

## Introduction, *Ē Luku Wale Ē*

Dennis Kawaharada, July 2015

Luku wale: vandalism, useless slaughter or destruction; to destroy thus.

*Ē Luku Wale Ē* is a lament, in words and images, for what has been lost in the wake of construction of the massive freeway known as H-3, on the island of Oahu. Working collectively as Piliamo‘o, photographers Mark Hamasaki and Kapulani Landgraf capture a ravaged landscape after crews and supervisors have gone home, the still, empty machines and absence of people suggesting secrecy, shame, abandonment, and places no longer amenable to human life.

The sixteen-mile freeway runs between the Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam (formerly Pearl Harbor Naval Base) in Pu‘uloa, and the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Kaneohe Bay on Mōkapu Peninsula, tunneling through the Ko‘olau Mountains from Hālawa Valley to Ha‘ikū Valley. Originally proposed in 1960, just after Hawai‘i became the fiftieth state, the H-3 was part of a federally funded project that had as its primary purpose the creation of a network of interstate defense highways, including the H-1 and H-2, to facilitate troop and equipment movement on the island. Project supporters promoted the highways as a means of speeding up travel and reducing traffic on O‘ahu’s other roadways. Construction on the H-3 began in 1972 on both sides of the Ko‘olau range—on the Hālawa Interchange, and on the section between the Pali Golf Course in Kāne‘ohe and the MCAS.

The largest and most expensive public works project of its time in Hawai‘i, the H-3 drew more protest and opposition than any other project in the islands before it or since. It symbolized what many in the community did not want Hawai‘i to become: an extension of the urbanized and commercialized continental United States. Opponents of the freeway wanted to preserve the integrity of the community and the qualities of life and land unique to Hawai‘i—its Hawaiian cultural foundation, its diverse natural environment, and its rural character.

Large-scale developments, beginning with nineteenth-century sugar and pineapple plantations, have destroyed many once sacred cultural sites. J. G. McAllister’s *Archaeology of Oahu*<sup>1</sup> and Elspeth Sterling and Catherine Summers’ *Sites of Oahu*<sup>2</sup> record some of the losses. The depredations will continue as long as the future of the islands lies in the hands of culturally uneducated developers, both local and foreign, and of politicians and residents who have come to see the land as vacant and available for development, rather than as a rich repository of sacred places and traditions.

Every generation grows up thinking that what it sees is what has always been. The photos in *Ē Luku Wale Ē* allow new generations to bear witness retrospectively to the changes in the land as they were taking place. The kanikau, elegies that evoke reflections on what used to be and bestow a profound reverence for place, accompany this visual poetry documenting destruction.

At Mōkapu (moku kapu, or sacred land), in the eighteenth century, the chief Pelei‘ōhōlani resided near today’s Nu‘upia fishpond. Early in the next century, Kamehameha the Great used the land as a meeting place for his ali‘i. So sacred was Mōkapu that the nineteenth-century historian S. M. Kamakau set his creation story at the crater of Mololani (well kept, well cared

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gilbert McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, Bishop Museum Bulletin 104 (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1933).

<sup>2</sup> Elspeth Sterling and Catherine Summers, *Sites of Oahu* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1978).

for), on the peninsula. Here, on the eastern flank facing the sunrise, the gods Kāne, Kū, and Lono created the first man and woman.

For centuries after the Polynesians' discovery and settlement of the islands, the sea provided a protective buffer, and the people and culture grew and flourished in relative isolation. Verse I, the first of eleven kanikau verses, describes Mōkapu—ironically, given its identification as the site of a creation myth—as a place where forces destructive to the 'āina entered the land: “the storm rages iniquity on the land.” The moa'e kū, the mighty trade winds, drove that storm to the islands' shores. By the eighteenth century, the sea had become a roadway to Hawai'i for European and American ships. The establishment of a Marine Corps base on Mōkapu in 1919 violated the sacredness of Mololani. Trespassers trampled it, toppling sacred stones, building on top of heiau, and disturbing the burial grounds at Heleloa: “Whirlwinds writhe within sands of Heleloa.”

The images of *Ē Luku Wale Ē* honor the rocks and mountains sculpted by the famous winds and rains of Kāne'ohe, He'eia, and Hālawā. Verse III and associated photos depict Ho'oleina'iwa (where frigate birds leap), a life-giving place in the uplands connected to the protective gods. Though near the freeway's route, this site remains undamaged:

Eyes of the wind plead within the calm  
hīnāno flower stirs rises skyward  
Bare among the fragrant hala of Ho'oleina'iwa  
are the fallen ripe fruits of Kekele  
Kāne's verdant ridges embrace a hidden place  
nurturing gifts from the ancestors  
Returning to the bosom of the sheltering god  
to be severed is to be lost  
Digging turning over connecting the past.

