

Peaceful Islands: Insular Communities as Nonkilling Societies

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 October 2011

Accepted 15 December 2011

Keywords:

Peace island, nonkilling,

Tristan da Cunha,

Ifaluk, Tahiti, Åland, Jujū,

Hawaii

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the idea of insular peacefulness that is indicated based on the measurable premise of island communities in which killing is absent or statistically low. Insular peacefulness is explored in three sections. The first section presents the notion of a deep-rooted archetype of islands as places of freedom, wealth and peace which can be traced to mythological and historical constructions scattered through time and space. Ancient descriptions are followed by the late medieval and modern quest for lost insular paradises which are also depicted in fictional literary utopian accounts and contemporary libertarian seasteading projections and experiments. The concept of “Peace Island,” following Ko, is also introduced to contextualize the case study sections.

Beyond utopian archetypes and realizations, the next section lays out three real insular communities that have been described as “peaceful” or “nonviolent” and that follow our criteria of being essentially killing-free islands. The three featured societies are Tristan da Cunha (British South Atlantic), Ifaluk (Micronesia) and Tahiti (Polynesia). Even if the strategies and structures of these remote and small communities are not necessarily applicable to larger insular populations, they certainly support the idea of the possibilities for realizing nonkilling societies through revised socio-cultural heuristic models.

The final section offers another four examples of larger islands that have defined themselves—through collective social imagination and/or intentional constructions—as “islands of peace,” seeking to develop, position, and export their identity in the framework of insular cultures of peace, upon distinct bases within their historical, political, economic and cultural roots. The Åland Islands in Finland (one of the first demilitarized and neutralized territories in the world); the Islands of Hawaii (with a fragile “equilibrium” of heavy militarization and a deep-seated traditional culture of peace and *aloha*); Jeju Island in Korea (with one of the most active programs for Peace Island development, even if located in a country still technically at war for the past sixty years) and the Canary Island of Lanzarote in Spain (a new international initiative for the diffusion of human rights and a culture of peace). All four examples illustrate through their commonalities the modern attempts for the realization of peaceful and peace-making cultures, programs and experiments from the standpoint of insular societies.

Introduction

This essay explores the idea of insular peacefulness that is indicated based on the measurable premise of island communities in which killing is absent or statistically low. Insular peacefulness is explored in three sections. The first section presents the notion of a deep-rooted archetype of islands as places of freedom, wealth and peace which can be traced to mythological and historical constructions scattered through time and space. Ancient descriptions are followed by the late medieval and modern quest for lost insular paradises which are also depicted in fictional literary utopian accounts and contemporary libertarian seasteading projections and experiments. The concept of “Peace Island,” following Ko, is also introduced to contextualize the case study sections.

Beyond utopian archetypes and realizations, the next section lays out three real insular communities that have been described as “peaceful” or “nonviolent” and that follow our criteria of being essentially killing-free islands. The three featured societies are Tristan da Cunha (British South Atlantic), Ifaluk (Micronesia) and Tahiti (Polynesia). Even if the strategies and structures of these remote and small communities are not necessarily applicable to larger insular populations,¹⁾ they certainly support the idea of

1) As Younger (2008) indicates, size is a key factor to correlate peaceful societies: whereas isolated small communities (under 1,000), characterized by the relevance of face-to-face contact and ties, tend toward peacefulness, larger population groups tend to split and compete generating larger social and interpersonal conflicts. Kirch (1996 [1984]) draws similar conclusions based on comparative historical studies of Polynesian islands. (See Ch. 8, pp. 195-216) It is also important to note how foreign interference—or outright colonization—

the possibilities for realizing nonkilling societies through revised socio-cultural heuristic models.

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The Peaceful Islands Archetype

The exemplary image of the whole creation is the Island that suddenly “manifests” itself amidst the waves. (Eliade, 1991: 151)

Insular constructions as places of abundance, freedom and peace are what Professor Mircea

can have a disruptive impact, sometimes initiating or intensifying violence among native population and, otherwise, in the long term, halting it to foster State control. (See Ferguson and Whitehead, 1992)

Eliade, the eminent historian of religion, described as “myths of eternal return,” in which a distinct reality that portrays the celestial archetype is constantly sought. Following Mieiro, the mythical representations of Eden—in its diversity of cultural variations—have many times been transfigured into some lost island(s) in which the original affluence and happiness persists and are maintained intact (2001: 22). This “archetypal tradition of universal mythemes that survive in culture and religion” share the common feeling of “nostalgia over the loss of the primordial paradise” (Mieiro, 2001: 12). The continuation of this tradition through various forms of social and political utopianism persists to our day and is closely linked to the peaceful island archetype. In this section, the quest for insular utopias and their characterization as peaceful societies is explored.

