Chapter 8
The Precarious “Middle Ground”: Exchange and the Reconfiguration of Social Identity in the Hawaiian Kingdom

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8.1 Introduction

Exchange is a vital nexus for the dynamic construction of social identities that people materialize in portable and nonportable artifacts. Social identity and culture change are emergent phenomena and so their study is germane to historians, archaeologists, and other scholars who seek to understand the consequences of European and American colonialism before and during the nineteenth century (Stein 2005). Yet, most archaeological studies of contact and colonialism focus on changes in the technologies, economies, and identities of groups (e.g., communities, societies, and cultures), rather than on individuals, since macroeconomic processes are generally more accessible in the archaeological record (e.g., Bayman 2003, 2007; Carter 1990). While this macroscale approach provides invaluable insights on the materialization of interaction and identity in colonial settings, complementary studies of individuals are also needed to understand exchange and domestic behavior during periods of culture contact (Flannery 1999, Lightfoot et al. 1998). This microscale approach promises a more detailed perspective on exchange, personhood (sensu Howard 1990), and its relationship to the construction of social identity. In so doing, archaeology can develop a more refined theoretical perspective on the nature of culture change in postcontact settings.

Such theory, however, should advance the construction of a more balanced view of culture change. For several decades, anthropological studies of contact and culture change were largely focused on the adoption of Western materials, technologies, and worldviews by indigenous non-Western cultures. Such change was viewed as symptomatic of “acculturation” wherein members of a non-Western society were passive recipients of a “superior” Western technological system. Far less attention has been devoted to instances in which Westerners adopted indigenous technologies during such periods, although documentary and archaeological records are replete with such examples (see Rothschild 2006: 88–98 for a notable exception).

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8.2 Anthropological Perspectives on Culture Change, Exchange, and Identity

During the first half of the twentieth century, many anthropologists viewed contact-period social and technological change as indicative of acculturation (sensu Redfield et al. 1936). The concept of “acculturation” was used to refer to the social and economic consequences of sustained interaction between two or more ethnic groups, and it was often used synonymously with “assimilation.” Anthropologists assumed that acculturation is a relative and unidirectional phenomenon that could be measured by tabulating the number of “culture traits” that one group adopted from another (e.g., Quimby and Spoehr 1951).

Given the colonial context of early anthropology as a discipline, it is not surprising that indigenous populations were frequently viewed as passive recipients of European technologies and ways of living (Rodriguez-Alegría 2008), and scholars commonly argued that such societies experienced the greatest amount of acculturation (Rogers 1993: 73). Scholars rarely identified the precise mechanisms through which less powerful societies adjusted to dominant western societies because they assumed that indigenous societies would inevitably adopt the materials, goods, and technologies of more developed European societies. The role of individual agency was also overlooked in many early and mid-twentieth century accounts of technological change in pre- and postcontact indigenous societies (Cusick 1998).

Although some anthropologists (e.g., contributors in Mead 1955; Sharp 1952; Spicer 1952) and historical archaeologists (e.g., Hammell 1983) advocated more nuanced views of indigenous culture change, the emphasis of many archaeologists on ecological and economic factors provided an overly facile explanation for the adoption of Western technologies by indigenous nonindustrial societies. Simply put, European and American goods and materials were deemed to be technically more productive and efficient.

In the past two decades, however, an increasing number of archaeologists have challenged this normative view, especially archaeologists who study contact and colonialism (e.g., contributors in Cobb 2003; Fitzpatrick et al. 2006; Rodriguez-Alegría 2008). Such scholars seek to privilege the social and ideological dimensions of preindustrial technologies (e.g., contributors in Chilton 1999; Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Frink et al. 2003; Lemonnier 1986; Torrence 1989). Accordingly, they begin by considering the broader cultural contexts within which technologies appear and develop (or are resisted) (Ehrhardt 2005: 5). This more recent approach to technological change by archaeologists has required more detailed analyses of social identity. Technology and social identity are directly linked, and archaeologists and other scholars must explore the connections between them more deeply to advance studies of contact and colonialism.

