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Territorial land laws and issues examined in upcoming book

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—[June 22, 2010]—University of Hawai‘i doctoral scholar and Mellon Hawai‘i Fellow Sydney Iaukea has signed a contract with University of California Press to publish a book based on her 2008 doctoral dissertation, “*E Pa‘a ‘Oukou: Holding and Remembering Hawaiian Understanding of Place and Politics.*”

The manuscript, to be published in mid-2011, examines land laws and land issues of Hawai‘i’s Territorial era. It is Iaukea’s personal narrative set within a historical context. Iaukea references from the Hawai‘i State Archives unpublished writings by her great-great-grandfather Curtis Piehu Iaukea. Mr. Iaukea held more than 40 political positions in both the Hawaiian Kingdom and the Territorial Government in Hawai‘i from 1885 to 1940.

“Most of the history taken from this era is not in the words of our *kūpuna*, but from an outside perspective,” Iaukea said, who also researched records in First District Court and the Bureau of Conveyances. “Reading how the *kūpuna* wrote about the Territory gives us a much better insight because it’s coming from the political actors of the time.”

Iaukea’s manuscript draws on her great-great-grandfather’s unpublished writing to chronicle Prince Kuhio’s suit against Queen Liliuokalani, which charged the Queen with mental incompetence in an effort to break her trust.

“It is a case that represents the complicated familial and property relationships that we still encounter today,” Iaukea said. “When the U.S. occupied Hawai‘i, they rewrote land laws through an American lens that disrespected the worldview of the Hawaiian Kingdom and disempowered the Kingdom and the Queen herself. Hawaiian Kingdom nationals were navigating this terrain and active in the system, while a territorial citizenry and landscape was created through land legislations that reworked the national fabric of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Much has been left out of our history, and this is one of the cases that have escaped public review. It is important to know all aspects of our history, so that we can navigate our present and future with the knowledge from our *kūpuna*. As contemporary Hawaiians we are dealing with land issues; we are tied genealogically to *kūpuna*; and what happened then is how we relate to landscape and *‘āina* today.”

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Territorial land laws and issues examined in upcoming book, page 2

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“The publication of Iaukea's work will garner enormous literary and scholarly attention because it will be one of those rare works that sets personal narrative in a geopolitical context,” said Matt Hamabata, executive director of The Kohala Center, which created the Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship program in collaboration with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Kamehameha Schools. “It will tell the story of dispossession and displacement in ways that are personally moving and politically challenging. And it will influence the way that we in Hawai‘i understand our own history.”

Iaukea received her Ph.D. in political science from the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in July 2008, and is Hawaiian Studies Educational Officer with the Department of Education. Born and raised on Maui, she is a 1987 graduate of Kamehameha Schools.

In 2008, Iaukea joined in the very first cohort of five Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship scholars. The fellowship is designed for Native Hawaiian scholars early in their academic careers and for others who are committed to the advancement of knowledge about the Hawaiian natural and cultural environment, Hawaiian history, politics, and society. The program allows doctoral fellows to complete their dissertations before accepting their first academic posts, and postdoctoral fellows have the opportunity to publish original research early in their academic careers.

The Kohala Center supports the progress of the Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellows, bringing the scholars together for retreats that focus on their writing and the presentation of their ideas, as well as introducing scholars to leading intellectuals in Hawai‘i and to acquisitions editors from Hawai‘i and the U.S. Mainland, such as the University of California Press.

“The Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship was completely responsible for the publication of my manuscript,” Iaukea said. “It gave me the time and space and support to start the process from dissertation to book and allowed the publishers to come hear us speak on our work.”

For more information about the Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, visit <http://kohalacenter.org/mellonabout.html>.

The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit center for research and education. As an institution committed to expanding educational and employment opportunities by caring for and celebrating Hawai‘i Island’s natural and cultural landscape, The Center supports efforts at developing *kama‘aina* leadership for Hawai‘i’s research and educational institutions. See www.kohalacenter.org.

-30-

Sydney Iaukea