

Ke Ala Kahiko

The Way
of the
Old
Ones



Trail Guide: Wahaula Heiau



half ancient, is a place to rest and reflect upon a world where men and women lived and died for a thousand years before the arrival of European explorers. The Hawaiians of old likely knew of no other culture beyond Polynesia, and so there evolved

Beyond the heiau of Waha'ula a path leads along the shore, where it weaves through yesterdays to a time when the rocks had ears and listened to the words of men. The 1 1/4 mile loop trail, half modern,

a style of life and a body of values in which other systems of mankind were beyond belief. Allow 1 1/2 hours for this walk through time.



Wahaula Heiau

*Kapu! Kapu! Ola! Ola!
Ola Mai ke ali'i! Ola Mai ke akua!
Sacred! Sacred! Life! Life!
Life through the chief! Life through
the gods!*

In the center of Hawaiian social order were the *ali'i*, the chiefs, the *kahunas*, the priests, and the *akua*, the gods—the four hundred gods, the four thousand gods, the ever-present gods. Directed by the gods, acceptable behavior was interpreted by the *kahuna* and enforced by the god-chiefs. But when Pa'ao arrived from the Central Pacific, he found a degenerated leadership. So this *kahunu nui*, or high priest, brought new *ali'i* from central Polynesia and infused new strength into the *kapu* system. About 1275 A.D., according to oral tradition, Pa'ao directed construction of the original Waha'ula Heiau for Aha'ula, god of chiefs and war. Waha'ula (red-mouth) likely referred either to terrifying, red-mouthed wooden images within the stone walls, or to the introduced god.

This is a *luakini kaaui*, a temple of war constructed in preparation for battle, that only the *ali'i nui*, by virtue of his position, could build. Those *ali'i* who participated in the temple would gather outside the heiau walls on the *papakohala*, the level pavement covered with small stones; women were not allowed any closer. Only the *ali'i nui*, assisted by the *kahuna nui*, were allowed within the stone enclosure.

With prayers, and under strict ritual, human sacrifices were made to consecrate the temple and appease *ku*—god of war. And legends tell of *kahunas* who would crush a victim's head or bleed the offering of its life near the main entrance.

After completing the ceremonies, the temple site was made *noa*—clean and free of *kapu*. The heiau could then be used for other ceremonies, especially to *Lono*, god of agriculture, with sacrificial offerings of fruit and fowl, pig and dog.

The *lua pau*, or bone pit, became the resting place of the remains of men, plants, and animals. Most likely the sacrificial remains were later removed and discarded in the ocean, for there was no trace of these found during excavations.



- 1 Hale Maui
- 2 Hale Pahu
- 3 Hale Maui
- 4 Hale Ihu
- 5 Hale Iu
- 6 Hale Iu
- 7 Hale Iu
- 8 Hale Iu

Wahaula Heiau: an artist's reconstruction

Tradition holds that nearby residents watched anxiously the ever-shifting smoke from the ritual fires as it rose from the *kaie-uma*; legends tell that to fall under its shadow was certain death. Even canoes could not launch if the smoke moved seaward. The *ma*, or bodycatcher, and his assistants must have watched a *luakini* carefully for

violators during the dedication, for if a sacrifice were not found, a *ma* would be used. These were times to avoid the heiau. But these may be no more than that; stories embellished by our fascination with violence.

between men and the powerful akua. The ali'i, their families and all their possessions were sacred; and with their sacredness they could declare anything kapu—and it was law, for it guaranteed the life of all. At the pinnacle was the ali'i nui—with gradations down to ali'i who were less awesome, but still far above commoners.

Perhaps it was war—or the rise and decline of leadership. Waha'ula Heiau often fell into disrepair, but was rebuilt each time and used again. Stone walls near the ocean are likely remains of earlier stages in the evolution of this place as a major temple. Waha'ula was last rebuilt in 1817 when Liholiho (Kamehameha II) visited the site during the makahiki ceremonies. Later, stones were removed from one wall for the adjacent grave—possibly that of a kahuna or ali'i.

In 1819 the kapu system was dissolved at this last surviving heiau of Puna, in the turmoil of western change. Waha'ula's images of gods, its structures of *ohia* and *lani*, and its *aki* and *pili* thatching were quickly destroyed or rotted away. And with the heiau went the means for the people of old to understand the universe and earthly processes.