Interdisciplinary scholars of colonialism have noted that Western powers sought to represent cultural identity, which they equated with ethnicity, as fixed and unchanging so they could distinguish themselves from those they ruled (Cooper
root and tuber crops such as taro, sweet potato, bananas, and sugar cane (Allen 1991; Ladeoged et al. 2003; Malo 1951: 204–206). Arboriculture emphasized coconut and breadfruit cultivation.

The eight major islands of the Hawaiian archipelago were divided into four major polities at European contact, which have since been described as complex chiefdoms (e.g., Cordy 1981; Earle 1977, 1987) or archaic states (e.g., Hommon 1986: 55; Kirch 2000: 300). The organization of early contact-period Hawaiian polities was highly stratified and centered on high chiefs and chieftesses (kaukau ali’i) and local administrators (konohiki) of territorial communities (ahupu’a) (Kamakau 1964: 4–9). Polities also included commoner subjects (maka’a‘inana). In many (but not all) cases ahupu’a paralleled river valleys that crosscut multiple ecological zones ranging from fringing reefs along the coastal lowlands, to the interior uplands and mountains (Ladeoged and Graves 2006: 259–262).

After contact in AD 1778, social and technological change accelerated in the Hawaiian archipelago, beginning with the indigenous adoption of metal adzes that eventually replaced adzes made of stone (Malo 1951: 51–52) and other nonlocal materials. Through acquiring and applying western weapons and military tactics, a powerful chief from Hawai’i island united the archipelago in 1812 and thenceforth assumed the title “King Kamehameha I” (Kuykendall 1938: 44–51). Accounts of Hawaiian history regularly note the role of British sailor John Young in aiding Kamehameha’s ascent: he facilitated the king’s access to weapons and tactical military strategy from Europe. From the inception of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1812, a succession of indigenous kings and their elites (ali’i) and their commoner subjects (maka’a‘inana) were drawn into the rapidly expanding world system of economic interaction that was brought to the archipelago by foreign ships. The export of Hawaiian sandalwood to China was a centerpiece of international trade (Sahlins 1992: 57).

In 1819, Liholiho (Kamehameha II) and other royalty (e.g., Queen Ka’ahumanu) abolished the indigenous kapu (sumptuary restriction) that prevented Hawaiian women from eating pork, bananas, and other selected foods (Kuykendall 1938: 61). The elimination of this particular custom instigated the near-instantaneous dissolution of the indigenous Hawaiian religion, although some traditions still persisted. Shortly after the traditional kapu system was terminated by Hawaiian royalty, Christian missionaries arrived from the United States in pursuit of native converts. After 1830, the sandalwood trade with China was superseded by a new economy that centered on the production of food provisions (e.g., pork and yams) for the American whaling industry from 1830 to 1860 (Daws 2006: 119–120).

Ruling Hawaiians initially benefited from this international economy, but their power rapidly waned following the establishment of a constitutional (rather than traditional) monarchy and the Māhele land reform of 1848–1850, which legally sanctioned the sale of land that was once held in trust (Kuykendall 1938: 269–298). Chiefly debts mounted with growing imbalance in international trade, and many ruling Hawaiians lost their land and political power as colonialism intensified. In 1893, the constitutional monarchy of the Hawaiian Kingdom was over-

8.3 Exchange and Identity After European Contact

At European contact in AD 1778, Hawai’i had the most complex hierarchical organization and largest scale of economic production among traditional Polynesian societies (Kirch 1984: 2–7, 2000: 300). The islands’ subsistence economy focused on agricultural production, arboriculture, aquaculture, fishing, and animal husbandry; the latter included pig, dog, and chicken. Hawaiian agriculture included...
thrown by residents with economic and political ties to the United States. Shortly thereafter, in 1900, the archipelago was annexed as a U.S. Territory (Daws 1968: 207–292).

