACE AND PEOPLE

Papahānaumokuākea is a living, breathing realm worthy of protection, and our language reminds us we belong to this place and are bound to its currents and wildlife. As continued acts of Hawaiian language and culture revitalization, many members of the CWG actively engage in tending of this place through speaking old names and developing new ones, researching archives, tides, and seasonal changes, surveying spaces, removing debris, crafting songs, producing proverbs, and building curricula, all through the medium of Hawaiian.

Like the puhi waha nui that excites the next generation, we hope this work helps shape our understanding of Papahānaumokuākea away from mere forgotten islands of the Pacific to a sacred space, wildlife sanctuary, interactive classroom, and living language lab that prioritizes Hawaiian as a living language, culture, place, and people. ■



He "puhi waha nui," no kekahi papa mala'oo o ka Kula Kaiapuni o Pū'ōhala i kapa aku. A "puhi waha nui," named by a Kindergarten class of Pū'ōhala Hawaiian Immersion School. - Photo: Ocean Exploration Trust

MO'OLELO NUI | COVER STORY

**Ola ka 'Ōlelo Kanaka ma Papahānaumokuākea** 'ao'ao 18-20

Na J. Hau'oli Lorenzo-Elarco

**He Au Hou no ka Puke Wehewehe 'Ōlelo Hawai'i** 'ao'ao 9

Na Ka Hui Wehi 'Ōlelo

**Ka 'Aha Makahiki ma Hāna, Maui** 'ao'ao 10

Na Donalyn Dela Cruz

**He Mana 'o e Pili ana i ka Ho'ona'auao Kanaka Muli Ki'eki'e** 'ao'ao 12

Na Pōlani Kahakalau

**E Laupa'i a'e ana ka 'Ike Kuamo'o** 'ao'ao 13

Na Kekamiani Irwin

**No ka Hua o Hinakulu'iua** 'ao'ao 14

Na Keukukulele

**Kani ka Leo 'Ōiwi ma ka 'Aha Hula Mele Manaka!** 'ao'ao 15

Na Kawainiuhaoaoopōka'i

FEATURED STORIES

**Ua Ola Ka 'Ī a Puni Hawai'i** 'ao'ao 4

Na Malis Nobrega-Olivera

**E Ho'ākea i ke Kahua** 'ao'ao 5

Na M. Paakes Nogelmeier, Ph.D.

**'Auhea 'Ōukou e nā Kumu?** 'ao'ao 6-7

Na Makalapua Alencastre, Ed.D.

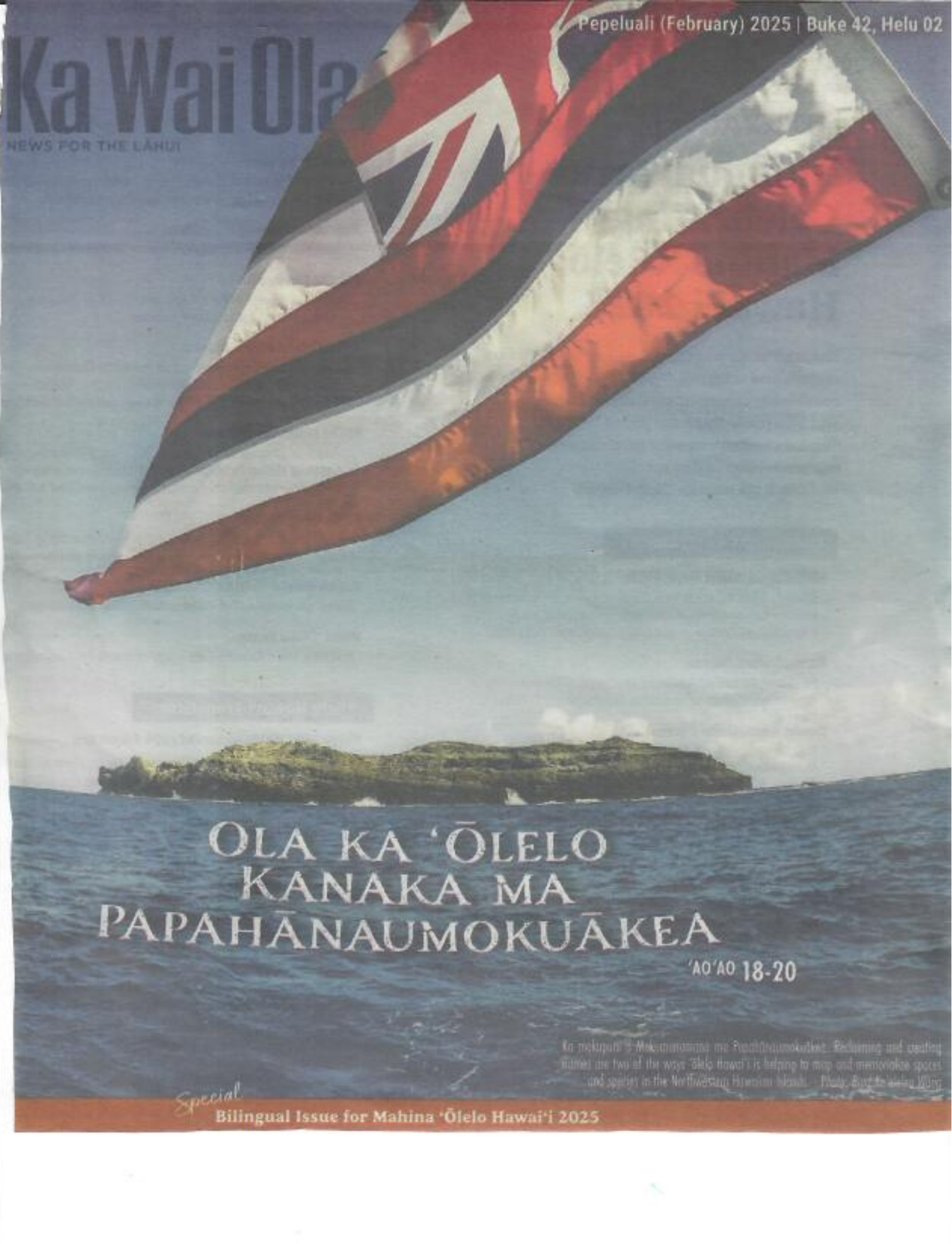
**E Ola Mau ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i** 'ao'ao 8

Na Kū Kahakalau, Ph.D.

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# Ka Wai Ola

NEWS FOR THE LAHUI



## OLA KA 'ŌLELO KANAKA MA PAPA HĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

'AO'AO 18-20

Ka mekaupuni 'o Māhealani ma Pāpāhānaumokuākea. Reclaiming and creating names are two of the ways 'Ōlelo Hawai'i is helping to map and memorialize spaces and stories in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Photo: Rusty Kawanishi/WOW

*Special*

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