As a part of the annual ceremonies of *makahiki*, the new year, all major luakini sites, like Waha'ula were visited by the ali'i nui or his representative.

The kapu system affected all daily living, but most importantly, it preserved the purity of the ali'i—the links

The Sea

events which would foretell of fishing success. Such was his acuteness of perception that rain might be described sixty ways; clouds by any of more than three dozen words.

These people learned also to conserve this source of protein; to live only on the income of new life, and not the capital. Many fish were kapu at different times of the year to ensure their survival and the survival of the people.

Scattered along the seashore are *ke'ula*, fishermen shrines, made of stone, where offerings of fish and coral and a prayer to the gods of fishermen would ensure a fish supply.

*Eia ka ulana la, e Kane,
He pua'a, he moa uaka,
E ku ka ia mai Ka-hiki mai,
He opela, ka ia hele pu me ka la,
O ke aku i lawai'a ia,
O ka auwaiwi nu ana ang ulana o ke kai,
He auwene hoaka i ke kahaka,
O Kane, o ho'ona mai ina i'a,
E ai ia e ka maka-pehu,
E ola ka ania,
Amama. Ua noa.*

*Here is an offering, O Kane,
A pig, a white fowl,
Drive hither the fish from Tahiti,
The opela, fish that travels with the sun,
The aku pulled in by the line,
The auwaiwi that swims near
the surface.*

*The auwene that haunts the pools,
O Kane send us fish,
That the swollen-eyed may eat it,
Life to the land.
Amen. It is free.*

For the Hawaiian, life was sustained through skills which economized his efforts to gather energy concentrated in the form of organic life. Survival depended upon how well the world was known, so the skilled fisherman might know thirteen changes in water color and wave action from shore to horizon that affected fishing. The head fisherman, *po'o lauwai'a*, most knowledgeable of all, would know the best net, or lure, or fish hook, and knew, handed down from generation to generation, the best fishing ground for *aki*, albacore tuna, and dozens of other fish. He would know the omens of stars and fishing birds, of weather and

O Puna aina ala i ka kala
Mai he kila no a akiaki.

O na ulu o Kailua
Aeae kukio makani o Ka'u.

Puna, the land made fragrant
by the hula

From one end to the other.

To the very breadfruit trees of Kailua
That stand unmolested by the winds
of Ka'u.

They loved it here. And why not?

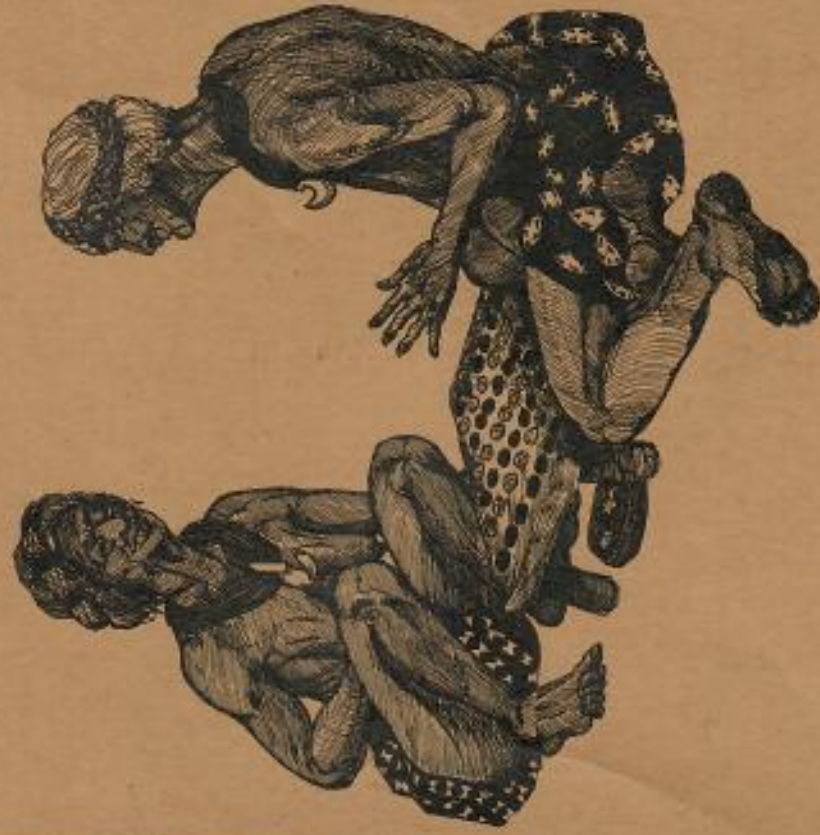
The rules of conduct were
demanding, but the days were
warm, and both sea and land
were good yielders of themselves.
There was time to play *konane*
near the shore, watch the hula,
or flirt with the eyes,
heoia ka maka.

