

REPORT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO
MARINE OPTION PROGRAM

Hoe! 'Ō, 'Ō, 'O ia! Incorporating Traditional Hawaiian Protocols into Marine Field and
Lab Courses

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Abstract

Traditional Hawaiian protocols such as *oli*, or chants, have been passed down for many generations. Protocol is an act of cultural value practiced daily throughout Hawai‘i and focuses on respect for the natural world, including marine life, and maintaining the balance between humans and the rest of the universe. People *oli* to ask for permission, guidance, knowledge, and protection within a new learning environment and to focus attention on the task at hand. Throughout the 2021-2022 school year, I worked alongside advisor Lisa Parr, the Uluākea Faculty Development Program, and Marine Science Department to introduce traditional Hawaiian protocols such as *oli* and *kīpaepae* (welcoming ceremony) into fieldwork and lab courses. My objectives were to create resources for instructors to use at designated field and lab locations such as Waiuli, Onekahakaha, and Ke‘ei. I produced videos and resources encompassing the *oli* ‘*O Wai Ka Mauna*, composed by Taupōuri Tangarō, to implement the University of Hawai‘i’s mission and increase the emphasis on protocol and educational immersion in “place” across our campuses. I introduced the *oli* to several Marine Science courses, including the Marine Biology and Oceanography labs, the MOP Seminar class, and Methods in Marine Science. The resources include maps and background information about the sites and information on cultural, academic, and safety behavioral protocols (*lawena*). To date, these courses are actively practicing protocols in their respective field labs and plan to continue to incorporate them moving forward. The use of *oli* support the University’s initiative to transform the institution into an indigenous center of learning enables us to demonstrate responsibility to this ‘*āina* (land), show our respect to the host culture, and practice *pono* (beneficial) science.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The act of *oli* or chant is an oral tradition that Native Hawaiians have practiced for many generations. This protocol is important as it demonstrates our intentions of respect for the *‘āina*, or land, and its people. Cultural protocol refers to following a code of principles or practices that guide the overall behaviors of a group (Oxfam.org 2021). Protocol *oli* is considered collaborative storytelling practices that strengthen a sense of community among participating members. As one person chants along with others, they fulfill a shared narrative reflective that encompasses the four elements of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) definition of community: integration, influence, membership, and shared emotional connection.

Protocol is a way to both establish and re-establish an understanding of correspondence and a communication device among people, places, and things (EKF 2017). The act of protocol helps to sustain a pervading attitude towards an ecological awareness when met with *mālama ‘āina*, or nurturing the land (EKF 2017). With specific intentions, *oli* can be used in protocol to ask for permission, protection, guidance, and knowledge. This traditional mode of communication serves an essential function while recognizing different responsibilities among us as *kanaka*, or people, and all other elements of nature; It connects us to the *‘āina* and creates a web of connections that sustains every one of us. On the other hand, with nothing to support us like protocol to the land, one may seem like a “rude invader” who refuses to “observe the rituals to show respect and appreciation of the place” (Xiaoqing 2009). The use of chanting within a modern context has been performed in recognition of, and out of respect for, the unique way of life that was once established in Hawai‘i (Silva 1989).

There are different types of protocols used for different situations; A *mele kāhea* is a protocol to ask for permission to enter. Traditionally, along with the *mele kāhea*, there would also need to be a *mele komo* or a protocol to grant permission; this would be done by an attendant of that space who would either grant or deny permission to enter. However, in situations where there is no attendant physically able to grant permission, Hawaiians use their *na‘au* or their intuitive factor to make the appropriate judgment. When in tune with a place, one can sense that place's hospitable or non-hospitable essence and decide whether to enter (EKF 2017).

The University of Hawaii's mission to transform its campuses into a Hawaiian place of learning intended to unify this community and its surroundings to institute an enhanced educational environment. Encompassing *oli* within the university system supports and establishes unity among participants, and helps to indigenize content, skills, and experiences (Tangaro personal communication 2021). The University's strategic initiative to transform its institutions into an indigenous center of learning is a step forward not only for Native Hawaiians but for all indigenous communities that share similar practices. Chanting provides an essential means to support and encourage Hawaiian ethnicity within the culturally diverse (but predominantly Western) society of Hawai‘i today (Silva 1989).

