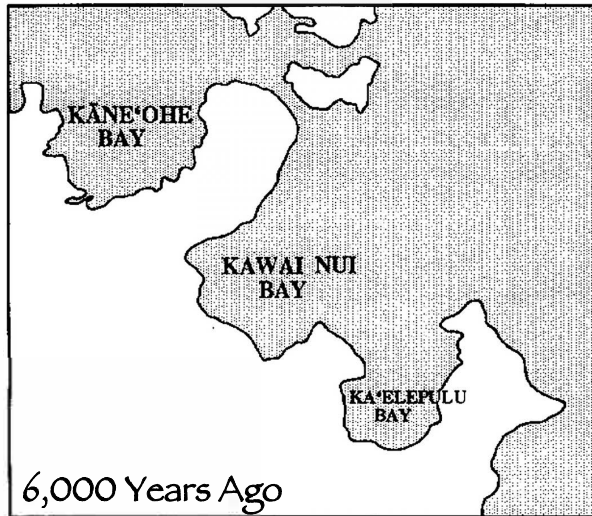
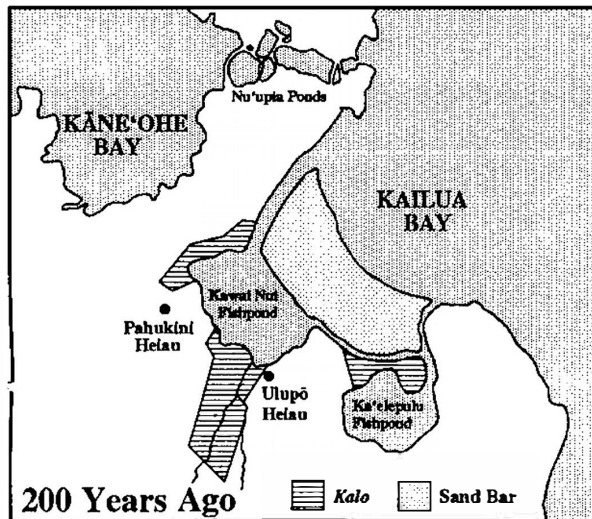


## A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

About 6,000 years ago and before the arrival of the Hawaiians, Kawai Nui and Ka'elepulu were bays connected to the ocean and extended a mile inland of the present coastline. This saltwater environment is indicated by inland deposits of sand and coral.



A sand bar began forming across Kawai Nui Bay around 2,500 years ago creating Kawai Nui Lagoon filled with coral, fish, and shellfish. The Hawaiians probably first settled along the fringes of this lagoon. Gradually, erosion of the hillsides surrounding Kawai Nui began to fill in the lagoon with sediments. By 200 years ago, the Hawaiians converted Kawai Nui into a large fishpond with an abundance of fat mullet and large *o'opu*. *Kalo* fields were cultivated along the streams and fishponds.



## ULUPŌ HEIAU STATE MONUMENT

Ulupō Heiau was transferred from the Territorial Board of Agriculture and Forestry to Territorial Parks in 1954. In the early 1960s, through a joint effort of State Parks and Kane'ohe Ranch, the stone walkway was placed atop the heiau and the stone paving was laid around the springs. The bronze plaque was installed in 1962 by the Commission on Historical Sites. Ulupō Heiau is listed on the National and Hawaii Registers of Historic Places. At Ulupō Heiau, State Parks seeks to promote preservation of the *heiau* and heighten public awareness about the cultural history of Kawai Nui.



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

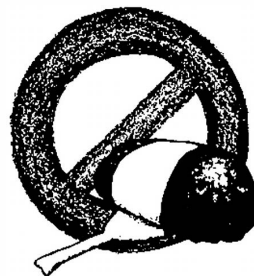


Special recognition is given to the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club for their hard work and dedication as the curators of Ulupō Heiau.

The Windward YMCA is acknowledged for their cooperation with the public visitation and interpretation of Ulupō Heiau.

## PRESERVE HAWAII'S PAST FOR THE FUTURE

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 to this fragile resource.