### 8.4 John Young at Kawaihae, Hawai‘i

#### 8.4.1 Documentary Record

Because of his elevated political status in early postcontact Hawai‘i, scholarly interpretations of John Young’s life are relatively abundant (e.g., Cahill 1999; Campbell 1998: 43–46; Henriques 1916; Stokes 1938), and I rely on these sources in this documentary summary (Fig. 2). Young was a boatswain on an American trading ship, the *Eleanora*, when he was stranded on Hawai‘i Island in 1790 at the age of 46. Shortly thereafter, Young was taken hostage by an exceptionally powerful Hawaiian chief, along with Isaac Davis, a Euro-American. Documentary accounts of Young indicate that although he initially attempted to escape the islands shortly after he was stranded, he ultimately decided to remain in Hawai‘i. Three years after his capture in 1793, Young declined an opportunity to leave the islands with George Vancouver, a British captain who offered to escort him to England. According to Vancouver, Young and Davis concluded that their lives were better in Hawai‘i than they would be in Europe or the United States.

![Fig. 2 Drawing of John Young in 1819 by D. Pellion (Courtesy of Bishop Museum)](image)

With assistance from Young and Davis, the Hawaiian chief united the archipelago in 1795 and ruled it as King Kamehameha I. By then, Young and Davis had been awarded political power and material wealth; returning to their respective homelands would have left them at least initially destitute, a sacrifice they were apparently not willing to undergo. Much of Young’s prestige was due to military advice that he provided Kamehameha and to his role in mediating international trade relationships. Five years after the archipelago was united, Young was appointed governor of Hawai‘i Island where he worked in service to the king who had by then centralized all Hawaiian trade with foreigners.

International ships were required to land at Kawaihae Bay (Hawai‘i Island) where Kamehameha and his retinue including John Young, resided (Fig. 3). From this locale they controlled the circulation of goods that were imported to, and exported from, the islands by European ships. In doing so, Kamehameha provided ships en route to China with sandalwood, agricultural products like taro, pigs, salt, water, firewood, and other goods in exchange for military weapons such as muskets and ammunition that he used to dominate the kingdom (Sahlins 1992: 38). Commoner (*maka‘ainana*) Hawaiians were generally restricted by their ruling chiefs from trading with foreigners, although they did acquire modest amounts of domestic utensils (e.g., knives, scissors, nails, beads, and mirrors) through various strategies (Sahlins 1992: 38).

This new system of economic distribution was a sharp departure from traditional modes of Hawaiian exchange that were less centralized, such as household reciprocity. Some facets of traditional Hawaiian trade were highly centralized, such as the payment of tribute by commoners to royalty, but not all goods were heavily regulated by chiefly elites (Earle 1977, 1987). Many commodities like foodstuffs (e.g., fish, agricultural produce) and raw materials circulated among kin networks (Sahlins 1992: 38).

![Fig. 3 Location of John Young’s and King Kamehameha III’s residences on the islands of Hawai‘i and Maui](image)
and nonkin individuals through reciprocal exchange. In the decades after contact, however, Hawaiian royalty demanded increasing amounts of tribute from lesser chiefs and commoners who resided in the traditional *ahupua'a* communities that dotted the islands.

During his life in Hawai’i, Young was twice married to indigenous Hawaiian women, each of whom produced children. His second wife, Kaonaheha, was a niece of Kamehameha I and therefore relatively high in rank. Not surprisingly, some of their children assumed important roles in Hawaiian society: one son, John Young, Jr. (known as Keoni Ana) was at different times the governor of Kaua’i and the governor of Maui (Cahill 1999: 144). Moreover, one granddaughter became Queen Emma, wife of King Kamehameha IV.