Utopian archetypes generally represent simple forms of society that live in harmony with nature and provide all of their members with abundant resources while avoiding forms of suffering derived from hunger, war, disease, painful labour, oppression and injustice. In contrast with the Hobbesian view of human nature which is still dominant in Western thought, insular utopias are more in tune with Rousseau’s idea of the peaceful “noble savage.” Considering humans lived exclusively as hunter-gatherers for roughly 99% of their existence (Hart and Sussman, 2009), a form of society that not only tends to have relatively nonhierarchical and egalitarian structures but that is also “grounded in an ethos of routine cooperation, reciprocity, and nonviolent conflict resolution” (Sponsel, 2009: 38), it is tempting to infer the possible origin of these persistent archetypes is based on the biocultural history of our species—although this is not to say that all egalitarian societies are

necessarily peaceful. As Sponsel (2009) points out, hunter-gatherer culture epitomizes the attributes of nonkilling societies supporting the basis for nonkilling human capabilities through revised socio-cultural heuristic models. Utopian thinking offers a door toward creative renovation of mental structures through new and innovative political, economic and moral structures that support peaceful, equitable and just societies (Mieiro, 2001: 47).

The idea of insular utopias has certainly been present since antiquity. Timaeus’ (ca. 345-ca. 250 BCE) descriptions of the Island of Atlantis (recollected in one of Plato’s dialogues) and the diverse accounts of the Fortunate Isles (or Isles of the Blessed) by authors such as Flavius Philostratus, Plutarch, Strabo, Pliny or Ptolemy, all point to the vision of earthly paradises of happiness and abundance (thus their linkages with the Elysium). In Celtic, Germanic and Nordic mythologies the islands of Annwn/Annwfn and Avalon (Wales), Tír na nÓg and St. Brendan (Ireland), Brittia (Low Countries), Buyan (Slavic), etc., are all portrayed as mysterious places of abundance somewhere in between the realm of the living and the otherworld. Other civilizations also featured similar mythological constructions as the Chinese “Tao Hua Yuan” (桃花源) or Turtle Island Iroquois Creation Myth, for example (Mohawk, 2005). As Ferreira (1999: 13) explains, Christianity was unable to erase these deeply-held beliefs in Europe and chose to assimilate them as Edenic vestiges. The late medieval and early modern surge of oceanic explorations brought new attention to these rogue islands, now framed somewhat vaguely as the Antillia, the Isle of Seven Cities, St. Brandan, the Isle of Brazil (from the Gaelic *Uí Breasail*; see Donnard, 2009; Westropp, 1912), Satanazes or Saya, sometimes represented as one single

island but mostly as a constellation of isles scattered along the great and still unknown Atlantic. Many contemporary geographers of that era describe these islands as utopian commonwealths based on the exuberant abundance of wealth and the absence of evils and disease. (See Ferreira, 1999: 19-20)

These insular archetypes were eventually translated into fictional representations that had a strong impact on literary history. To mention a few early examples (16th and 17th cc.) a necessary point of departure is Thomas More's *Utopia* (*Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia*), published in 1516. *Utopia* is a fictional description of an ideal insular society characterized through its social and political customs and institutions. This is not a form of primitive society but rather an advanced industrial civilization that incorporates innovations such as the welfare state in which unemployment, private property and hunger have been eradicated. More indicates that *Utopia* does not represent his personal view of a "perfect society" but offers a point of departure for an in-depth debate on the social and political problems of his time. Indeed, in spite of the lack of theft and physical punishment, ideas such as a death penalty, slavery and euthanasia are contemplated in *Utopia*, and so is the hiring of mercenaries for defence.