Introducing cultural protocols within the university system represents a critical step towards its goals by respecting and keeping an open mind on indigenous worldviews while also encouraging culturally appropriate working practices. These goals focus on valuing cultural diversity that enriches, motivates, and drives an organization closer to its objectives (Oxfam.org 2021). With a strong and profoundly rooted university system, it will increase opportunities to learn and grow through the many cultural experiences encompassed within the curricula.

In recent years, the University of Hawai‘i has undertaken several initiatives to support its mission of indigenizing its campuses. This includes *Papa o ke ao*, a way to enhance storytelling through *ka ‘ao* or legends, and Uluākea/Kīpaepae, which was created specifically for the UH Hilo campus in training faculty and introducing protocol within field lab courses. Both of these play a significant role in supporting cultural practices within the university system. For example, the goals of the *Papa o Keao* project are to support leadership development, community engagement, and parity in Hawaiian culture and language. The organization believes that there is success within these opportunities for native and non-native students because it is *pono*, or the right thing to do (Papa o Keao 2021). Uluākea and the associated Kīpaepae working group are initiatives that are exclusive to the UH Hilo campus. Their goal is to provide training for faculty and staff to introduce Native Hawaiian protocol and *oli* to all field lab courses (Parr Personal communication 2021). For example, Instructor Lisa Parr has incorporated several practices within her Marine Science courses, such as using *mele komo* before field labs to open a space and to respect and acknowledge Hawaiian traditions and values. Uluākea has also collaborated with Hawaiian place-based teachings of sports psychology. This course resulted in a greater appreciation and an increased desire to incorporate more Hawaiian concepts into teaching. Furthermore, when traditional concepts were applied to modern sciences, there was an increase in the retention of values gained by students (Barkhoff & Tangarō 2008).

The Marine Science Department understands the need to incorporate *oli* within their field labs to enhance the focus on Hawaiian values within the educational system. When *oli* and protocol are practiced and used within our courses, the Hawaiian culture and people are able to thrive. To truly be *aloha ‘āina* or love the land is to *‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i*, or speak its mother tongue (Okamura 2020). When we, as students and children of this land, speak the language of the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, we express our gratitude to the space and creatures that we‘ll be working with. Nature is the first people, and it’s important that we honor and *mālama* or care for the land not just for our sake but for the generations to come (Tangarō personal communication 2021). There is a need for *oli* and protocol within our departments. The Marine Science Department is trying to drive the use of *oli* to support the University’s initiative to demonstrate responsibility to this land and show our respect to the host culture.

My primary learning objectives were to 1) create a video that explained the importance of *oli* and protocol, 2) Work with students and faculty within appropriate field lab courses, 3) Create a Padlet as a resource for the Marine Science Department. I created these resources for instructors and students at designated field lab locations, including Waiuli, Onekahakaha, and Ke‘ei, all located on the Island of Hawai‘i. I produced videos and resources encompassing the *oli* ‘*O Wai Ka Mauna* composed by Taupouri Tangarō to implement the University of Hawai‘i’s mission in emphasizing protocol across our campuses. I supported and normalized cultural protocol within the University setting through my primary learning objectives and set an example for future implementations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Site

The Marine Science Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo conducts most of its field lab courses within three areas; Waiuli, Onekahakaha, and Ke‘ei (Figure 1). Waiuli, commonly known as Richardson Ocean Park, is located on the eastern side of Hawai‘i Island within the district of Hilo, in the subdivision of Waiākea. The park is known for its black sand and is an optimal location for snorkeling. The beach is also heavily used for teaching surveying techniques and identifying organisms. Onekahakaha is also located on the eastern side within the district of Hilo, in the subdivision of Waiākea. This site is an optimal snorkeling location used by the Marine Science Department to identify various organisms within the protected bay. The last area, Ke‘ei beach, is located on the southwest coast, within the district of Kona, in the subdivision of Hōnaunau. This site is where the two-week QUEST program is held, which focuses on the ecological monitoring of coral reefs using SCUBA. The students and staff incorporate the act of protocol within these three locations to promote a Hawaiian place of learning.

