



1930s photo of Waimea Valley with Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau.
Credit: Bishop Museum Archives

WAIMEA VALLEY

The land division or *ahupua'a* of Waimea was the major political and religious center of northern O'ahu. Waimea Valley offered fertile agricultural lands, abundant fresh water, rich offshore marine resources, and good surfing and canoe landing sites. The *ali'i* and *kāhuna* sought areas such as Waimea to reside. To support this ruling center, the *maka'ainana* cultivated fields of *kalo* (taro) and sweet potato on the valley floor and fished in Waimea Bay. Housesites were scattered throughout the valley. At the valley mouth are 2 large *heiau*; Pu'u o Mahuka on the north and Kupopolo on the south. In the valley is Hale o Lono, a *heiau* dedicated to the god Lono. Religious ceremonies to Lono were held during the annual Makahiki season to promote fertility of the resources.

Soon after Western contact, the people left the taro fields to cut sandalwood in the upper valley.

By the 1860s, the population was reduced by disease, floods, and famine.



Heiau artwork by Ipo Nihipali.

PU'U O MAHUKA HEIAU STATE HISTORIC SITE

Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962 in recognition of its importance to Hawaiian culture and history. Also in 1962, the 4-acre property encompassing the *heiau* was placed under the jurisdiction of State Parks to preserve this significant site for future generations.

In the 1960s, the path through the *heiau* was created. Today, we ask that you observe the site from outside the walls and do not enter the site to avoid further damaging the walls and paving.



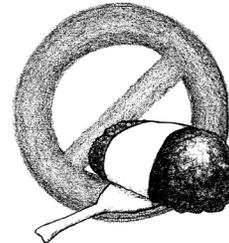
STATE OF HAWAII
Department of Land &
Natural Resources
Division of State Parks



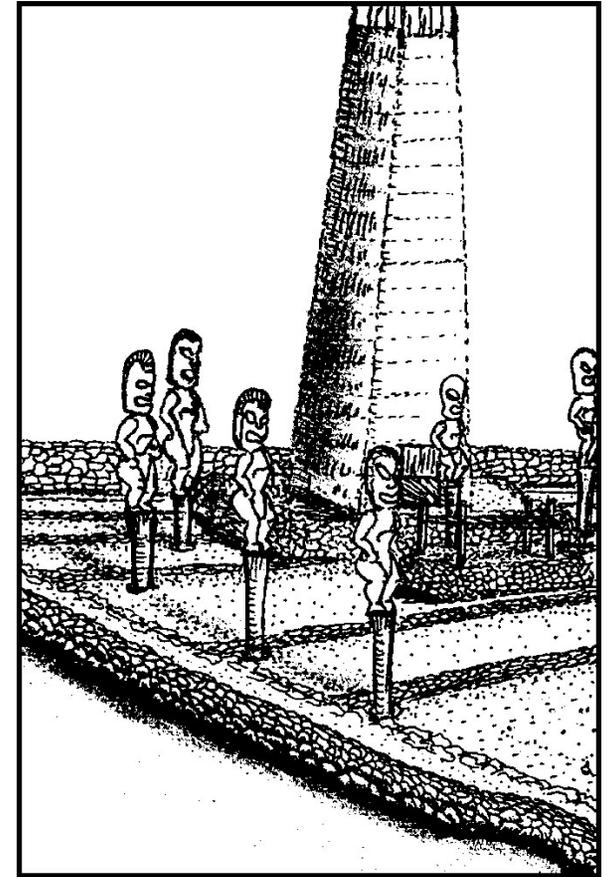
Special recognition is given to Nā Hoa o Pu'u o Mahuka, a community volunteer group and curators of Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau.

PRESERVE HAWAII'S PAST
FOR THE FUTURE
E mālama no kēia mua aku

Traditionally, food items were left as offerings at a *heiau*. Please do not wrap or move rocks and do not leave items such as coins, incense, or candles as they cause long-term damage.