When Young died in December of 1835, he was buried with the sumptuary privileges of a high chief, even though his funeral was administrated by Hiram Bingham, a prominent member of the first Christian missionaries in Hawai’i. Young’s Christian burial and his de facto membership in Hawaiian royalty was the capstone of a life that was inculcated with a novel identity. Young’s hybrid identity is embodied in a variety of traded goods and materials that archaeologists recovered from his Kawaihae residence.

### 8.4.2 Archaeological Record

Archaeological investigations of Young’s residence (i.e., Durst 2001; Rosendahl and Carter 1988) complement documentary accounts of his life, and confirm that he used a combination of indigenous and Western goods that were acquired through local and international exchange. Indigenous Hawaiian artifacts were vital for surviving in the islands since access to Western and Asian goods would have been constrained even for a powerful expatriate like Young who, with Kamehameha I, coadministered international exchange.

Significant subsurface excavations have been undertaken at Young’s residence on two occasions (i.e., Durst 2001; Rosendahl and Carter 1988). His residence included three Western-style structures (i.e., Structures 1, 2, and 3) and five Hawaiian-style features (i.e., F-1, F-2, F-3, F-4, and F-5). However, excavations focused only on the three Western-style buildings and Feature 4, an earth oven (*imu*) (Fig. 4). Approximately 15.01 sq. m of matrix were excavated from the three Western-style structures and the earth oven (*imu*). Together, the excavation of 1 x 1 m units on the two projects recovered approximately 2,485 artifacts, not including faunal and floral remains (e.g., coral, bone, shell, charcoal).

Although the number of indigenous artifacts recovered in the three Western-style buildings at his residence is not particularly high (N=60), it includes basalt and volcanic glass debitage, cores, hammerstones, an anvil, an abrader, and an adze fragment (Durst 2001: 84, Table 14; Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 43, Table 71). Combined, these artifacts imply that at least some lithic core reduction was practiced at John Young’s residence. Other traditional artifacts were also excavated including sea urchin spine abraders and bone awls. Such mundane tools were indispensable in the traditional Hawaiian subsistence economy. Volcanic glass flakes, for example, would have been used to process plant fiber for fishnets, gut and clean fish, and butcher chickens, pigs, and undomesticated birds (Barrera and Kitch 1973).

Although it cannot be known with certainty if any of the traditional artifacts were acquired through exchange, geological study of 27 volcanic glass flakes indicated that about 70% of them originated from a deposit located approximately 29 km from Kawaihae (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 45). Although there are other sources of volcanic glass that are closer to the Kawaihae area, Young may have preferred the more distant materials. If so, it is possible that Young acquired these nonlocal lithic materials through trade with Hawaiians who desired Western goods like metal nails and domestic utensils.

A whale tooth pendant (*lei niho palaoa*) that was recovered in Structure 2 at Young’s residence is especially notable. In traditional Hawaiian society, such pendants only adorned the necks of the highest ranking elites (*ali'i*). The discovery of this pendant in one of the buildings at Young’s residence echoes documentary accounts of his high status in Hawaiian society despite his lack of Hawaiian ancestry. Although it is possible that this particular *lei niho palaoa* was actually worn by Young’s second wife, Kaonaheha, or one of their children, its presence signifies the close connection of their household with Hawaiian royalty.
Nonindigenous artifacts include objects made of metal (i.e., brass, bronze, copper, iron, and lead), glass (e.g., beads and broken bottles), earthenware ceramics (e.g., tableware and storage containers), and shell (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 49). Objects made of metal included, but were not limited to, gun parts, nails and screws, needles, a key, a fishhook, and furniture fittings. The confirmation that nails were the most abundant metal artifact corroborates historic accounts that Europeans like Young used them for trade because Hawaiians highly valued metals. Although excavations reported by Durst (2001: 84, Table 14) yielded a total of 111 iron nails and nail fragments from two structures (i.e., Structures 1 and 3), it is notable that 94% of the nail assemblage was recovered from a single 1 x 1 m test unit in a Western-style building (Structure 1) that John Young apparently used as his primary residence. Although such a high concentration of nails in a single excavation unit arguably implies that they had been cached for eventual trade, it is also possible that they were primarily used for building the wood superstructure of his house. A total of 80 iron nails and nail fragments were recovered throughout the other Western-style structure (Structure 2) (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 42, Table 6).