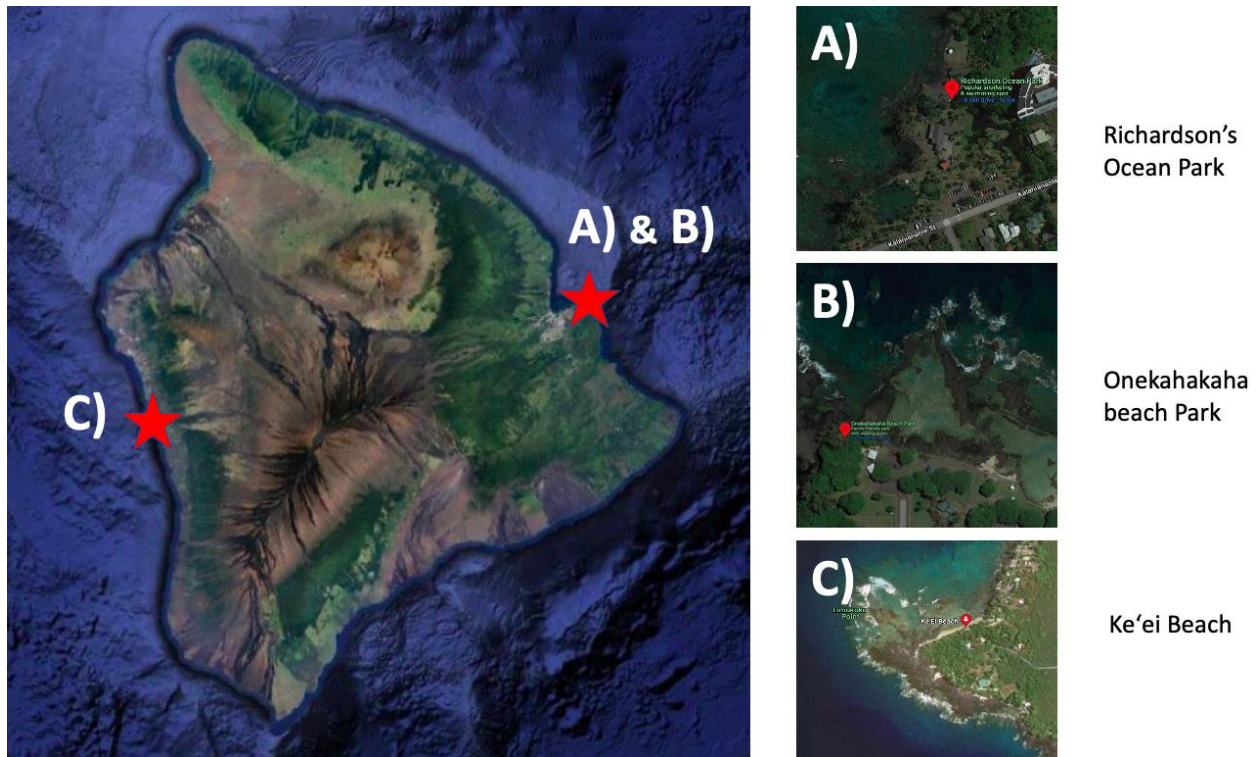


Figure 1. The study site of three field course locations on Hawai‘i Island are Waiuli (A), Onekahakaha (B), and Ke‘ei (C).

2.2 Creating a Video

A video was made for the Marine Science Department to use in all field lab courses. This video was created to educate people about *oli* from a general perspective. I decided to make a video because it gave students the autonomy to rewatch and learn anywhere. It's essential to know the background of *oli* and its importance before trying it. Within the video, I covered several topics such as an introduction to protocol and why it is practiced here in Hawai‘i, the importance of *oli* (chant), and how our *lawena* (behavior) reflects our purpose. The *oli* “‘O Wai Ka Mauna?” is the welcoming chant used during protocol when we go to different field sites ([See appendix 1](#)). This *oli* composed by Taupōuri Tangarō acknowledges the names of the sites being visited, states our intentions to bring aloha and our eagerness to learn and offers a gift to gain entrance into that space. Tangarō created this *oli* to fit any location, as long as there is a mountain, district, and land section, and is delivered in a two-party style called *kāhoahoa*, which requires a *kāhea* (callout) and *pane* (answer). In the video, I also broke down each line of the *oli* and explained the meaning of what we were saying. Knowing each line puts power and purpose into our words and intentions, enhancing the overall experience and connection to this land. At the end of the video, I concluded with an audio recording by composer Taupōuri Tangarō to provide students and staff a reference to how it sounded.