With the years the ancients
developed a love of life, and land,
and people that is still sensed.



Kaau i laa huahua'i, e 'uhene la i pili ko'olua.

We two in passionate outpour, giggling, clinging, two and two.



The Land

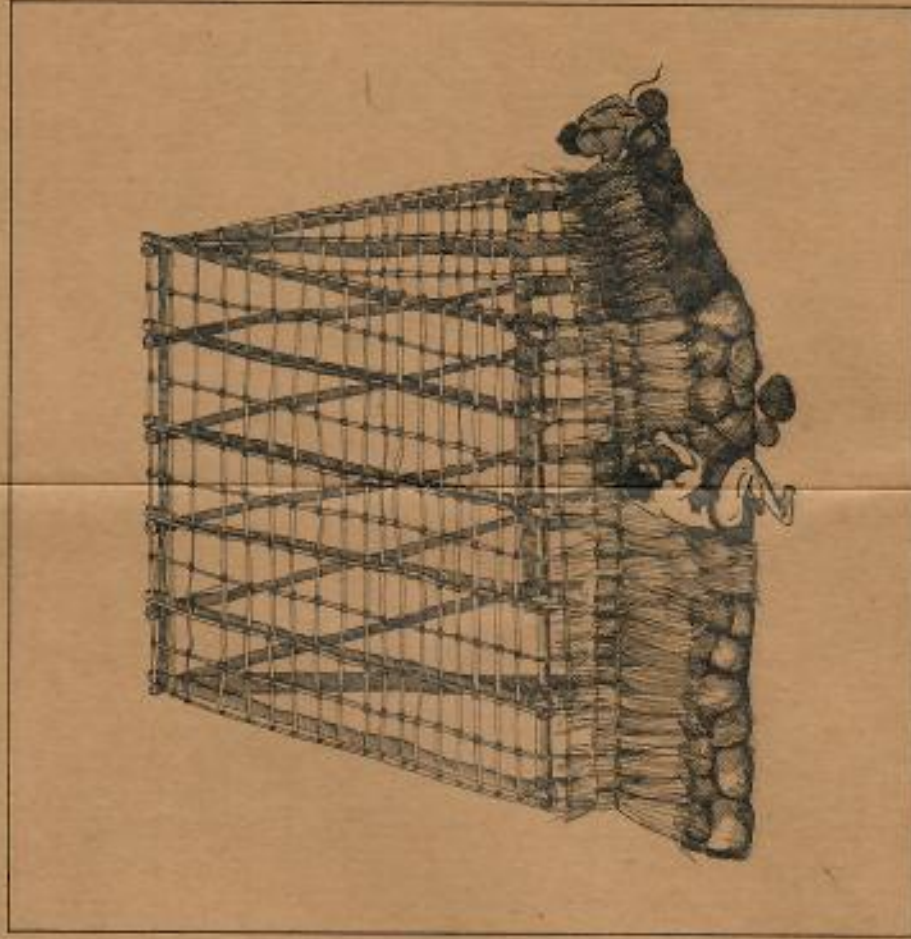
He ao nui i iki ia mai Kapupu
o Kahiki,
Maia, e haawai mai i maia
no ka mala . . .
Maia ka mauua, maia ka waiua a me
ke aa Kolo
I hiki ke uia a paha ka pu'e i ka uala.
O great cloud that appears from the
borders of kahiki,
Shade, o give shade to our garden . . .
Shade the mounds, shade the vines,
shade the slips,
So that they may grow, and bear, and
the mounds be full of potato . . .

This land is on the border of harsh country, but with skill the farmer cultivated taro for poi on the upland slopes and sweet potato, uala, near the shore. For each new uala, soil was laboriously carried from the hills and enriched with squid or fish. Irregular depressions in the rocky aa may mark the areas of this cultivation. Fresh water was limited, but carefully carried in calabashes, the precious, brackish water of earth cracks sustained plants during dry seasons. It was hard labor, but richly satisfying to work with these amiable friends. And as with fishing, prayer intertwined every act of farming to recognize the presence and aid of powerful gods.