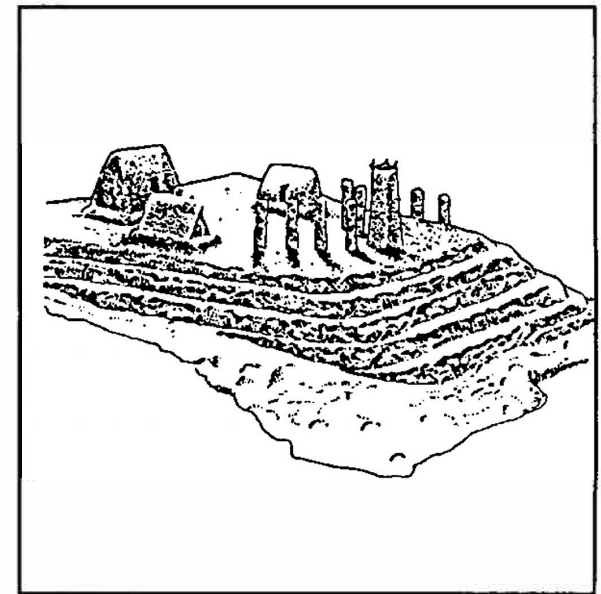


Artwork by Telford Cazimero and Graphic  
House Revised 10/97

# ULUPŌ HEIAU

State Monument

Kailua, O'ahu

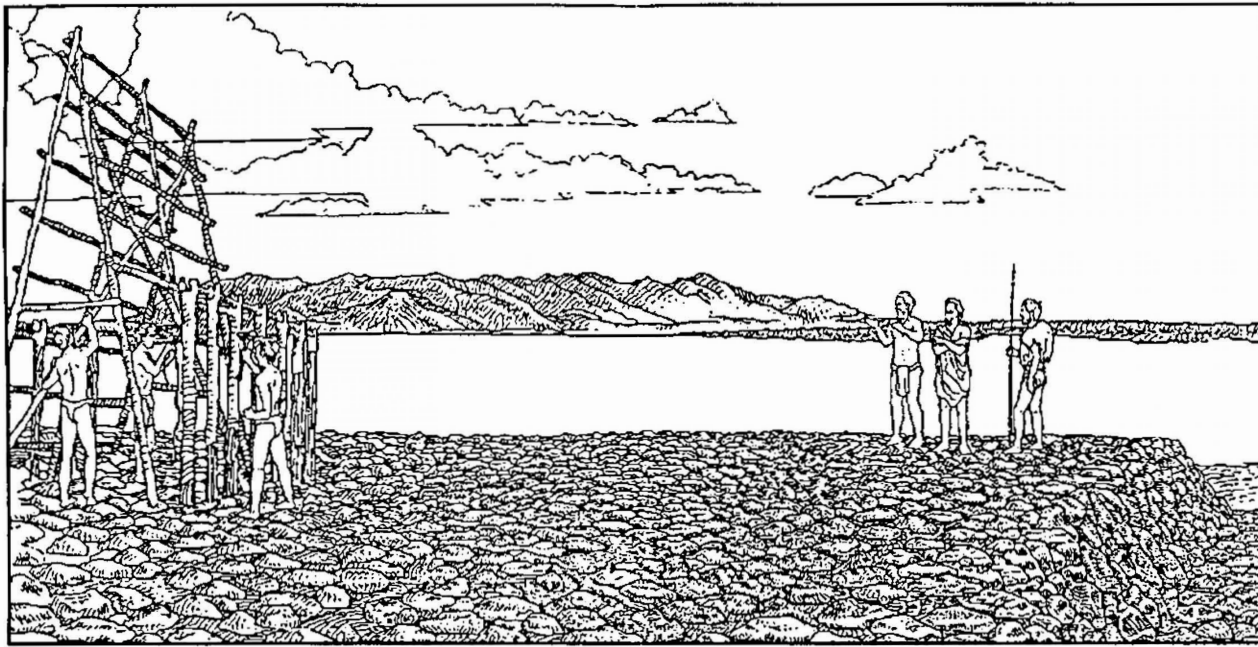


Artist's rendering of Ulupō Heiau as it may have looked in 1750.

State of Hawai'i  
Department of Land & Natural Resources  
DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/>





Ali'i and kahunas overseeing Ute construction of features at Ulupō Heiau.

It's 1750. Kailua is the political seat of power for the district of Ko'olaupoko and a favored place of the O'ahu chiefs for its abundance of fish and good canoe landings. The houses of the *ali'i* (chiefs), their families, and their attendants surround Kailua Bay. Behind the sand beach is the large, fertile expanse of Kawai Nui which has been converted to a fishpond surrounded by an agricultural field system. Kawai Nui is a large 400 acre fishpond with an abundance of mullet, *awa* and *o'opu*. Ka'elepulu and Nu'upia fishponds are nearby. The *maka'ainana* (commoners) provide support for this chiefly residence. Farmers grew *kalo* (taro) in the irrigated lo'i (fields) along the streams from Maunawili and along the edges of the fishponds. Crops of dryland *kalo*, banana, sweet potato, and sugarcane mark the fringes of the marsh. The fishermen harvest fish from the fishponds and the sea. The *kahunas* (priests) oversee the religious ceremonies and rites at several *heiau* around Kawai Nui. There is Ulupō Heiau on the east with Pahukini Heiau and Holomakani Heiau on the west side.