2.3 Working with Students and Staff

Throughout the first couple weeks of lab sessions, I worked alongside the Marine Science Department staff and the TCBES Graduate students to support them as we introduced the *oli* to the students. This occurred in three different lab classes, which included the MARE171L (Marine Biology Diversity), MARE201L (Oceanography), and the MARE353L (Pelagic methods & Analysis). I supported instructors in learning the *oli*, assisted them with introducing it to their classes, and presented in the MOP class each semester to introduce it to a broader array of students. Overall, this helped provide more confidence and familiarity with the chant and protocol within the field lab areas.

2.4 Creating a Padlet

A Padlet is a digital tool similar to an online bulletin board where teachers and students can post information, including links, photos, and videos for everyone to see. The Padlet I made was designed for the Marine Science Department to help students feel more familiar with lab locations and understand their sense of place. The purpose of this Padlet was to provide a platform for students and staff to learn and share information among themselves about *oli* and protocol. Within the Padlet, I included information for each of the three field sites: a map with directions, the history of that location, several interesting articles, and background on the environment and appropriate academic, safety, and cultural protocols. In one way or another, much of the history found was important to that place and helped strengthen the people of Hawai'i. Within the Padlet, I added a general section that connected students and staff to the video on *oli*, podcasts that shared stories specific to the lab locations, and the UH Hilo's MSD Youtube.

3. RESULTS

Throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, I produced videos and resources to familiarize students and staff to the *oli*. The protocols were a part of each lab and were done to open up the space and one time to close the session (Figure. 2). The closing ceremony would usually consist of a *leo mahalo* or a voice of thanks. I introduced the *oli* and protocol to several Marine Science courses, which included the MARE100 (Marine Option Program Seminar), MARE171L (Marine Biology Diversity), MARE201L (Oceanography), and the MARE353L (Pelagic methods & Analysis). The Padlet made for the Marine Science Department was completed and ready to be used by the student and staff (Figure. 3).



Figure 2. Working with students and staff at designated marine field site locations.

