

Hawaiians vs the State: How a Colonialist Agenda Battles the Spirit of Aloha

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Abstract:

Many native and non-native Hawaiians are currently protesting TMT, the Thirty Meter Telescope initiated by the state to be constructed atop Hawaii's largest mountain and dormant volcano, Mauna Kea. As I interviewed past and present residents of Hawai'i, they talked about how after years of colonialism in Hawai'i, the native Hawaiians still protect their sacred lands (including Mauna Kea) as well as how they live every day through "Kapu Aloha," or "sacred love." Kapu Aloha is a love-promoting, all-inclusive, non-violent and respectful lifestyle that because of its peaceful and accepting nature, creates the possibility of compromise for both the protesters and TMT, and opens the door for real change in order to protect their sacred mauna. Through my research I gained an in-depth understanding of what it means to be Hawaiian. No matter where you come from ethnically, living in Hawai'i seems to bond people together and present a real love for their islands. My research questions include: How have the protesters stayed loyal to keeping Kapu Aloha alive during the movement? How has Kapu Aloha affected the lives of Hawaiians? How has Kapu Aloha benefitted this protest movement specifically so far? Is it the only true "weapon" that can win this protest?

Methods:

My methods included online formal interviews with people whom had lived in Hawai'i in either the past or present.

My interlocutors include:

- A friend's father who lived there until his early 20s
- A friend's mother who lived in Hawai'i until her mid teens
- A current student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa who has lived there all his life
- A lifelong resident of Hawai'i

I would reach out to them through either iMessage or Instagram Direct Message, and if they agreed to participate in an interview, I would ask them questions regarding their feelings about Kapu Aloha as a movement and ideal, the TMT, as well as background questions about their experience in Hawai'i in order to understand their connection to this protest.

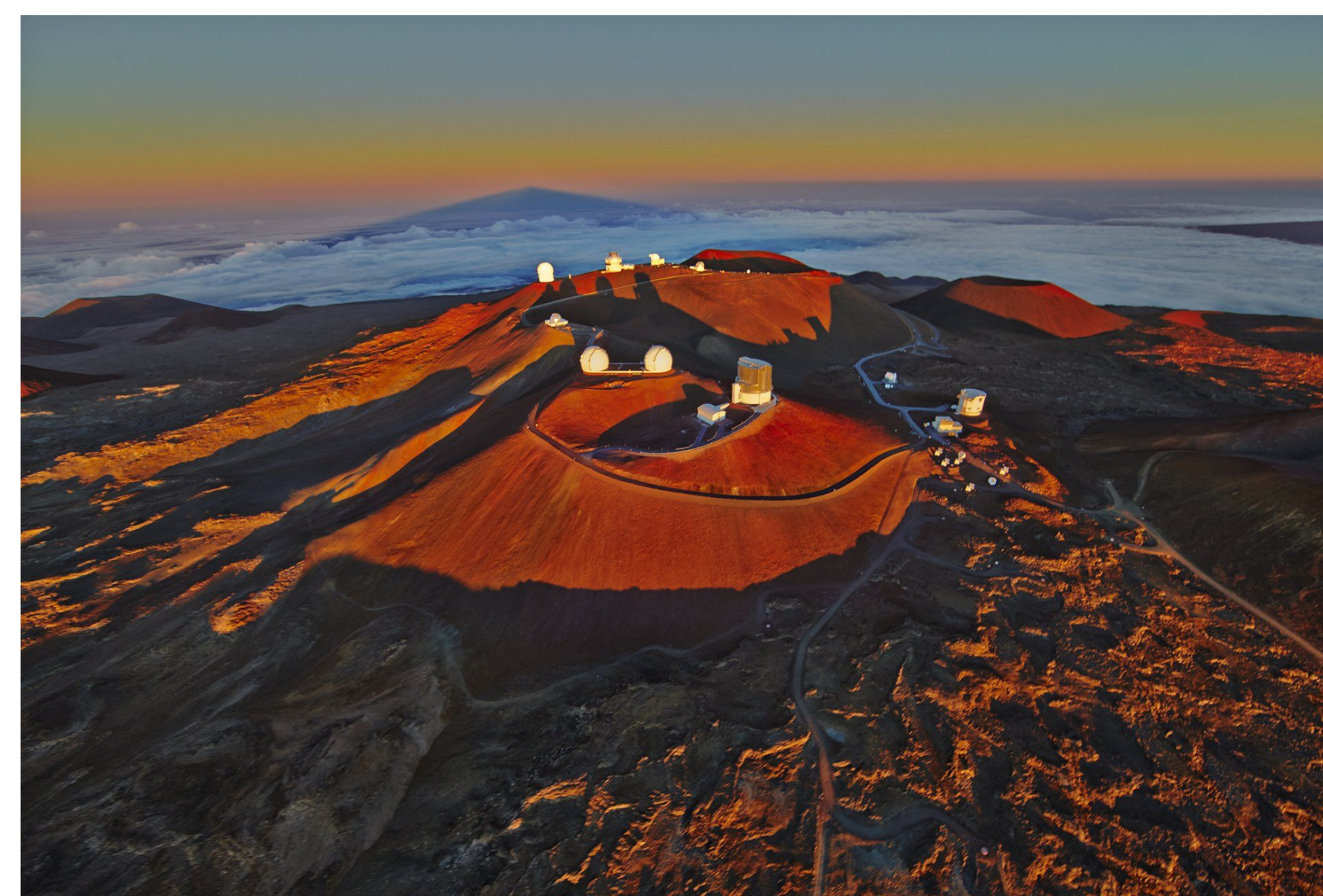


Actor Jason Momoa at the protests performing a hongi:

- Traditional Polynesian greeting

Mauna Kea:

- Altitude: 13,803 ft
- Depth: <32,800 ft
- Prime location for astronomers



Kia'i:

- Protectors of the land
- Highly respected in Hawaiian culture

- CGI of the Thirty Meter Telescope plan



Results and Discussion:

After researching the native Hawaiians' protests and mentality about TMT in general, I learned more of what it means to live in Aloha and Hawaiians' perspective of colonialism in Hawai'i. Many Hawaiian residents seem to say "ENOUGH" to the colonialism still present in Hawai'i. They are fed up with the state's efforts in building telescope after telescope, but nonetheless stay respectful in their opposition. I learned that there are currently thirteen telescopes atop Mauna Kea, each one being the "last one," as promised by the state. An interesting fact I learned though my research about the protesters was that they are not against the scientific benefits and discoveries which could be made possible by the construction of the TMT. Hawaiians are in fact indifferent when it comes to TMT itself, some even support it. The problem lies simply in where it is planned to be constructed. Mauna Kea is a sacred place to Hawaiians. It is a peak with a completely unique and isolated ecosystem, has one of the most clear views of the sky and space in the world. Hawaiians claimed it first, but the state has more power, and it's the competition for this land that these protests were born from.

Conclusion:

Mauna Kea currently holds one of the world's most unique protests. It involves native Hawaiians, non-native Hawaiians, non-Hawaiian residents wishing to show their support, and even scientists who value the respect of the natives over the scientific advancements that the TMT would bring. The protestors keep Kapu Aloha alive through their non-violent nature, traditional dances and performances, and even offerings of respect that have been given to the officials guarding the construction site, in an effort to show their love through the struggle. Kapu Aloha is a lifestyle that has helped the protest gain momentum online, as its nonviolent priorities make it unique. As for the Hawaiians themselves, they believe that "ALOHA WILL ALWAYS WIN, even in a situation where the almighty dollar is the strongest weapon."

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