Ceramics from the Western-style structures at Young’s residence included earthenware from England, porcelain from China (i.e., blue on white) and England (i.e., lusterware), and a small number of stoneware ceramics. The ceramics are roughly contemporaneous in age and overlap with John Young’s life. Accordingly, the site’s excavators argue that Young used European artifacts to maintain a connection with his English heritage (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 75). It is worth noting, however, that many powerful Hawaiian elites and chiefs also acquired and used English artifacts in the postcontact period (e.g., Garland 1996). That Hawaiian royalty used European artifacts suggests their desire to signal their affiliation with European culture. In turn, selected architectural features of John Young’s residence illustrate his apparent desire to convey his affiliation with indigenous Hawaiian society.

8.4.3 Western and Indigenous Architecture

At European contact, indigenous Hawaiian households often comprised a group of buildings that were collectively known as kaupule. In a normative kaupule, separate buildings were used for different activities and people. Ideally, there were separate eating houses for men and women, a cook house, a sleeping house, a canoe shed, and other structures (Handy and Pukui 1958). While a variety of imperatives governed the spatial organization of kaupule, the gendered segregation of activities such as eating was mandated by the strictures (kapu) of the Hawaiian religion (Malo 1951; Weisler and Kirch 1985; cf. Van Gilder 2001). Women did not eat in the presence of men and they were typically restricted from consuming foods such as pork and bananas, until the kapu was eliminated by Queen Ka‘ahumanu and other royalty in 1819.

Young established his residence in 1793, well before the kapu system was eliminated, and before the arrival of Christian missionaries from the United States in 1821. There is intriguing evidence that Young’s residence was at least partially structured as a kaupule, though he was not an indigenous Hawaiian. The three Western-style buildings at Young’s residence were constructed with basalt stones that were set in a mud mortar and covered with coral lime plaster, whereas the five Hawaiian-style features consisted of dry-laid basalt masonry (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 11). Three of the Hawaiian-style features probably functioned as residential terraces or platforms, whereas a stone mound is likely derived from an earth oven (imu) and one of the stone platforms may mark a burial.

Archaeological evidence that Young’s residence was organized in a kaupule fashion corroborates an 1828 documentary account by Judd (1928: 36), who noted that Young’s second wife, Kaaonahea, lived in a separate “native” house that was made of “grass” (Rosendahl and Carter 1988: 23). In contrast, Young probably lived in one of the houses (Structure 1) that was a combination of Hawaiian and Western architectural characteristics. Unlike traditional Hawaiian houses with walls of pili grass thatching, Young’s house was constructed of basalt stone that was stabilized with mud mortar and whitewashed with a plaster of burnt coral and sand. Although the mortared and whitewashed walls of Young’s house were a Western introduction, the floor of his house comprised a traditional pavement of ili ili stones (rounded pebbles). However, several characteristics of the buildings at Young’s residence are common to both Hawaiian and European traditions: their layout, the use of thatched roofs, and their focus on rectangular forms (Durst 2001: 109). Therefore, the interpretation that the buildings at Young’s residence materialize his effort to assimilate into Hawaiian culture should not be overstated.

Nonetheless, the archaeology of Young’s domestic life confirms his use of Hawaiian artifacts that were likely acquired through exchange, as well as his adoption of the kaupule household arrangement. Concurrently, however, many of Young’s indigenous Hawaiian counterparts adopted selected Western technologies and cultural practices. The third king of the Kamehameha dynasty, Kaukeouli, provides a striking example of this phenomenon (Fig. 5).