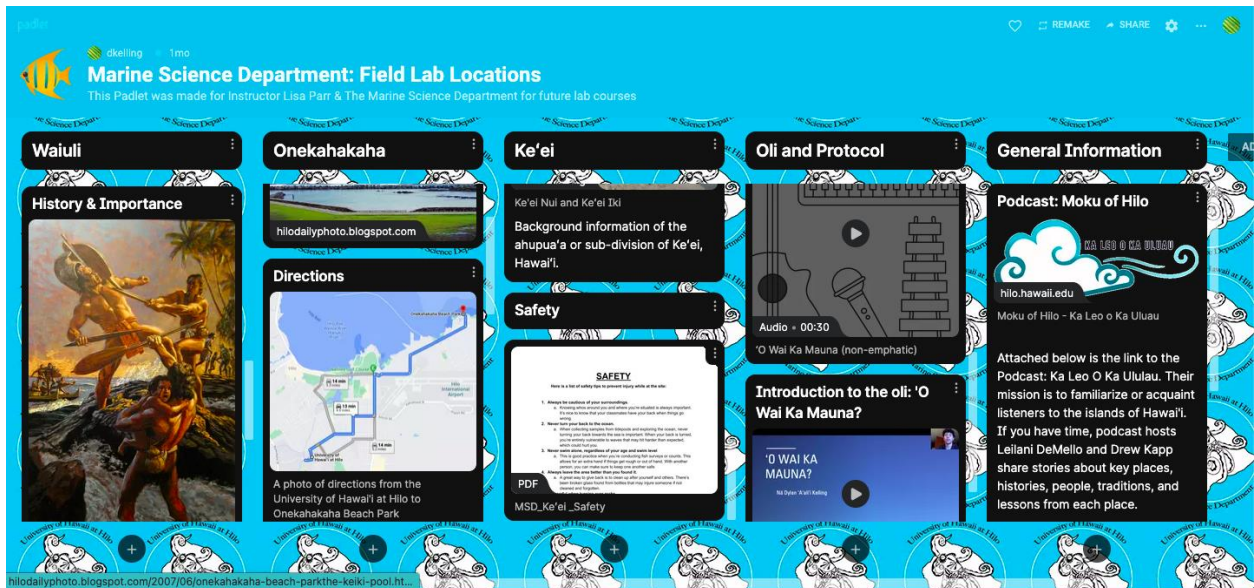


Figure 3. Photo of the Padlet made for the Marine Science Department

4. DISCUSSION

Overall, this project was a great opportunity to introduce cultural practices into science fields. As people who reside in Hawai'i and consider this place our home, it's our contribution to give back Native or Non-native to the host culture and traditional practices. We control the well-being of our environment and should find ways to identify ourselves as familial descendants of the natural world. The materials I put into place were created to be used as a platform for cultural exchange to take place. The act of protocol and *kipaepae* is a way to get every participant to have the same mindset and think from a Hawaiian perspective. When people come together, their attention and focus are one with the land and task at hand. *Kipaepae* is known as the stepping stone in front of one's house. We can use *kipaepae* to revitalize our way of welcoming. It will act as the bridge to help transcend students and staff of various backgrounds into a space where they

feel connected to the land and culture.

The introductory video was made to support student success of all backgrounds and orient them to the traditions and practices of Hawai‘i. The Marine Science Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo was among the first departments that accepted this *kuleana* (responsibility) with the goal of changing the narrative. There is often a disconnect between science and culture, and the Marine Science Department recognizes this problem and wants to make their mission to connect the future of science with culture. This will be demonstrated by the involvement of the community. My responsibility for this project was to help widespread *oli* and protocol into these courses and start the initiative for creating better futures.

There is a need for this practice because the University of Hawai‘i's mission to ground their education within Hawaiian values has a large impact on this project. Along with the University's mission, there is a need to state our intent and responsibilities within marine field lab courses and the intent to give back to that environment. The usage of protocol is a form of acknowledging the *‘āina* (land). This environmental kinship sees oneself as inclusive in and not separate from the natural environment, ecosystems, cycles, and phenomena (Dudoit Personal communication 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, *oli* and protocol can be easily introduced into field lab courses. My goal for this project was to help widespread this idea in hopes that other departments incorporate these lessons into their courses. The Marine Science department is a great example of the future, as it intertwines indigenous ways of knowing and science. This project was not meant only for Native success but made for students of all backgrounds who want to learn more about Hawaii and become grounded within its culture. It's everyone's responsibility to learn the language and protocol and is considered a tangible way of contributing to that giving back process.

Appendix 1.

‘O WAI KA MAUNA (Hawai‘i)

‘O wai ka mauna?

‘O (Maunakea/Maunaloa/Hualalai/Kōhala) ka mauna

‘O wai ka moku?

‘O (Hilo/Puna/Ka‘ū/Kona/Kōhala/Hāmākua) ka moku

‘O wai ke ahupua‘a?

‘O (list ahupua‘a of districts)

I aha ai kou hiki ‘ana mai?

I komo, i komo aku au i o Kahiko mā

He aloha ē, he aloha!

Hōmai he leo, A he leo wale nō.

Hoe! ‘Ō, ‘ō, ‘ōia!

(Hanu i loko a ho‘oku‘u me ka leo hāwī mālie)

‘O WAI KA MAUNA (English)

“Who” is the mountain?

Names one of Hawai‘i’s four mountains.

“Who” is the district?

Names one of Hawai‘i’s six districts.

“Who” is the land section?

Names appropriate ahupua‘a

For what reason have you come?

To Enter, to enter into the presence of the Ancient Ones (Nature)

We bring Aloha, we bring our commitment to learn

Please grant us the voice of approval to enter your voice is our key to proceed forth

Let us “hoe” on the count of 1, 2, and 3...!

(Inhale and expel with a soft-whistling sound)

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