Luís Vaz de Camões also includes a utopian island (the "*Ilha dos Amores*", or "Isle of Love") in his epic *Os Lusíadas* (*The Lusíads*), published in 1572 and bringing a fantasized Homeric description of the 15th and 16th cc. Portuguese oceanic explorations (*Canto IX*). The island offers a "model society in which war, suffering, pain and daily fatigue are absent" (Ferreira, 1999: 65), clearly inspired by his

country's veiled seafaring quest for the Fortunate Isles, Antillia and the Isle of Seven Cities. (See Mieirol, 2001: 53-60; Ferreira, 1999: 62-66.) Similarly, Cervantes features in the second part (ch. XLV) of his *Don Quixote* (1615) the "Ínsula Baratária," awarded to Sancho Panza, who rules the island in an utopian and peaceful fashion. (See Avallé Arce, 1988.) Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (*Civitas Solis*) is another early utopian work (written in 1602), also inspired by Plato's *Republic*, as was More's *Utopia*. Following Timaeus' vision of the Island of Atlantis, Campanella idealizes a theocratic insular commonwealth in which goods are shared and war is unlikely, in spite of the heavy militaristic social organization. Francis Bacon's 1627 *New Atlantis* (*Nova Atlantis*) takes place in Bensalem Island, surrounded by the waters of the Pacific. This utopian society could be described as a "scientocracy" characterized by the generosity, enlightenment, dignity and piety of its members.

The search for alternative societies in the oceans has taken new directions in the 21st century, with innovative and sometimes controversial proposals such as seasteading, which incorporate much of the utopian insular tradition. The idea of developing permanent homesteading in the oceans, beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone of any country, has been pushed forward by The Seasteading Institute (<<http://seasteading.org>>), founded in 2008 by Wayne Gramlich and Patri Friedman with the mission of furthering "the establishment and growth of permanent, autonomous ocean communities, enabling innovation with new political and social systems" (Friedman and Gramlich, 2009). Social and political experimentation outside the sovereign boundaries of any existing country would lead to new forms of seasteading nations based on libertarian

values, even though not all proposed “freedoms” would necessarily be considered peaceful. Some commentators raise concerns about the challenges of class structures in these proposals.

Happiness, generosity and peacefulness are a shared discourse in insular utopias and archetypes. The vision of islands as a place for peace is also widely spread. A leading example is the contemporary formulation of the “Peace Island” concept which is the result of Dr. Chang Hoon Ko works, initiated in 1999 and specially focused on Jeju Island and its Peace Island Forum that has been active since 2001. (See Ko et al., 2004.) Ko argues that islands are a “healthy unit” for the creation of cultures of peace within the oceans, in contrast with peninsular and continental nations that encounter a number of setbacks. Island values, attitudes, lifestyles and worldviews contribute toward a unique insular culture of peace philosophy that needs to be shared with others around the globe (Ko, 2010, personal communication). The two following sections are relevant to this argument.

Nonkilling Insular Communities

This section presents three cases of insular communities that have been characterized as “peaceful” or “nonviolent” by the academic literature in the social sciences, all featured in the online *Encyclopedia of Selected Peaceful Societies*²⁾ and that have the commonality of having an absence of or very rare occurrence of killing within their societies. As the title of the *Encyclopedia* indicates, this is just a selection of societies and certainly other cases could be included. (For a wider set of peaceful insular

communities see Younger, 2008.³⁾) Still, the three examples sketched below (Tristan da Cunha, Ifaluk and Tahiti) provide an interesting chart of real and consistent examples of the peaceful island “utopia” with various geographic and demographic backgrounds: from the cold seas of the South Atlantic to the tropical Pacific waters of Micronesia and Polynesia; from the few hundred inhabitants of Tristan and Ifaluk to the several thousands of Tahiti. Either way, these examples illustrate the possibilities for the realization of nonkilling insular societies through a variety of social, cultural and psychological mechanisms that tend to nurture conflict prevention, dispute resolution and overarching peacefulness among integrated communities.

Tristan da Cunha

Tristan da Cunha is a remote volcanic island located in the South Atlantic and integrated in the British overseas territory of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Its 275 inhabitants (2009⁴⁾) are descendants of the first European settlers that founded the community in 1817, 300 years after the discovery of the island by Portuguese explorer Tristão da Cunha. The first permanent inhabitants sought “an utopian community based on the principles of communal ownership, absolute equality, and freedom from governmental control” (Munch, 1964: 369).

The main economic activities are still subsistence farming and fishing. Land is communally

3) Among Polynesian islands that could be considered peaceful due to absence of internal violence and war (both aspects quantified as zero) Younger features Nukuoro, Sikaiana, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Nanumaga, Nui, Nukulaelae, Vaitupu, Kapingamarangi and Manihiki/Rakahanga (2008: 928).

4) See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/6748187.stm>.