There were other foods of course, and coconut, nuu, was among the richest. From its fruit and trunk, leaves and blossoms, came more than one hundred products for daily living. Like taro, coconut was also a kumudipo, a source of life.

Settlement

Ku lalani ka pale a Keoloulu
i ke akua.
O Kuuu wahi'a i ke piko o ka
hale o Mea.
O ku! A wai! A moku ka piko!
A moku, a moku iho la!
Orderly and harmonious is the prayer
of the multitude to god.
Kuuu cuts now the piko of the
house of Mea.
He Stands! He cuts! The navel string
is cut!
It is cut! Lo it is cut!

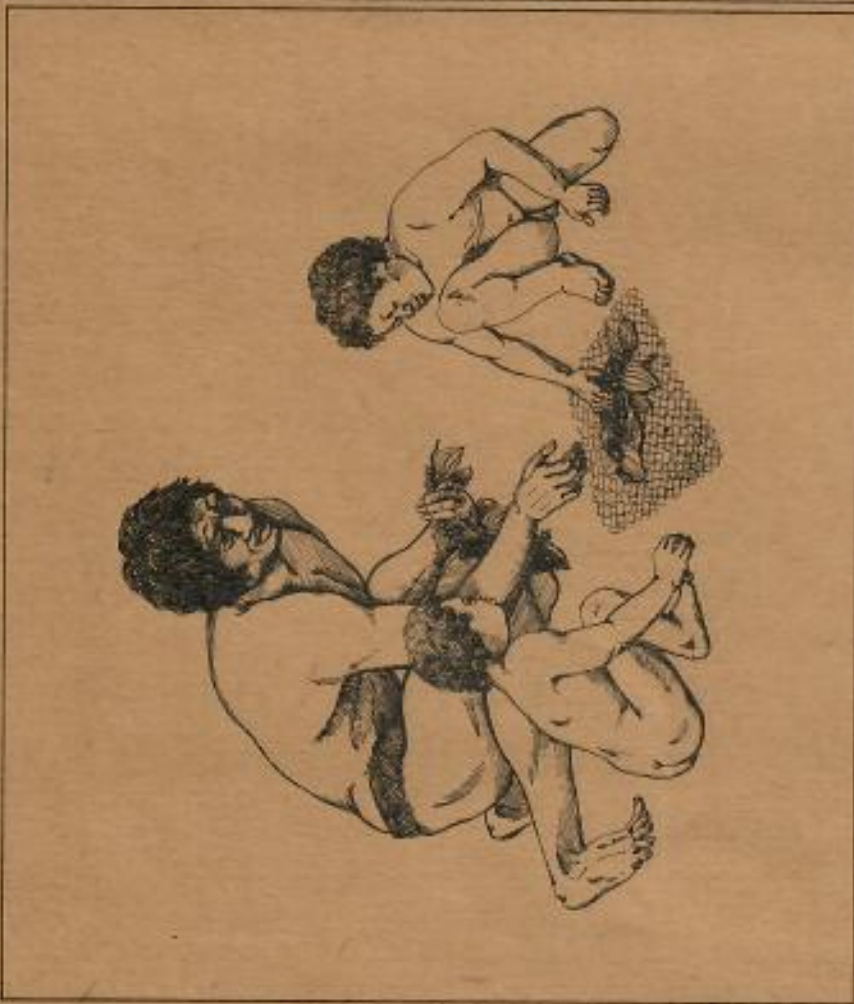


Remnants of the Hawaiian settlements scattered along the Kalapana coast are now partially destroyed by tidal waves, hidden by advancing forest, or buried by recent lava flows. But east of Wahaula is the village of Poupou-kauka, where the low rock walls of former houses, fishermen shrines, and canoe sheds still reflect the land's long use.

On this rough aa, stone walls were filled with *il'i'i*, small stones, to make level and comfortable floors. But no house was casually built; the advice of a *kiiokio*, or diviner, was needed to decide the best location. Then, with the help of friends and relatives, each man would build a house for himself, lashing together *oia* poles with *hau* bark and binding *pili* grass for thatching. With proper ceremony the house was consecrated, and with the kapu removed, a family could move in. This would be the common sleeping house, *hale non*. For eating or working there were mutually exclusive houses for men and women.