8.5 King Kamehameha III (Kaukeouli) at Moku‘ula, Maui

8.5.1 Documentary Record

The third king in the Kamehameha dynasty, Kaukeouli, ruled the Hawaiian kingdom for almost three decades from 1825 to 1854 (Kuykendall 1938). This period witnessed a great deal of change in Hawaiian society, including the proliferation of Christianity, a reorganization of international exchange relations, and the implementation of the Mähele land reform. Until the early 1840s, chiefly elites controlled international trade, and commoners in the countryside acquired only marginal amounts of traded goods through kin relations (Sahlins 1992: 112). However, a market-driven cash economy eventually reached the Hawaiian countryside in the
late 1840s (Sahlins 1992: 112–113), at a time when the kingdom’s royalty suffered from an increasingly severe imbalance in international trade. The growing imbalance in international commerce led to steady increases in the debt load that many Hawaiian chiefs carried by the mid-nineteenth century.

Some Hawaiian royalty viewed the Māhele land reform of 1848–1850 as an opportunity to dispense with crushing debts they had accumulated since Hawai‘i’s economy shifted from the sandalwood trade with China to the provisioning of American whaling ships that plied Pacific waters between Japan and the U.S. Pacific Northwest (Sahlins 1992: 102). Since the Māhele sanctioned the sale and private ownership of land, it was a sharp departure from traditional land tenure wherein indigenous kings and chiefs held a majority of Hawai‘i’s land in trust for its residents.

Prior to the 1848–1850 Māhele, Kaukeaouli constructed and occupied multiple residences on the island of Maui and on the island of O‘ahu. Like many of his contemporaries, such as John Young, Kaukeaouli’s houses embodied a mix of Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian influences in their materials, design, and contents. His residence at Moku‘ula, on the island of Maui, is relatively well documented by historic accounts (Fig. 3). Klieger’s (1998) study of documents confirms that Kaukeaouli’s residence at Moku‘ula included a large palace, a smaller residence, a fort, and a royal tomb on an artificial one-acre island within a 11+ acre fishpond (Fig. 6). The palace was constructed of coral blocks and the smaller residence consisted of a traditional thatched hale (house) constructed with local plant materials. Although an early missionary account of the coral block palace in 1837 described it as “rather splendid,” a later account less than a decade later describes it as being in a “somewhat dilapidated state” (Klieger 1998: 48–54). By then, Kaukeaouli was apparently residing in a thatched hale instead of the palace (Klieger 1998: 54). Together, these accounts confirm the economic pressures that weighed heavily on the Kamehameha dynasty, in response to the growing imbalance of international trade.

Archaeological data complement documentary descriptions of Kaukeaouli’s life at Moku‘ula. Notably, the archaeological record of his residence illustrates the role that exchange played in the dynamic construction of hybrid identities in post-contact Hawai‘i.
8.5.2 Archaeological Record

Relatively limited archaeological excavation has been undertaken at Kauikeaulu's residence at Moku'ula, even though the excavations were broader in their horizontal coverage in comparison to such work at John Young's residence at Kawaihæ (i.e., Klieger 1995, 1998; Klieger and Lebo 1999). This disparity is due to the fact that archaeological excavations (25.75 sq. m), the extraction of sediment cores (N=14), and an electromagnetic (EM) survey at Moku'ula were concentrated on identifying the horizontal limits of the artificial one-acre island where his palace complex was constructed (Fig. 6). Thus, although it is not clear if materials recovered by the excavation units and sediment cores were directly derived from Kauikeaulu's residence, their acquisition from the island illustrates their link to his occupation at Moku'ula.

