COMMUNITY STRUGGLES, STRUGGLING COMMUNITIES:

LAND, WATER AND SELF-DETERMINATION IN WAIĀHOLE-WAIKĀNE, HAWAI‘I

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This dissertation is a comparative case study of three resource struggles in a rural community of Hawai‘i: an anti-eviction fight by the Waiāhole-Waikāne Community Association, a battle for water by Waiāhole taro farmers, and a Hawaiian family’s fight to protect its land from the U.S. military in Waikāne. Native Hawaiian, multiethnic Local, and American traditions have been politically mobilized in ways that have both helped and hurt the community’s ability to use their land and water. Sometimes the mobilization of tradition enabled alliances across diverse ethnic and economic groups, and sometimes it did not. Traditions that accommodate multiple identities and plural practices can be effective political resources, especially when articulated into broad public policies of sustainable and equitable development in the islands. This study shows that issues of land, water and self-determination in Hawai‘i are not simply ‘Hawaiian issues’ separated from other ‘Local issues’; on the contrary, community struggles for control and use of resources are most successful when diverse people from across socioeconomic classes come together in a productive politics of difference rooted in traditions of place in a Hawaiian Hawai‘i.

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