2) See <<http://www.peacefulsocieties.org>>.

owned while joint ownership applies to long-boats, cattle, apple orchards and huts, setting a firm basis for individually selective and reciprocal cooperative and mutual aid practices (Munch and Marske, 1981: 166-167). Income is complemented with local labour at a lobster packing factory set up in 1950 (Munch, 1964: 371) and administrative functions. Even though currency (and electricity) was introduced in World War II, traditional reciprocity is still highly valued for insular social and economic relations. (See Munch, 1970.)

Although an appointed Administrator acts as head of government and a partially elected Council also performs advisory functions, society is still supported by “largely independent family units tied together by bilateral kinship and mutual recognition, but without any formal authority or control” (Munch, 1964: 370). Munch and Marske (1981) referred to this societal model as an “atomistic community” where cooperation extends to all aspects of life “creating a continuous network of overlapping and interlocking interpersonal obligations, and tying the community together in what we describe as “atomistic social integration” (1981: 163).

This “aggregate of independent households” (Munch and Marske, 1981: 165) has nevertheless developed into a community characterized by “[k]indness, considerateness, and respect for another person’s individual integrity” (id.), where deviance from these principles implies a severe loss of social prestige. Not only are there no records of killings ever taking place but there also haven’t been fights in living memory (Bonta, n/d): “The person who lost his temper in a quarrel would have that scar on his reputation for life, while someone who diffused a tense situation with a joke would gain general respect.” Freedom, personal integrity, equality,

peacefulness and anarchy are other values the community takes pride of, also celebrating its “lack of crime, strife, or status distinctions” (id.).

Ifaluk

Ifaluk (or Ifalik) is a small coral atoll in the State of Yap, Federated States of Micronesia. In 2002 it had a population of just over 500, whose primary economic activities were fishing and taro crops, articulated mainly through sharing and cooperative work (Lutz, 1990: 210). The introduction of US currency has been extremely disruptive, as it tends not to be shared as all other goods, leading to “emotional ambiguity and conflict” (Lutz, 1990: 212).

Ifaluk society is articulated through a “strong taboo on interpersonal violence or disrespect” (Lutz, 1990: 205). Conflicts are usually dealt with within the immediate family or lineage even though a council of traditional leaders representing the Island’s clans arbiters an “informal code of law” (id.) and deliberates in island-wide meetings (*toi*). The response of these leaders is taken as guidance on moral attitudes and emotions toward conflicts and disruptions (Lutz, 1990: 208-209).

The taboo over violence is expressed through the concept *song*, that could be roughly translated as “justifiable anger.” *Song* operates as a pro-social concept that regulates behaviour identifying those attitudes that transgress societal values, especially those related to sharing and cooperation. *Song* not only anticipates and prevents violent outbursts—interpersonal violence is “virtually non-existent on the island,” (Lutz, 1990: 224)—but serves as an anticipatory system for conflict prevention as behaviour is modelled seeking the avoidance of *song*. As Lutz explains

“to become ‘justifiably angry’ is to advance the possibilities for peace and wellbeing on the island, for it is to identify instances of behaviour that threaten the moral order” (1990: 206). Mallon and Stich (1999) actually argued that anger itself does not exist in Ifaluk, and Marshall (1994) interestingly points out that “[p]ersonal competence in these societies [small face-to-face communities] is contingent upon a continually demonstrated ability to respond to others.” Nevertheless, historical studies have also pointed out that Ifaluk has not always sustained peaceful relations with its neighbouring islands, something that must be considered. (For violence in the pre-contact Caroline Islands see Younger, 2009.)

Tahiti

Tahiti is one of the main islands of the so-called French Polynesia, officially an “Overseas Country Inside the [French] Republic” (*Pays d’outre-mer au sein de la République*), holding the seat of the autonomous government (in Papeete) and most of the territory’s population. The Kingdom of Tahiti survived as a French protectorate until the forced abdication of King Pomare V in 1880, and has since been an integral part of France. In 2007 the island had 178,133 inhabitants,⁵⁾ most of which remain ethnically unmixed in spite of the notable presence of inhabitants with European and Asian ancestry. In this paper, we will focus on traditional Tahitian society as studied by Levy (1969, 1973, 1978). For more recent social developments see Lockwood (1993).