In either case, the excavations and sediment cores on the island yielded an intriguing mix of indigenous and nonindigenous artifacts and materials. Although nonindigenous objects dominate the assemblage, a variety of excavated materials (like marine shell, coral, fishbone, and kukui nuts) suggests the continued use of traditional resources. Traditional artifacts of basalt (N=12) at Moku'ula included hammerstones, edge-altered flakes, unaltered flakes, and pieces of lithic shatter (Dixon 1995: 223, Table 9; Klieger 1998: 106). Eight volcanic glass artifacts were also recovered including flakes, shatter, and cores, and a piece of raw material (Dixon 1995: 222-232). In addition to these artifacts, nonindigenous artifacts included a marine shell fishhook fragment and a sea urchin spine abrader that was likely used for making marine shell fishhooks.

Nonindigenous artifacts at Moku'ula that dated to Kauikeaulu's era were dominated by British earthenware ceramics, some Chinese and Japanese porcelain ceramics, and a few metal nails. The discovery of earthenware ceramics from Europe and Asia directly signals the tangible impact of international trade on domestic consumption by Kauikeaulu and other Hawaiian royalty. European and Asian goods surely had great value among Hawaiian royalty, since they expanded the metaphorical "body" of a chief (or chieftess) and his (or her) retinue (Sahlins 1992: 80).

In this vein, Klieger's (1998: 109) observation that none of the nonindigenous artifacts showed any signs of being redesigned for traditional purposes is perhaps particularly meaningful, in light of the fact that such behavior was relatively common among other indigenous populations elsewhere in the world (e.g., contributors in Cobb 2003). In Spanish colonial California, for example, Native populations made traditional tools with bottle and window glass (Silliman 2003: 148). Among Hawaiian royalty, altering such commodities would diminish their inherent ideological value as extensions of the royal body. This behavioral pattern is quite different from many early postcontact Hawaiian commoner sites with Western items (e.g., bottle glass, metal nails) that have been reworked for other traditional purposes. The manufacture of traditional fishhooks with Western nails is only one example of such behavior that is corroborated by the documentary record (Li 1959: 87). Evidently, Hawaiian royalty were less inclined to use Western materials for traditional activities; instead, they used such goods for their intended functions, as did the Europeans who provided them through exchange.

Klieger (1998: 108-109) uses low frequencies of both indigenous and nonindigenous artifacts at Moku'ula to suggest that Kauikeaulu still adhered to traditional Hawaiian customs that governed the careful disposal of royal refuse, through burning or secretive caching. In the indigenous religious ideology, such disposal was imperative since royal possessions, like their royal owners, were charged with powerful mana. That this custom may have been practiced more than 20 years after the introduction of Christianity is testimony to the persistence of traditional Hawaiian religion and to syncretism rather than the wholesale replacement of ancient beliefs. The archaeological record of Moku'ula illustrates the complex nature of Kauikeaulu's identity in midnineteenth century Hawai'i.

8.6 Discussion: A Comparative Perspective on Exchange and Social Identity in History and Archaeology

Scholars of contact and colonialism have long grappled with conflicting documentary accounts that speak to the sources and consequences of culture change. Archaeological studies of exchange and domestic behavior are uniquely informative because how people circulated and used material artifacts reflected their construction of social identity (e.g., Lightfoot et al. 1998). Comparing John Young and Kauikeaulu as case studies illustrates the bidirectional nature of culture change at the level of individual agents within a broader, international political economy. These two individuals had sharply contrasting life histories: one was a common British sailor, and the other was by birth and ancestry a member of indigenous Hawaiian royalty. In Hawaiian epistemology, their identity stems from a genealogical connection to the taro plant that grew from the still-born child of their progenitor gods.

Although John Young never became fully Hawaiian as traditionally defined, he and a few other non-Hawaiians were eventually buried in Mauna 'Ala, the royal mausoleum (Fig. 7) in Nuuanu Valley, O'ahu (Chapman and Kaihe'e'ekai Mai'oho 2004). Everyone else in the mausoleum was indigenous elite, and most were consanguineous or affinal kin of the Kamehameha dynasty or the Kalakaua family. Hawaiian commoners were excluded from the mausoleum. In some respects then, despite their divergent ethnic heritages, John Young and Kauikeaulu shared an overlapping identity. Both men were powerful members of a highly stratified, multicultural society and their elite status distinguished them sharply from Hawaiian commoners, as well as most Europeans and Americans in the islands. In the case of early postcontact Hawai'i, social class transcended ethnicity in some, but not all, respects.

