

## ENIGMATIC IMAGES



Leonard K. Paculan, Honolulu Publishing's print production director, is from Kona and is a lifelong friend of Kelekolio. Not long after the photo was taken, Paculan was visiting relatives on the Big Island, and his niece asked him, "Did you hear what happened in Kailua-Kona?" She told him about the remarkable photo everyone was talking about. Paculan, who is keenly attuned to his Hawaiian heritage, but who is also a down-to-earth, seeing-is-believing sort of person, asked his niece if she had been there or had seen the photo. She said, "No," and he said, "Don't believe what you hear."

Paculan thought nothing more about it. Then, six years later, he was together with Kelekolio and Joe Tassill, another member of the canoe club who had been on the scene that day, and the two started talking about it. Hearing it from two longtime friends who had been there, Paculan took notice. Tassill had the photo and showed it to him. With the passage of time, the Polaroid shot had faded, but the enigmatic figures in front of the heiau were there, all right.

Paculan borrowed the original to have an enlarged print made. He took it to a

professional photo processing lab and put a few questions to the expert technicians there. Yes, they said, the photo definitely was an original. They further told him that it is mechanically an impossibility to double-expose a photo using a Polaroid camera. Nor had the photo been tampered with, they said.

Still—there were those images, dressed from a bygone era in Hawaii and out of scale with the other people in the picture.

From Paculan, the print came into my hands. I decided to take it to two kahuna to get their interpretation of it.

Mornah Simeona, looking at the large woman who is prominent in the grouping, said, "That's Kaahumanu." (As a matter of fact, the pose does resemble a well-known portrait of the queen.) She said Kaahumanu's spirit was there, in the land, and wanted to be released. Simeona conducted ho'oponopono, with a special prayer, over the photograph to release the earthbound spirit, and pronounced that it was done.

When I took it to kahuna nui Momi Mo'okini Lum, even before I took the photo out of the envelope, she knew what was on it. As I was telling her

that it was taken at 'Ahu'ena Helau, and that it was a Polaroid shot, which is impossible to double-expose, she said with firm assurance, "Ah, yes. You got the kupuna (ancestors)." When I showed her the photo, she said, "That's right. They are the kupuna. They are of the bloodline that belongs there, belongs to that heiau. It is a royal family, as indicated by the red they are wearing." I asked her why they were there, and she replied, "They came out to say thank you for a job well done on the heiau. They're pleased with the work, and they're at peace. I think it's a beautiful photo."

I do, too, but I still can't get over the habit, every time I pull it out of the envelope to look at it, of checking to see if the kupuna—or Kaahumanu—are still there. —P.P.