As in other Polynesian societies, Tahitian

traditional economic activities consisted of fishing, livestock and horticulture, where sharing and cooperation had great relevance. Aggression and open hostility are rare within this society and the display of anger is very uncommon as “Tahitians believe that hostile feelings should be brought quickly out into the open verbally; if not, resulting explosions of open anger could provoke the spirits of the ancestors to retaliate and perhaps even kill the angry individual” (Bonta, n/d). Violence is prevented through a number of social mechanisms including controlled dramatic events in which conflict is expressed symbolically, even though usually avoidance strategies prevail. Nevertheless, this had certainly not always been the case as historical accounts of warfare in the past show (see Wrangham and Peterson, 1997, ch. 5).

In spite of the presence of a large military contingent and increasing numbers of Europeans and Asians through much of the 20th century, official records show that between 1900 and 1962 serious crimes were reduced to two murders, one taking place in 1928 and the other in 1953 (Levy, 1973: 277). Not only is crime low but also interpersonal violence in all forms: “The fear of the consequences of anger, of hostility, of violence—with little apparent experience of such consequences—is noteworthy” (Levy, 1973: 284). In fact, Levy correlates low crime rates with the “pervasive lack of violence in everyday life” (p. 279) that characterizes Tahitian “gentleness.”

Insular Cultures of Peace

In this section four cases in which insular cultures of peace have been or are being developed are presented: Åland, Jeju, Hawai’i

5) See Institut de la statistique de la Polynésie française <<http://www.ispf.pf>>.

and Lanzarote. Even though all four cases have significant commonalities, including past traumatic experiences and multicultural backgrounds, significant differences arise. While Åland has been privileged with a demilitarized and neutralized status for over a century, Hawai'i has suffered an increasing militarization for the same period, transforming the Islands into a target (both in the past—Pearl Harbor in WWII—and in the present). Jeju, on the other hand, seeks to build itself as an island of peace within a country that is still technically at war. Finally, Lanzarote—that, as Hawai'i, saw its indigenous population reduced close to complete extinction—is strategically and symbolically located in the North-South divide, seeking to provide a bridge between the two based on peace and conflict resolution.

Other insular peace initiatives could certainly be mentioned, such as the Alcatraz Conversion Project and its associated Global Peace Center (initiated in 1978 with a focus on indigenous sacred spaces), San Simão (or Simón) Island in Galiza, a Spanish Civil War concentration camp that was to be converted into a Center for the Preservation of Historical Memory (of war victims), the Bermudas and its Society for Nonviolence and Peace; or Spitsbergen Island in the Norwegian Arctic, an effectively neutralized territory that also hosts the so-called “Svalbard Global Seed Vault” (the proposal of converting it into an Arctic Peace Island is credited to Professor Magnus Haavelsrud). Nevertheless, only four cases mentioned above were brought forward considering their significance, diversity and scope.

Åland Islands

The Åland Islands are a Baltic archipelago

with political autonomy within Finland and a majority of monolingual Swedish-speaking population. Its demilitarization in 1856 after the Crimean War (Article 33 of the Treaty of Paris), made it one of the first areas of this kind in the world, also being a neutralised territory that necessarily must be kept out of the theater of operations in the event of war. This condition has significantly shaped Ålandic culture, especially since the prohibition of all military activity and conscription in the islands was confirmed in 1921 by the League of Nations and political autonomy granted by Finland (Kainen and Horn, 1997; Eriksson, 2006). In fact, Ålanders frequently refer to their archipelago as the “Islands of Peace,” symbolically reaffirmed in the insular motto and even a blended nationalities flag.

The Åland example of neutrality, autonomy and demilitarization as a model for the resolution of territorial disputes has been suggested as an alternative to stagnated conflicts such as those of Kashmir (Bano, 2007: 90-91), Nagorno-Karabakh (Ziyadov, 2007), Kosovo (Republic of Serbia, 2007), Zanzibar, Kalingrad (Vesa, 2009), etc. As Vesa (2009: 56) explains, the “full protection of minority rights and sufficient autonomy taking into account the historical, local and cultural conditions” jointly with the “positive role of third parties as mediators and the responsiveness toward each others’ interests and values” are essential components—together with the already mentioned neutrality, autonomy and demilitarization—of the Ålandic peacemaking approach.