In an earlier collection of photos, *Nā Wahi Pana O Ko'olau Poko*,<sup>3</sup> Landgraf notes that although there is “no written documentation of this culturally significant site,” the stones at Ho'oleina'iwa “appear similar to the birthing stones of Kūkaniloko” in Wahiawā, where the high chieftesses of O'ahu went to give birth. Ho'oleina'iwa may be another such sacred and sheltered place for the delivery of children and the perpetuation of life. The name refers to frigate birds ('iwa), which nest on land, and then give birth to and raise their young there, but spend much of the rest of their life at sea fishing. Short-legged, they walk awkwardly, but when they leap from their perches on shrubs, trees, or rocks with their broad wings outspread, they soar. Ho'oleina'iwa also alludes to a place of departure, leina, where human spirits leave earth to reunite with their ancestors in the afterlife. There may no more sacred place than this in Ko'olaupoko.

*E Luku Wale E* also records signs of archaeological work done to uncover what lay in the path of destruction—remains of rock walls and 'auwai (irrigation channels), carefully laid out with uncut stone by Native Hawaiians—before these disappeared under concrete and asphalt. The recurrent theme of digging in the photos and the kanikau conveys both destruction and restoration. The eleven kanikau verses end with “Kau 'eli'eli kau mai kau 'eli'eli ē,” offering “a solemn supplication at the end of a prayer.” 'Eli'eli, “to dig again and again,” describes the

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Kapulani Landgraf, *Nā Wahi Pana O Ko'olau Poko* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

destructive digging—but it also means “profound,” “firmly rooted,” “deep,” and “reverence.” To dig down is to be firmly rooted, like the many-rooted hala tree, and this rootedness is the only way to remain connected to and venerate the ‘āina, and to protect and perpetuate human life.

The H-3 opened to traffic on December 12, 1997, twenty-five years after its construction began. Protests and litigation filled those two and a half decades. Community groups led by Hawaiians, cultural preservationists, and environmentalists succeeded in delaying the project and scoring some concessions to protect cultural sites, but in the end the groups could not stop the massive project. (For a timeline of the project, see page 00.)

Beneath Keahiakahoe, the second-highest peak in the Ko‘olau range, in the route of the freeway, was the site of Kukuiokāne (kukui trees of Kāne), once the largest and most important heiau of the region. The heiau was dedicated to Kāne, the god of life-giving water and farming. Kāne gives his name not just to the heiau, but to the ahupua‘a itself, Kāne‘ohe: ‘ohe, or bamboo, is one of the forms the god assumes. Thomas G. Thrum reported in 1916 that Kukuiokāne was “being destroyed” to plant pineapple fields.<sup>4</sup> J. Gilbert McAllister visited the area in 1933 and noted that the heiau was gone, but that “the ploughed-up remains indicate heavy walls and several terraces.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1988, archaeologist Earl Neller reported that, while probing for sites in the path of the freeway, he had found the site of the heiau. However, the following year, after further excavation, the Bishop Museum declared that the site represented dry-land agricultural terraces, not a heiau. Work on the freeway continued.

In 1991, the Bishop Museum’s archaeological project director, Scott Williams, concluded that the site Neller had identified, along with three adjoining sites, formed an agricultural complex that included Kukuiokāne. Place names and the flora around the site support this premise, indicating the presence of Kāne. A nearby site on the pali of Keahiakahoe is named Pāpua‘a a Kāne, the pig enclosures of Kāne, where the god is said to have kept his prized pigs.<sup>6</sup> Beneath that site is a grove of kukui trees, the oil-rich nuts of which provide food for the pigs, and the spring of Kumukumu, both associated with the heiau. The spring is near the head of Wailele Stream, which joins Kamo‘oali‘i Stream and flows into Kāne‘ohe Bay near the Waiakalua fishpond. Verse VII speaks of Kukuiokāne and the sacred spring of Kumukumu that is associated with it. The kukui tree is also a form of Kamapua‘a, the pig god, and the verse calls on the boars of Kamapua‘a to form a protective barrier around Kukuiokāne:

Heiau drum of Kukuiokāne deeply resounds  
unites the gathering of beloved ones  
Kumukumu’s kapu violated  
.....  
Kane’s boars surround the kukui grove  
Return again and yet again its sacredness to the earth,  
living kapu of Kukuiokāne  
Digging turning over restoring.