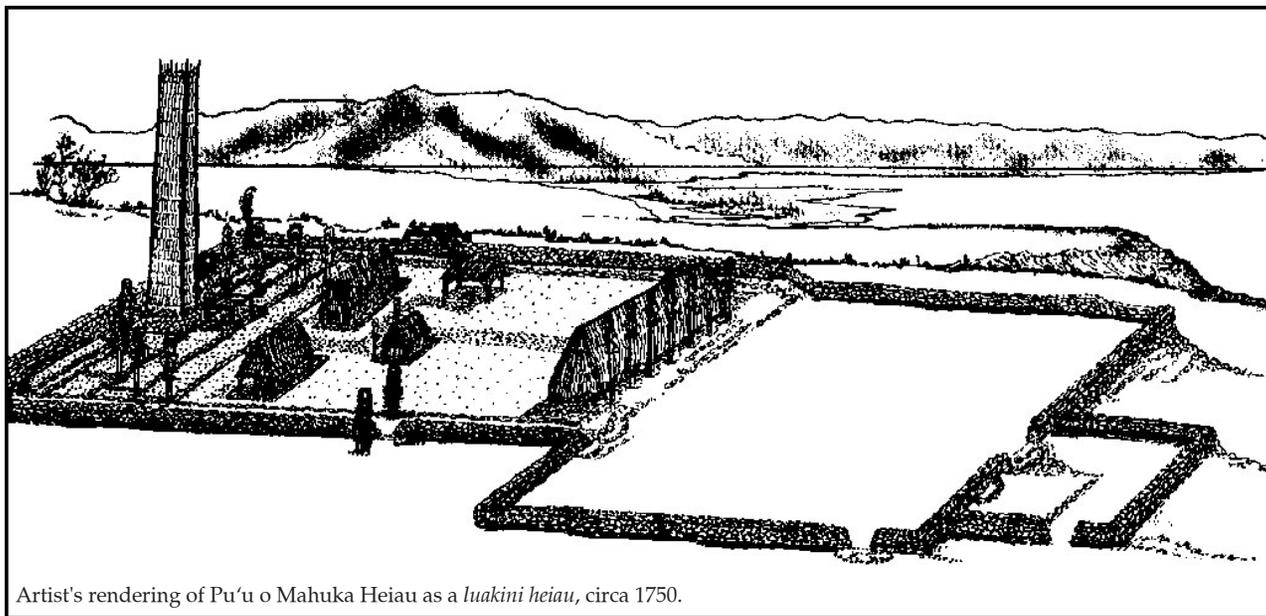


PU'U O MAHUKA HEIAU STATE HISTORIC SITE



Pūpūkea, O'ahu





Artist's rendering of Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau as a *luakini heiau*, circa 1750.

PU'U O MAHUKA

Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau is the largest *heiau* (religious site or temple) on O'ahu, covering almost 2 acres. The name is translated as "hill of escape". Undoubtedly, this *heiau* played an important role in the social, political, and religious system of Waimea Valley which was a major occupation center of O'ahu in the pre-contact period.

Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau may have been constructed in the 1600s. Built as a series of 3 walled enclosures, the stacked rock walls ranged from 3 to 6 feet in height and the interior surface was paved with stone. Within the walls were wood and thatch structures. Such a large *heiau* would have been built by the *maka'ainana* (commoners) under the direction of a high ruling *ali'i nui* (chief) and his *kāhuna* (priests).

It was not unusual for a *heiau* to be expanded and modified by a new ruling chief. It appears that the upper, eastern enclosure was constructed first and was the ceremonial focus of the *heiau*. The other 2 enclosures were added later, probably in the 1700s.

In the 1770s, high priest Ka'opulupulu under O'ahu chief Kahahana, oversaw this *heiau*. This was a time of political upheaval and it is likely that the *heiau* was used as a *luakini heiau* (sacrificial temple), perhaps for success in war.

In 1795, when Kamehameha I conquered O'ahu, his high priest Hewahewa conducted religious ceremonies at this *heiau* until 1819 when the traditional religion was abolished.

Situated on a ridge with a commanding view of Waimea Valley and the northern shoreline of O'ahu, this *heiau* had ties with the *heiau* at Wailua on Kaua'i. It is reported that signal fires at these *heiau* provided a visual communication between the islands.

In 1792, Capt. George Vancouver anchored his ship *Daedalus* off Waimea and sent a party onshore to collect water. A skirmish ensued with the Hawaiians and 3 of Vancouver's men were killed. Some have suggested that these men were taken to Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau for sacrifice.

After the *heiau* was abandoned, circa 1819, the site may have been used for other purposes. Some have suggested that the middle enclosure was used for agriculture and the stone mounds are clearing and/or planting areas. Pineapple was cultivated around the *heiau* until the 1960s.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

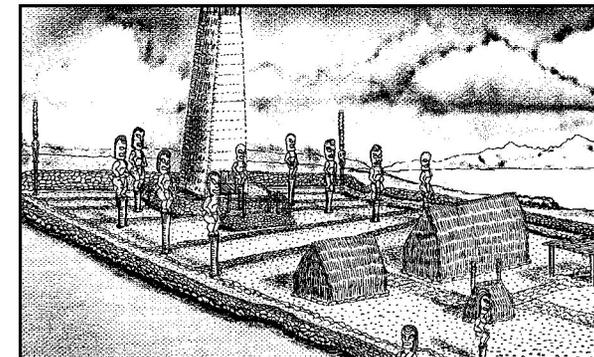
Archaeological research has indicated several changes in the *heiau* structure over time. Initially, the *heiau* consisted of the upper, *mauka* enclosure with a paved floor of basalt and coral boulders. At a later time, a paving of smaller stones known as 'ili'ili was laid over the boulders.

In more recent times, rock has been taken from the walls which has reduced their height. The breaks in the walls appear to be recent. This leads one to wonder how the *kāhuna* and *ali'i* entered the site.

LUAKINI HEIAU

The upper enclosure of Pu'u o Mahuka Heiau conforms to the generalized pattern for a *luakini heiau*. The altar area at the east end probably held the *anu'u* tower, *ki'i* images, and *lele* altar. Thatched buildings were constructed on the level stone paving in the western portion. The ledges along the interior side of the walls may have been where participants sat during religious ceremonies.

1. *Lanau'u mamao* or *anu'u* (oracle) tower where religious services were conducted and the gods spoke to the *kāhuna* and high *ali'i*. This structure often measured 20 feet or more in height and was a pole frame covered with *kapa*.
2. *Ki'i* or carved wooden images placed by the altar and the entrance to oversee the site.
3. *Lele* altar where offerings for the gods were placed. Often a raised wooden platform.
4. *Hale Pahu* where the sacred drums were kept to announce rituals and send messages.
5. *Hale Waiea* where the sacred water was kept.



6. *Hale Umu* where the temple fires were lit. These fires might be used to cook the offerings.
7. *Hale Mana* where the ceremonial objects were stored and where the *kahuna* might reside for short periods.
8. Ledges along walls where those admitted to the rites were seated.