The Government of Åland has been an active promoter of the Ålandic example as a working model for minority issues and crisis management, seeking to influence international organizations and actors (Granlund, 2010; Bailes et al.,

2007). This effort is especially visible through the Åland Islands Peace Institute (*Ålands fredsinstitut*) founded in 1992 as an independent charitable foundation. The “Åland Example” is the overarching focus that reaches out through the Institute’s research areas: minority-related issues, autonomy and self-government, and security through demilitarisation, conflict management and nonviolence. (See <<http://www.peace.ax>>.)

The Institute serves on the one hand as an interdisciplinary meeting place for Åland, the Nordic countries and the Baltic Sea region and focal point for the promotion of culture of peace within the Islands, bringing peace education to schools, authorities and the general public. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign affairs, in its peace-making efforts, has also organized institutional visits to Åland for representatives of regions affected by conflict that could seek inspiration in the Islands history and approach.

Jeju Island

Jeju Island is located in the Korea Strait between the Korean mainland and Japan and is the only special autonomous province of the Republic of Korea. From the late 1940s to the mid 1950s the island witnessed extreme violence linked to the April 3rd Rebellion in which some 30,000 people were killed. By the end of the 1990s local scholar Dr. Chang Hoon Ko introduced the concept of “Peace Island” and in 2001 the Peace Island Forum was initiated in Jeju, as part of the efforts of the World Association for Island Studies. As a result, in 2005 Jeju was declared a “World Peace Island” by the Korean Government and a privileged setting for experiences of rapprochement between the two Koreas and human rights promotion with special focus on minorities and the environment

(Jeju Development Institute, 2006: 5).

Since, Jeju has been a focal point for the development of the “Peace Island” idea. It has hosted the “Peace Island *Bulteok* Forum” on an annual basis (this year [2010] the 10th edition will take place), the Peace Island Tribunal, the Peace Island Culture Olympics, the Peace Island Film Festival, regional peace education trainings and a four-week “World Environment and Peace Summer School” featuring courses on human rights, international relations, governance, environmental leadership, marine tourism economy, climate change studies, cultural heritage and tourism, peace education and media, among other subjects (Ko et al., 2004; Ko, 2010, personal communication).

In 2010 (November 1-3) Jeju will also be hosting the Islands 20 (I-20) Summit focused on peace, the environment and oceanic tourism. The Summit seeks to establish a new alliance (United Islands and Cities for World Environment and Peace) bringing together a number of islands and low-lying coastal cities, that are symbolically linked to environmental and peace values. Proposed insular membership includes Jeju, Hainan Sao, Okinawa, Bali, Kinmen, Lakshadweep Islands, Fiji, Maui (Hawai‘i), Galápagos, Tasmania, Spitzbergen, Crete, Majorca, Mauritius, Madagascar, Prince Edward Island, the Isle of Man, Sakhalin, Bahrain and Åland. Cities include Hiroshima, Hanoi, Christchurch (New Zealand), San José (Costa Rica), Stockholm, Cape Town and Boston (Massachusetts). One of the expected outcomes is a Peace Island Initiative Resolution (I-20 Resolution) addressing the challenges and opportunities for island societies.

Beyond these activities, Jeju is looking into sustaining the Peace Islands Initiative through an island-based World Environmental University and associated entrepreneurial programs such as

a “Peace Island Cruise Tour” through participating islands and cities (Jeju, Kinmen, Hainan, Hanoi, Kerala, Bali, Tasmania, Fiji, Maui, Okinawa, Hiroshima, etc.) (Ko, 2010, personal communication).

Hawai’i

Hawai’i is a well-known archipelago in the Central Pacific, currently administered as a U.S. State but that remained independent as a monarchy until the overthrow of Queen Lili’uokalani in 1893 (Silva, 2004). Even though the Islands suffered an increased militarization since the turn of the 19th century—especially visible since World War II and the establishment of the U.S. Pacific Command in O’ahu—Hawai’i’s nickname is the “Aloha State,” referring to the so-called spirit of *Aloha*, that can be translated as “peace” or “love” (Ulukau, 2004). Even though Polynesian peaceful traditions have possibly been over-romanticized somewhat ignoring the strong feudal and warrior culture that existed in the islands before their westernization (for another view see Dukas, 2004), the idea of Hawai’i as the “Geneva of the Pacific” (Ikuma, 2004: 17), a place for meeting, has a wide acceptance and has been supported by the State government and promoted by organizations such as the Center for Global Nonkilling and the Matsunaga Institute for Peace.