Celebration

Ke akua loa,
Ke akua pokole,
Ke akua e haaukuf'ana,
Ke akua e pui ana e like
me ka makani
Ke makani pukiokio!
Ke akua kia'i a ki'ei ana!
Eua akua ho'omalo, a manawale,
Eua akua e Kai hele ana ike ala
o ka po!
E hele mai e ai.



Education

*Enoi, enoi i ke kahuna nui,
Na hanauna hoi, na hanauna i hula.
Ask the high priest,
Generations new, generations past.*

Life was not limited to the leisure of sports and feasting, for every child had to learn a role in the settlement. There was little chance to become lazy, a most despised trait, for the family, the *'ohana*, cared about your growth.

At an early age you were directed by an expert, a *kahuna*, to learn the skills of your world. To strive to obtain wisdom, *kulia e loa i ka naauao*, was an admired trait.

Under the *kahuna kalai wa'a*, the canoe maker, an apprentice would learn how to select and shape a *kou* or *kukui* trunk into a hull; how to strip the strong bark from the *hou* and bind outrigger, canoe, and mast into a craft of strength and beauty. *Kukui* nut oil would provide the finish to protect and speed the vessel.



A *kahuna lepa'au*, a priest of herb medicine, would teach of *kukui*'s valuable flowers, nuts, and bark to make effective remedies for a host of ailments—for asthma and sores, for general weakness and as a laxative. Even today the trunks of *kukui* show the scars of stone adz which tapped the tree's sap for black tapa dye. White seeds of *mamaki* were a favored choice for digestive ailments. Others sought its bark for *tapa*, although it was less favored than the *waruku* of wetter Puna. There were few plants that were not used to shape this world.

Training for music and dance was vigorous, for these pleasures permeated life. They were the means to revere and describe the gods, the history and hopes of men, and natural forces. There were chants of genealogies and exploits, of war and love, of laments and prayers. And many evenings were filled with entertainment by skilled storytellers—who kept alive the long history of men and the values to live by.



Reflections

Today the land is greatly changed. Explorers brought goats and cattle, introduced guava, christmasberry, and scores of other plants from six continents which altered the scene. Most missionaries condemned the Hawaiian style of life, and with the foundation of life eroded by evangelism, a body of belief that had cemented this culture together began to disintegrate. In the crumbling of their life style, the people were left to be absorbed by new cultures and with the passing of generations, the Hawaiian skills for living and the memories of a heritage began to fade. The process is still going on.

Life here by our standards was not idyllic; there was too much

violence, and hunger, and fear of spirits for that. Yet in rejecting all, most immigrants failed to see these Hawaiians as people with values worth adopting.

Overlooked was the Hawaiian reverence of the natural world, their physical pleasures of games, music, and dance; and the wit, the courtesy and generosity of the people. The Hawaiian strengths of people with people were largely forgotten: the importance of the family, the *'ohana*: the respect for elders, *kupuna*, as guides and sources of strength; or *mimi*, the ability to forgive fully and completely.

These are among the many qualities which, for those who follow the people of old, continue to add richness, warmth, and security to the delights of living in Kalapana, the sunny place.

Recommended Reading

- Emerson, Nathaniel B. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii—The Sacred Songs of the Hula*. Charles E. Tuttle, 1965.
- Fornander, Abraham. *Selections from Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1959.
- Handy, E. S. Craighill and Elizabeth Green Handy. *Native Planters in Old Hawaii—Their Life, Lore, and Environment*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 233. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1972.
- Ii, John Papa. *Fragments of Hawaiian History*. Bernice Bishop Museum Special Publication. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1959. (Translations from Hawaiian by Mary K. Pukui and Dorothy B. Barrere.)
- Kamakau, Samuel M. *Ka Po'e Kahiko: The People of Old*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1968. (Translations from Hawaiian by Mary K. Pukui and Dorothy B. Barrere.)
- Malo, David. *Hawaiian Antiquities*. Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publication, No. 2, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1971. (Translations from Hawaiian by Nathaniel B. Emerson and W. D. Alexander, ed. 1900.)
- Pukui, Mary Kawena, and E. W. Haertig, and Catherine A. Lee. *Nana I Ke Kama (Look to the Source)*. Published by Hui Hana, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1973.
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 TRAIL DESIGN: JOHN HAUANIO
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