Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i: Decolonizing Maps and Reasserting Indigenous Sovereignty

Maps are powerful tools that have been used throughout history to shape our understanding of the world. They can be used to represent territory, to legitimize political claims, and to control resources. Maps have also played a significant role in the colonization of Indigenous lands, including the Hawaiian Islands.



Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i

by D.K. Spencer

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In this article, we will explore the critical settler cartographies in Hawai'i, examining their impact on Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) sovereignty. We will analyze the ways in which maps have been used to legitimize settler colonialism and dispossess Indigenous peoples, and highlight the

importance of decolonizing maps and reasserting Indigenous spatial knowledge.

Settler Colonialism and Cartography

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism in which settlers from one country establish permanent settlements in another country, often displacing or subjugating the Indigenous population. Settler colonialism is characterized by the imposition of European political, economic, and social systems on Indigenous societies, and by the dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources.

Maps have played a central role in settler colonialism, serving to legitimize the claims of European settlers and to facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Maps have been used to represent Indigenous lands as empty and available for settlement, and to justify the removal of Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories.

The Case of Hawai'i

The history of Hawai'i provides a clear example of how maps have been used to support settler colonialism. When Captain James Cook first arrived in Hawai'i in 1778, he claimed the islands for the British Crown. This claim was based on the European doctrine of terra nullius, which held that lands that were not claimed by a Christian nation were available for settlement.

In the years that followed, European and American missionaries, traders, and settlers arrived in Hawai'i. By the mid-19th century, the United States had become the dominant foreign power in Hawai'i, and in 1898, Hawai'i was annexed by the United States.

Throughout this period, maps were used to legitimize the claims of European and American settlers and to dispossess Kanaka Maoli of their lands. Maps were used to represent the Hawaiian Islands as empty and available for settlement, and they were used to justify the removal of Kanaka Maoli from their traditional territories.

Decolonizing Maps

The decolonization of maps is a critical step in the process of decolonization. Decolonizing maps means challenging the Eurocentric and settler colonial narratives that have been embedded in maps for centuries. It means reasserting Indigenous spatial knowledge and reclaiming the power to represent Indigenous territories.

There are a number of ways to decolonize maps. One way is to use Indigenous place names and to represent Indigenous territories in a way that reflects Indigenous knowledge and values.

Another way to decolonize maps is to highlight the role that maps have played in settler colonialism and dispossession. By exposing the ways in which maps have been used to oppress Indigenous peoples, we can challenge the legitimacy of settler colonial claims and support the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty.

Maps are powerful tools that have been used to shape our understanding of the world. They can be used to represent territory, to legitimize political claims, and to control resources. Maps have also played a significant role in the colonization of Indigenous lands, including the Hawaiian Islands.

In this article, we have explored the critical settler cartographies in Hawai'i, examining their impact on Kanaka Maoli sovereignty. We have analyzed the ways in which maps have been used to legitimize settler colonialism and dispossess Indigenous peoples, and highlighted the importance of decolonizing maps and reasserting Indigenous spatial knowledge.

The decolonization of maps is a critical step in the process of decolonization. By challenging the Eurocentric and settler colonial narratives that have been embedded in maps for centuries, and by reasserting Indigenous spatial knowledge, we can support the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and create a more just and equitable world.



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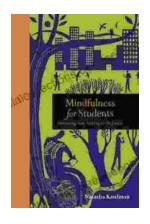
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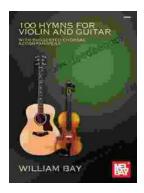
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