Hawai’i is both a “war island” and a “peace island.” It hosts not only a large military contingent throughout land, sea and air force bases and installations but also a very large percentage of veteran population (over 118,000 in 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), partially responsible for the State’s high suicide rates (approximately 9 per 100,000; id.). This makes Hawai’i, in many aspects, a retirement gift similar to what

Roman legionaries were granted with on the completion of their term of service, also serving as place for healing for those wounded in battle. The military accounts for a substantial portion of the Islands income and this close tie is symbolically enshrined by the many war monuments, memorials and museums (Pearl Harbor, Battleship Missouri, Punchbowl National Cemetery, Army Museum, etc.).⁶⁾

On the other hand, Hawai’i’s peace traditions are an important part of the Islands’ heritage. Queen Lili’uokalani’s opposition to armed resistance during the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and her peaceful struggle during the following decades seeded the basis for the Hawaiian nonviolent sovereignty movement that reemerged during the sixties. The movement’s vision of a restored Hawaiian society incorporates many of the Island’s traditional values as *laulima* (cooperative work for the common good); *pono* (righteous justice); *lokahi* (harmony in unity); *ho’okipa* (hospitality); *lokomaiika’i* (generosity and goodwill); *kokua* (mutual help); ‘

6) Note that some “Peace monuments,” even though fairly unknown, are also present. Among them: Hawai’i Peace Memorial (1986), Kennedy Theatre, Mānoa Campus, University of Hawai’i, Honolulu, O’ahu; Mohandas Gandhi’s statue (1990) in Kapiolani Park, Waikīkī, O’ahu, given to the city by the Gandhi Memorial International Foundation; the Leahi Millennium Peace Garden (2000), Diamond Head, Honolulu, O’ahu, “[c]reated by teens from around the globe to promote peace and cultural understanding and now stands as a symbol of solidarity and hope” or the “Plant Peace” Mural (2006), Leahi Millennium Peace Garden, Diamond Head, Honolulu, O’ahu. The “Peace Bells” scattered through the islands are also worth noticing, including those of the Byodo-In Temple, Valley of the Temples, O’ahu; Nani Mau Gardens, Hilo, Hawai’i; Hiroshima Peace Bell, Izumo Taisha Mission, North Kukui Street, Honolulu, O’ahu and Nagasaki Peace Bell, Honolulu Hale (City Hall), Honolulu, O’ahu.

ohana (extended family); *aloha‘aina* (love for the land); *malama* (care for each other) and *aloha* (love and peace) (Guanson, 1991: 9). Interestingly, the monopoly over violence imposed by the United States meant that most aggressive aspects of traditional culture were erased—as they would harm the interests of the State—while the peaceful facets of the same culture were allowed to continue,⁷⁾ even if in a heavily merchandized form, that sovereignty and cultural movements are attempting to surpass.

Hawaiian traditions as that of the *pu ‘uhonua*, places of refuge⁸⁾ “within no blood can be shed nor unkind word spoken” (Guanson, 1991: 11), provided basis for rethinking the islands as a zone of peace, “a place of refuge for all to go for renewal and protection” (id.). *DMZ Hawai‘i / Aloha ‘Aina*, a network⁹⁾ of organizations and individuals working to counter the military’s negative social, cultural and environmental impacts in the islands, is one example of the combination of environmental, indigenous and peace struggles in Hawai‘i, confronting military expansion and “promoting the development of environmentally sustainable, socially just and culturally appropriate economic alternatives” for the islands.¹⁰⁾

The Center for Global Nonkilling’s “Nonkilling

Hawai‘i” project is also akin to these efforts, envisioning the Islands as a working model for modern killing-free societies. Its comprehensive approach includes the promotion of leadership development, research/discovery, education/training, and policy/action initiatives. Among these, the First Global Nonkilling Leadership Academy held in October 2009, the 2009 and 2010 Interdisciplinary Nonkilling Research Seminars convened at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, or the Nonkilling Hawai‘i Advisory Council (that includes representatives from a wide array of public and private organizations), are some recent examples. (For more on nonkilling, see Paige, 2009; Evans Pim, ed., 2009.)