The state and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs agreed to preserve one of the sites that Williams had identified as part of the agricultural complex and to bury the other three sites

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas G. Thrum, “Completing O‘ahu’s Heiau Search,” *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual* (1916), 87–91.

<sup>5</sup> McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, 177.

<sup>6</sup> Sterling and Summers, *Sites of Oahu*, 206.

intact. The state built the Kāne‘ohe interchange on top of these sites, including the site of Kukuiokāne.

Disputes also arose over two sites in Hālawā Valley. In 1992, a researcher and an archaeologist from the Bishop Museum, as well as other cultural experts, identified the sites as an important heiau. They believed that one was a hale o Papa—a house of Papa, the mother of Hawaiian creation. Kamakau notes that such heiau belonged to high chieftesses (pi‘o and niaupi‘o) and “were for the good of the women and the children borne for the benefit of the land.”<sup>7</sup> The two Bishop Museum representatives identified the other site as a luakini, which only an ali‘i nui, or paramount chief, could build. Constructed in times of war and other crises, luakini permitted human sacrifice to plead for support from the war gods. The State Historic Preservation Division’s chief archaeologist and others, however, contended that the two sites were the remains of houses and family burials, not heiau.

Both sides agreed that the two sites were archaeologically and culturally significant, and in 1992 the state realigned the freeway through North Hālawā Valley to avoid damaging them. Still, the protests continued, as the new alignment had an impact on the sites. Today the sites lie in a fenced-off area along a road under the freeway. ~~Access for cultural study is allowed, but~~ [;] the construction destroyed the natural setting.

Verse X and associated photos portray Hālawā as sacred to Papa, and depict the building of the freeway as a rape. The land cries out at the desecration, and members of the community continue to feel and express heartache, grief, and anger over the impact of the H-3 freeway on the ‘āina.

Mountains saturated with moisture  
iron boar insatiably ravages barren lands  
exposes the entrails of Papa  
Forest of Pepehia attracts gathering clouds  
branches with crescents tremble in daylight  
‘elepaio loudly shrieks in the uplands  
Mountains slide into the realm of Milu  
bloody flesh of Hālawā  
Digging turning over perpetuated.

The struggle over H-3 was part of a crucial chapter in the story of twentieth-century Hawaiian activism. In a 1997 newspaper article about the opening of H-3, University of Hawai‘i professor Haunani-Kay Trask noted, “Struggle after struggle, we protest, we talk about sacred sites, we talk about the destruction of the land at whatever development that we’re protesting, and then we lose.” She expressed her belief that Hawaiians needed to establish “a sovereign entity of equal legal standing with the US government.”<sup>8</sup> The only way to effectively protect their cultural heritage and sacred sites, according to Trask and many others who share that view, is to restore the sovereignty of their nation, overthrown in 1893 by haole businessmen with the support of the US Marines.

The Hawaiian community has a long and powerful history of resistance to colonization, Westernization, and urbanization. After a century of disruption, loss of sovereignty, and

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<sup>7</sup> Kamakau, *Tales and Traditions of the People of Old: Na Mo‘olelo a ka Po‘e Kahiko*, 129.

<sup>8</sup> “Rocky Road: Even with the Opening at Hand, Many Hawaiians Say Protests May Not End,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, December 4, 1997.

destruction of native cultural heritage, traditions, and sacred sites, the community experienced a cultural rebirth in the second half of the twentieth century. This movement aimed to resist the wholesale adoption of Western values and practices, and to teach and practice traditions that had been kept alive in rural pockets and among family blessed with kūpuna who knew and cherished those traditions. The reinvigoration of culture and arts included language immersion teaching, kalo farming, fishing and fishponds, herbal medicines, kapa making, hula, chanting, voyaging, and martial arts.

Meanwhile, during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, investors from the United States, Japan, and elsewhere were pouring money into the islands, convinced they could profit by transforming the region into the Pacific's business and tourism center and a hub of the global economy. The freeway symbolized the encroachment of this new global culture on Hawai'i, driven by international capitalism and backed by the military might of the United States.

Tunnels through the Ko'olau Mountains, which once served as a protective barrier for rural Ko'olaupoko, became conduits for the spread of Honolulu's urbanizing influences. The state had punched through the mountains twice before, with the Pali tunnels (completed in 1957) and the Wilson tunnels (1960); the H-3 included a third set of tunnels. Kāne'ohe and Kailua had already become suburbs of Honolulu; the fear was that the H-3 would bring more people, traffic, subdivisions, and shopping malls, and that development would spread to the ahupua'a north of Kāne'ohe.