Hauwahine, the mo'o or guardian spirit, protects the people of Kawai Nui and assures an abundance of fish. The legendary association of Ulupō Heiau with the *menehune* suggests the antiquity of this site. The massiveness and quantity of rock carried many miles hint at its cultural importance. Tradition records Kualoa, more than 10 miles away, as one source of these stones.

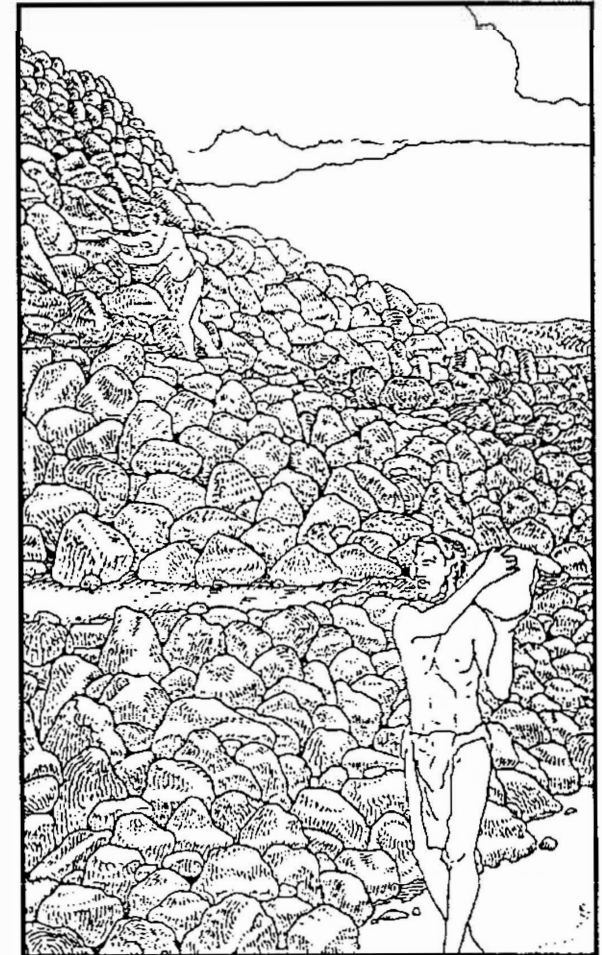
It is likely that the function of this *heiau* changed over time. It probably began as a *mapele* or agricultural *heiau* with ceremonies and rites conducted to insure the fertility of the crops grown in Kawai Nui. In later times, it may have become a *luakini heiau* dedicated to success in war with structures erected atop this massive stone platform, including an altar, an oracle tower or *anu'u*, thatched hale, and notches in the terraces to hold the *ki'i* or wooden images. The spring off the corner of the *heiau* was another important feature related to the ceremonial traditions of the site.

Ulupō Heiau measures 140 by 180 feet with walls up to 30 feet in height. The construction of this massive terraced platform required a large work force under the direction of a powerful *ali'i*. Several O'ahu chiefs lived at Kailua and probably participated in ceremonies at Ulupō Heiau, including Kakuhihewa in the 1400s and Kualii in the late 1600s. Kualii fought many battles and he may have rededicated Ulupō Heiau as a *luakini heiau*. Maui chief Kahekili came to O'ahu in the 1780s and lived in Kailua after defeating O'ahu high chief Kahahana for control of O'ahu. Kamehameha I worked at Kawai Nui fishpond and is said to have eaten the edible mud (*lepo 'ai*) of Kawai Nui when there was a shortage of *kalo*. But by 1795 when Kamehameha I conquered O'ahu, it is believed that Ulupō Heiau was already abandoned.

## HISTORIC CHANGES

In the 1880s, Chinese farmers converted the *kalo* fields of Kawai Nui to rice. Cattle grazed throughout much of Kawai Nui and a large cattle pen was built atop Ulupō Heiau in the early 1900s. The cattle probably hastened the collapse of the rock faced terraces on the steep faces of the *heiau* platform.

The marsh began forming around 1920 when the rice fields and fishpond were abandoned and siltation followed. Today, the marsh is a habitat for Hawaii's endangered waterbirds. The agricultural terraces and fishpond are now covered with silt, grasses, and bullrushes.



Placement of rocks to terrace the heiau platform.

Today, Ulupō Heiau remains a sacred site for the Hawaiian people. Show respect as you visit this special place. Please stay on designated trails as rocks are loose and unstable.