Lanzarote

Lanzarote is the easternmost of the Canary Islands, a Spanish autonomous archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean. The whole island is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and has a long history of settlements from diverse cultural backgrounds, following its strategic location between the Canary Islands and the African continent (just 100 Km away from the coast). Recently, a strong proposal for establishing an “International Zone for Human Rights and a Culture of Peace” (*Zona Internacional para la Cultura de Paz y los Derechos Humanos*) has been brought forward by local and national authorities, to be maintained by a Foundation under the same name. (See <<http://zonainternacionaldepaz.org>>.) The proposal is intended to transform the island into a meeting-point for peoples and States seeking understanding and conflict prevention through the use of dialogue and negotiation. The project is based on three central axes, that are to be developed combining local and global actions in the areas of human rights, sustainable devel-

7) For this observation I am grateful to Professor Stephen M. Younger.

8) Preserved historical *pu ‘uhonua* include the *pu ‘uhonua o Hōnaunau*, Hawai‘i National Historical Park. (See <<http://www.nps.gov/puho/planyourvisit/the-puuhonua.htm>>.)

9) Groups that have been active in the network include: the American Friends Service Committee Hawai‘i Area Program, ‘Ohana Koa / NFIP, Malu ‘Aina, Ka Pakaukau, KAHEA, Life of the Land, Malama Makua, Hui Malama o Makua, ‘Ilio‘ulaokalani, Hui Ho‘okipa, Save UH / Stop UARC Coalition, Kipuka, Na Imi Pono, Kaua‘i Alliance for Peace and Social Justice, and World Can’t Wait.

10) See <http://www.dmzhawaii.org/?page_id=2>.

opment and corporate social responsibility. The initiative builds upon previous experiences as the “*Navegantes por la Paz*” (“Sailors for Peace”) UNESCO Associated Schools Programme or the Spanish Network for the Global Compact (<<http://www.pactomundial.org>>) on corporate responsibility.

The new Foundation is intended to merge research, action and sensitization under the principles of peace, democracy, equality toward global disarmament, conflict prevention and resolution and human security. Beyond promoting cultures of peace in the islands the project seeks to establish an international role for Lanzarote as an active agent of peace. Former UNESCO Secretary-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza recently committed to take the proposal for the establishment of an “International Zone for Human Rights and a Culture of Peace” to the UN General Assembly, and in July 21, 2010 the Spanish Senate unanimously approved a motion in support of the project.¹¹⁾

Final Remarks

In his keynote address to the 6th Peace Island Forum: “Security and Peace in Island Societies” (Jeju, July 6-7, 2006), Professor Glenn D. Paige posed the question “Is a nonkilling island society possible?” Paige offers a series of public policy, economic, educational and security recommendations for island development following historical, scientific, social, cultural, spiritual, etc. grounds for confidence on the realization of nonkilling insular societies. Taking into account

11) See *El Mundo* (21/07/2010), “El Gobierno impulsará a Lanzarote como Zona Internacional de Paz y Derechos”; *ABC* (22/07/2010); “El Senado apuesta por crear en las Islas una Zona para la Paz”.

the second section of this article and considering Kenneth E. Boulding’s “First Law” (“Anything that exists is possible”, in *Stable Peace*, 1972), the obvious answer to Paige’s question is “Yes!”.

The other two sections in this article provide further evidence that this possibility has been permanently recollected in human consciousness through the ages, forging a deep-rooted individual and collective archetype of islands as places for peaceful and sustainable development of human existence. This vision and quest—possibly originated in the reminiscences of the biocultural history of our species—not only emerges in utopian literary fictions (some of which have been mentioned) but have constantly been pushed forward as a feasible reality, evident in late medieval and modern oceanic explorations, contemporary seasteading experiments and actual island-based cultures of peace realizations as those presented in the final section.¹²⁾ Navigating the future seas to islands where there is no more killing will be fascinating.

Acknowledgments

For comments on a draft of this paper I am indebted to Glenn D. Paige, Glenda H. Paige, Stephen M. Younger, Leslie E. Sponsel, Thomas

12) As Ko (2010, personal communication) explains, peace islands are a “healthy working model,” and also a metaphor that can be exported to non-insular communities. I extremely appreciate Les Sponsel’s idea of (re)thinking of peace islands beyond geographical constructions, as certainly many peaceful communities and areas (such as the Amish experiences or several international peace parks as those of Costa Rica with its neighbours) can be considered enclaves or “continental peace islands”.

A. Fee, Balwant Bhaneja, Katherine Li and Robley George. The many shortcomings still present remain my own responsibility. I am also grateful to Alberto Vieira for allowing the presentation and discussion of the initial draft of this work at the International Conference on Islands: “The Islands of the World and the World of Islands”, CEHA, Madeira (Portugal), July 26-30, 2010.

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