A year after H-3 construction started, in 1973, the farming communities of Waiāhole and Waikāne learned that a landowner was planning a new development in their valleys. The communities began organizing protests against it. These protests continued to increase in strength and intensity for four years, culminating in marches on state government offices, obstruction of roads into the valleys, and a blockade of Kamehameha Highway, the only route north through Ko'olaupoko to Ko'olauloa.

In the end, the state diffused the protest by buying Waiāhole Valley in 1977 for \$6.1 million to preserve it as farmlands. In 1998, the City and County of Honolulu purchased 500 acres in Waikāne to block a plan for a golf course and preserve the valley for use as a nature park.

In the 1970s, Hawaiian activists and their supporters also confronted the US military over the status of Kaho'olawe, an island occupied during World War II and subsequently used as a bombing and firing range. When the movement to protect Kaho'olawe arose in the 1970s, many criticized it as too radical and as unpatriotic; but by the mid-1980s, the majority of people in Hawai'i, from politicians to schoolchildren, saw the protests as pono, or just. The support was a testament to the strength of the Hawaiian community's cultural and political revival.

After two decades of protest and struggle, in 1990, President George Bush issued an executive order ending the military's use of Kaho'olawe as a bombing and target range. In 1995, the US Navy agreed to return the island to the state, which then designated it as a site for native cultural practices and education. In 2004, after a five-year, \$400 million cleanup, the Navy officially returned the island to the state. Still, tons of unexploded ordnance had penetrated the 'āina and remains embedded to this day.

These struggles against the desecration of the land brought about a growing awareness of the importance of protecting and restoring sacred places for future generations, in order to teach about and perpetuate cultural traditions that embody the values and practices of living on islands, maintaining the 'āina's health and vitality, and using her the precious resources sustainably. Island values and practices contrast and clash with those of the United States' expansionist,

consumerist culture, which developed on a continent that had a seemingly endless supply of resources. Settlers used those resources to build massive cities and roadways, while overwhelming a multitude of native cultures and communities once deeply rooted on the continent.

The photos in *Ē Luku Wale Ē* reveal a natural environment altered after the islands opened to the world. Introduced plants such as mango, albizia, paperbark trees, java plum, strawberry guava, and octopus trees dominate the coastal plains of Kāneʻohe, while endemic plants (lehua, koa, hala) and the plants the Native Hawaiians brought in their migrations from the South Pacific (kalo, ʻuala, kī, wauke, ʻawa, kukui, hala, ʻulu, ʻohe) have a reduced presence.

Mountains are enduring—not as easily leveled as hills or forests. Again and again in the photos, we recognize the three great mountains of Kāneʻohe—Kōnāhuanui, Lanihuli, and Keahiakahoe—rising like giants above the wind- and rain-furrowed pali of Kāneʻohe and Haʻikū. These peaks capture rain clouds arriving on the trade winds, and the water tumbling down their pali in shimmering silvery falls has come to symbolize the sky father, Wākea, bringing new life to the earth mother, Papa.

In place names, the old stories endure, like the mountains themselves. Verse I describes the tallest of the three mountains as bearing witness to the changes taking place below: “mountainous Kōnāhuanui reveals the onslaught.” The name Kōnāhuanui (his large seeds) is said to have its origins in a story recounted by Theodore Kelsey: “When a man, probably a giant, chased a woman who escaped into a cave, he tore off his testes and threw them at her.”<sup>9</sup> Kōnāhuanui is home to a moʻo goddess, a large lizard that lives in freshwater pools and streams (perhaps the woman who escapes into the cave in Kelsey’s story). Rain clouds, symbolic of male fertility and life-giving waters, gather around its heights. The mountain’s leeward side, often ribboned with waterfalls, is the wettest area of Honolulu: the waters of Mānoa and Nuʻuanu valleys have their source here.

On the Koʻolaupoko side, below Kōnāhuanui, is a stream called Kahuaiki (the small seed), one of three streams said to be wives of the god Kāne (the other two are Hiʻilaniwai and Māmalahoa). Place names tell a story of regeneration: Kamoʻoaliʻi (the royal moʻo) brings life-giving water to the fields and plains of Kāneʻohe (bamboo Kāne) before entering the bay near the fishpond of Waikalua (water cave). The names huanui (big seed, in Kōnāhuanui) and huaiki (small seed, in Kahuaiki) indicate the land’s fertility. To the northwest of Kōnāhuanui is Lanihuli (swirling heavens, suggesting rain clouds moving in the winds around the peak); northwest of Lanihuli is Kahuauli (the dark seed). Uli may refer to the dark rain clouds, their shadows on the land below, or to the dark green vegetation along and below the summit.

