

An Overview of Native Hawaiian Land and Ocean Management Practices

In a discussion of the Hawaiian landscape it is also appropriate to briefly discuss traditional Hawaiian land terms and land management customs. It is important for contemporary readers to know that in the Hawaiian mind all aspects of the land—all natural and cultural resources are interrelated, and that all are culturally significant. The integrity of a landscape and its sense of place depends upon the well-being of the whole entity, not only a part of it. Thus, what we do to one part of the landscape has an affect on the rest of the landscape. Properly planned, designed, and built features could ensure both physical and spiritual well-being for the inhabitants and users. To ensure that a balance and compatibility with the natural landscape was maintained, priests of the *papa huluhonua* and *kuhikuhi pu'uone* (priests who specialized in knowledge of the earth, its natural systems, and the placement of structures upon the land) were called upon by high chiefs and commoners prior to undertaking and during construction projects (cf. Malo 1951:161, Kamakau 1968:8,27,47).

Hawaiian customs and practices demonstrate the belief that all portions of the land and environment are related, like members of an extended family, each environmental zone was named, and their individual attributes were known. Acknowledging the relationship of one environmental zone (*wao*) to another, is rooted in traditional land management practices and values. Just as place names tell us that areas are of cultural importance, the occurrence of a Hawaiian nomenclature for environmental zones also tells us that there was an intimate relationship between Hawaiians and their environment. The native tradition of *Ka-Miki* (in *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, 1914-1917), provides readers with a detailed account of Hawaiian land divisions and environmental zones. These traditional *wao* or regions of land, districts, and land divisions include:

1—*Ke kuahiwi*; 2—*Ke kualono*; 3—*Ke kuamauna*; 4—*Ke ku(a)hea*; 5—*Ke kaolo*; 6—*Ka wao*; 7—*Ka wao ma'u kele*; 8—*Ka wao kele*; 9—*Ka wao akua*; 10—*Ka wao la'au*; 11—*Ka wao kanaka*; 12—*Ka 'ama'u*; 13—*Ka 'apa'a*; 14—*Ka pahe'e*; 15—*Ke kula*; 16—*Ka 'ilima*; 17—*Ka pu'eone*; 18—*Ka po'ina nalu*; 19—*Ke kai kohola*; 20—*Ke kai 'ele*; 21—*Ke kai uli*; 22—*Ke kai pualena*; 23—*Kai popolohua-a-Kane-i-Tahiti*. 1—The mountain; 2—The region near the mountain top; 3—The mountain top; 4—The misty ridge; 5—The trail ways; 6—The inland regions; 7 and 8—The rain belt regions; 9—The distant area inhabited by gods; 10—The forested region; 11—The region of people below; 12—The place of *'ama'u* [fern upland agricultural zone]; 13—The arid plains; 14—The place of wet land planting; 15—The plain or open country; 16—The place of *'ilima* growth [a seaward, and generally arid section of the *kula*]; 17—The dunes; 18—The place covered by waves [shoreline]; 19—The shallow sea [shoreline reef flats]; 20—The dark sea; 21—The deep blue-green sea; 22—The yellow [sun reflecting— sea on the horizon]; and 23—The deep purplish black sea of Kane at Tahiti. (Kihe in *Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, September 21, 1916; Maly, translator).

Over the centuries, as the ancient Hawaiian population grew, land use and resource management also evolved. The *moku puni* or islands were subdivided into land units of varying sizes, and the largest division was the *moku-o-loko* (district - literally: interior island). It appears that the development of the major districts on the islands, and the system of establishing smaller manageable units of land became formalized by the early 1600s, in the reigns of 'Umi-a-Li'loa and Mā'ilikūkahī (cf. Kamakau 1961 and Fornander 1996). The large districts were in turn, further divided into *'okana* or *kalana* (regions smaller than the *moku-o-loko*, yet comprising several other units of land).

In the system of traditional land management, the next, and perhaps most important unit of land was the *ahupua'a*; subdivisions of land whose boundaries were usually marked by altars with images of a pig, carved of *kukui* wood, placed upon them. The *ahupua'a* within which the native Hawaiians lived, represented land divisions that were complete ecological and economic production systems. The boundaries of the *ahupua'a* were generally defined by cycles and patterns of natural resources that extended from the mountainous zone, or peaks, to the ocean fisheries.

The natural cycles within the *ahupua'a* were also the foundation of the Hawaiian family, social, political and religious structure, and it can be said that the Hawaiian culture itself, is rooted in the land. This concept is demonstrated in the Hawaiian saying – "*He kalo kanu o ka 'aina*," which translates literally as "A taro planted on the land." The saying has been used for

generations, to describe someone who was a native of a particular land (Pukui 1983:1447). The *ahupua'a*, like the larger districts they belonged to, were also divided into smaller manageable parcels. The *'ili lele* were detached parcels with resources in various environmental zones; *kīhapai* were gardens; *mala* were dryland agricultural parcels; and *ko'ele* were agricultural parcels worked by commoners for the chiefs, and these small land units are among those which were identified by the ancient Hawaiians. These smaller parcels were inhabited and managed by the *maka'ainana* (people of the land) and their extended families. In each *ahupua'a*—from mountain slopes to the ocean—the common people were generally allowed access to all of the various natural resources within a given *ahupua'a* (cf. Kamakau 1961, Boundary Commission Testimonies 1873-1890, and Handy, Handy, and Pukui 1972).

In pre-western contact Hawai'i, all land and natural resources were held in trust by the high chiefs (*ali'i 'ai ahupua'a* or *ali'i 'ai moku*). The use of lands and resources were given to the *hoa'aina* (native tenants), at the prerogative of the *ali'i* and their representatives or land agents (*konohiki*), who were generally lesser chiefs as well. In 1848, the Hawaiian system of land tenure was radically altered by the *Mahele 'Āina* (Division of Land). The *Mahele* (division) defined the land interests of Kamehameha III (the King), the high-ranking chiefs, and the *konohiki*. As a result of the *Mahele*, all land in the Kingdom of Hawai'i came to be placed in one of three categories: Crown Lands (for the occupant of the throne); (2) Government Lands; and (3) *Konohiki* Lands (Kuleana Act, 1850). Laws in the period of the *Mahele* record that ownership rights to all lands in the kingdom were "*subject to the rights of the native tenants*;" those individuals who lived on the land and worked it for their subsistence and the welfare of the chiefs (*Kanawai Hoopai Karaima... {Penal Code} 1850:22*). The 1850 resolutions in "*Kanawai Hoopai Karaima no ko Hawaii Pae Aina*," authorized the newly formed Land Commission to award fee-simple title to all native tenants who occupied and improved any portion of Crown, Government, or *Konohiki* lands. These awards were to be free of commutation except for house lots located in the districts of Honolulu, Lahaina, and Hilo (cf. Penal Code, 1850:123-124). After native Hawaiian commoners were granted the opportunity to acquire their own parcels of land through the *Mahele*, foreigners were also granted the right to own land in 1850, provided they had sworn an oath of loyalty to the Hawaiian Monarch.