It is important to note, for example, that neither Young nor any other non-Hawaiian (e.g., Charles Reed Bishop) was buried in the Kamehameha dynasty or
Kalākaua family crypts. Young’s and Kauikeauli’s status and identity could not overlap completely since they were not genealogically conterminous in the traditional Hawaiian worldview. Although both men were Christians and the mausoleum was designed with characteristics of a European church (Chapman and Kahi‘e‘akai Mai‘oho 2004), their identities were still distinguished by Hawaiian traditions. Although the wholesale adoption of Christianity by Hawaiians ensured that they shared a religious ideology with European and American residents of the islands, it did not undermine their traditional emphasis on genealogy to establish ones indigenous ancestry and cultural identity.

8.7 Conclusions

Because European and American contact with the Hawaiian archipelago occurred relatively late (i.e., AD 1778) in the expansion of capitalism, a rich body of documentary accounts is available to scholars. The Hawaiian Islands were not contacted for more than two centuries after the New World was first visited, and later settled, by Europeans in AD 1492. Moreover, because modern economic development has accelerated in the islands over the past few decades, the archaeological record of early contact (i.e., the first century) in Hawai‘i is poorly preserved. Fortunately, however, the archaeological record of key individuals in Hawaiian history like John Young and Kauikeauli is relatively intact. Consequently, the Hawaiian Islands offer an exceptional opportunity to examine the role of exchange in the construction of changing social identity in a context of emergent colonialism.

In the first several decades of contact in the Hawaiian islands, a “Middle Ground” (sensu White 1991) was achieved between indigenous and nonindigenous elites, such as John Young, King Kamehameha I, and many other individuals. However, by the time of Kauikeauli’s rule in the midnineteenth century, the precarious balance of the “Middle Ground” was tipped toward increasing control of the islands by Europeans and Americans. In any event, this study confirms that culture change in the context of contact and colonialism is a two-way street that is driven by the political economy of exchange (Cobb 2003: 11). Accordingly, anthropological models of exchange and identity that dominated the twentieth century must be refined to account for the bidirectional nature of culture change.

References


9.1 Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, a group of Chinese and Chinese-American families founded a small fishing village on the outskirts of the coastal resort town of Pacific Grove near Monterey, California (Fig. 1). This community took its name from Point Alones, a series of rocks that jut out into the Pacific Ocean and, together with Point Almejas, shelters a small cove. Throughout its history, this village was a focal point for trade and exchange between the Chinese and the non-Chinese living in the Monterey area. This exchange took many forms – social, cultural, and economic. Through this direct exchange, the non-Chinese in the Monterey Bay area came face to face with people who had long been represented in Western society by exotic and desirable ceramics, knick-knacks, silks, and other luxury items. Analyzing the archaeology and history of the Point Alones village provides a glimpse into the ways that these face-to-face encounters and the exchange of goods, cultural forms, and aesthetics shaped the lived experiences of village residents and their neighbors.

This particular moment of culture contact illustrates what happens when regionally salient discourses encounter local situations that don’t fit. In this case, the ability of Chinese-made and Chinese-looking objects to stand for exotic luxury was called into question by racial violence and tension between the residents of the Point Alones village and their non-Chinese neighbors. This chapter specifically focuses on how these tensions influenced the meanings given to foreign-looking objects and the ways in which they were displayed, celebrated, and condemned in a local context. Although Earle argues that “an important material correlate of meaning is style” (1982: 9), the relationship between meaning and style is not always clear or consistent. In this case, two categories of foreign-looking objects exist with similar styles but very different meanings. This chapter asks why such disparate meanings were