Verses V and VI feature the peak north of Kahuauli: Keahiakahoe (the fire of Kahoe), the second tallest peak in the Koʻolau Mountains. Its legend portrays the stinginess of a fisherman named Pahu toward his brother Kahoe, whom Pahu gives only baitfish. As payback, Pahu must watch in silence and hunger as his brother cooks food over a fire during a famine. Sharing is a cherished value of our local community, but when one person is stingy, another may reciprocate in kind. North of Keahiakahoe is Haʻikū Valley, in the ahupuaʻa of Heʻeia. In the cliffs above the valley is Kaualehu (the ash rain described in Verse VIII). In this cave dwells the earth goddess Kāmehaʻikana, associated with Papa and Haumea. These earth mothers are the procreators of islands and people.

Lulukū (utter destruction) is a section of land at the base of Keahiakahoe. The significance

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<sup>9</sup> Sterling and Summers, *Sites of Oahu*, 311.

of its naming is lost (perhaps it alluded to flash flooding in the area), but in modern times, the name has ironically become a reminder of the havoc wreaked by the construction of both the Likelike highway and H-3. Numerous reports document the impact of development and construction projects throughout the islands: disturbance of burial sites; destruction of cultural sites; loss of native habitats for flora and fauna; the introduction of nonnative species into the valleys and mountains; diminished access to cultural sites and places where Hawaiian cultural practitioners gather forest resources; increased flooding, runoff into the ocean, and subsequent damage to reefs; more noise; more trash; and brighter lights at night, diminishing our view of the heavenly bodies traditionally used to determine direction, time, and seasons. While we can preserve, rehabilitate, restore, or reconstruct some of the sites and resources, others we lose forever. If Honolulu represents the future of the islands, the legacy will be primarily one of loss—hardly a single structure evoking the cultural foundation of ancient times remains extant in the city.

As the islands move through a new century, new development will raise the same questions again and again: How much of what we *say* we value are we willing to sacrifice to our pursuit of prosperity and comfort? How sustainable is our drive for commercial gains, and at what point is the destruction of the land and native culture so great that it irretrievably damages our quality of life? Is there any way to stop traveling down the path of continuous destruction documented in the photos and verses of *Ē Luku Wale Ē*?

In the end, remembering the stories and mitigating the damage may not be enough to preserve what is special and unique to our islands. In a community that imports most of its food, goods, and energy, that could desalinate seawater if it pollutes its sources of freshwater or sucks them dry, where children grow up absorbed in their electronic devices and worshipping the culture displayed in movie theaters and shopping malls, how can a reverence for the ‘āina survive?

Without that sense, land becomes mere property, an object of investment and profit. Sacred places become objects for study or tourist stops, rather than sites where one experiences the divine and makes prayers to the gods. And if these places are no longer essential to the life of the community, they will remain protected only until another traffic, housing, or economic crisis propels more development.

Contemporary life encourages us to trade what we should value spiritually and culturally for material wealth. The photographs and verses of *Ē Luku Wale Ē* embody the belief that what we need is rootedness in the ‘āina.

Verse XI on Hālawa refers to the kōlea, the golden plover, whose home and nesting grounds are in Alaska, but who comes to Hawai‘i during the winter months to avoid the cold and find food. The kōlea is a metaphor for those who come to the islands to enjoy themselves or to make a profit, and leave after they have gotten what they wanted. These transient residents have not acquired any knowledge of the land and its history; they have no deep aloha for the ‘āina, no commitment to protect its life for future generations, no deep aloha for the ‘āina, no commitment to protect its life for future generations. And the kōlea are not just those who come to visit, but those who live here, yet remain ignorant and uncaring.

In contrast to the heedless kōlea are the steadfast hala and the kukui trees. In ancient times, they provided for the needs of the people: the hala for baskets, mats, paintbrushes, decorations, medicine, and food; the kukui for medicine, condiments, adhesive, dye, and oil to create light. Both the hala and the kukui have flourished for centuries in the wet, rainy lowland forests of Kāne‘ohe, Ha‘ikū, and Hālawa. May they live on forever. Kau ‘eli‘eli kau mai kau ‘eli‘eli e.