



NEWS RELEASE

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF ANCESTRAL MAUI Teachers for tomorrow, ancient structures whisper of the past

MAUI, Hawai'i – Stones speak. Affected by the passing of time, infused with the energy of those who labored in service of their communities, silent witnesses to celebrations and sorrows, from Stonehenge to Machu Picchu the constructions of old tell the stories of a culture. This is certainly true for Maui Nui where numerous ancient stone works remain.

Best known are the heiau or ancient Hawaiians' places of worship. They were built with volcanic basalt stones and without the use of mortar. The construction of heiau was so ingenious that a mythical people, the Menehune, are often credited for the work. Traces of heiau date back to early settlement times and as society grew more complex, their design grew in size. After the 1300s, magnificent platforms surrounded by enormous walls appeared serving as political and religious centers. These compounds might contain hale (house structures) and ki'i (carved images). But the heiau might be simple shrines as well, dedicated to agriculture, war fare, fishing or ancestors.

A National Historic Landmark, located at Kahanu Garden in east Maui, Pi'ilanihale Heiau is believed to be the largest heiau in Hawai'i. Remnants of a village remain on the adjacent flat land. The north face of the heiau is as tall as a five-story building and its top is big enough to hold nearly eight football fields. Strategically located on a beautiful coastal point, the heiau has been associated with the great Pi'ilani dynasty. During the 16th century, these chiefs constructed Maui's famed alaloa, a paved trail that completely encircled the island. Not surprisingly, Maui's modern major highways bear the Pi'ilani name.



All that remains of Kuakeali'i Heiau is a large open platform about four feet high, but nearby ancient sites remain, shrouded in legend and myth. They are all part of the remote, 122-acre Wai'anapanapa State Park, a popular stop for its small black sand beach, picnic and camping spots and overnight cabins. A native hala tree forest opens to anchialine cave pools that tell the tragic story of a chiefess murdered by her jealous husband. Another cave is storied with a shape-shifting shark man. You can hike to Hāna along the ancient alaloa trail.

The high chiefs of Maui lived mostly in the Wailuku area in Central Maui. Among them was Maui's last great king, Kahekili, who died in 1794. He made his home at the majestic Haleki'i and Pihanakalani Heiau, which overlook 'Īao Stream and the great mountains of Maui. Declared a State Monument, the site contrasts eerily with its neighbors, bustling Wailuku and Kahului towns. Haleki'i is named for the many ki'i that once guarded this heiau, while Pihanakalani might have served as a luakini, a place for human sacrifice.

A deep sense of ancient sacredness permeates 'Īao Valley and surrounds its 1,200-foot volcanic spire, 'Īao Needle, featured in the legends of old. The three-vowel name means "radiant clouds," and in the valley's steep cliff sides hide the burial places of Maui's great chiefs. In 1790, Kamehameha I defeated Kahekili here in a bloodbath of defenseless warriors trapped by canyon walls. The infamous battle became known as the Battle of Kepaniwai – the damming of waters – for the many bodies that blocked the stream. Today, 'Īao Valley offers visitors various explorative opportunities including pathways with informative signs telling the stories of the past.

What were the tools used in and around the sacred heiau and ancient sites of Maui or the artifacts that complete the stories? Stop by at Bailey House Museum operated by the Maui Historical Society. It is in part dedicated to pre-contact Hawaiian objects and is the best and most complete collection on Maui.

As for Moloka'i, this rugged island is home to one of the most striking heiau in the state, 'Ili'i'ōpae Heiau. Situated on private property (access may be restricted) 15 miles east of Kaunakakai, it once belonged to the most powerful luakini in the islands and measured close to 30,000 square feet. Large ki'i would have stared out over the Pailolo Channel. Legends say it was under the spell of sorcerer gods and built by menhune who were paid with mountain shrimp (ōpae) to carry waterworn pebbles (i'i'ili) from far-away streams.

In east Moloka'i's verdant Hālawā Valley, descendants of taro-farming families who lived here from early Polynesian settlement until the 1960s are restoring the sites where human and natural ecologies once interacted in harmony. They invite visitors to join a guided two mile hike; it passes numerous ancient sacred stone works and ends at



spectacular Mo‘o‘ula Falls. Historical Hikes West Moloka‘i specializes in cultural explorations on the western side.

The quiet, dry coastal lands of the Island of Lāna‘i protect a rich cultural heritage that evokes the lifestyle of ancient fishing families. In Kaunolū, on the southwestern shore, house sites, signs of early agriculture, shrines, and a sacred heiau speak of harmonious subsistence practices infused with spirituality. Wild and windswept, and on the National Register of Historic Places, Kaunolū once provided to Kamehameha I a relaxing fishing and summer retreat.

New to Lāna‘i is Lāna‘i Culture and Heritage Center, which showcases artifacts of Hawaiian origin. The items were collected through archaeological investigations or found by plantation employees while they worked the fields with plow and hoe years ago.

Numerous other places in Maui Nui speak of ancient days including burial sites such as Honokahua Preservation Site, a 13.6-acre parcel of land between Honokahua Bay and The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua. It is the resting place of more than 2,000 Hawaiian kūpuna (ancestors), dating from A.D. 850 to the early 1800’s.

In ancient Hawai‘i, heiau and burial sites were approached with respect and strict protocol. Architectural feats, their existence allowed the isolated evolution of a thriving, organized society. They are fragile today and considered sacred. Maui Nui invites you to listen with reverence to these works entwined with the past. They may yet teach us about tomorrow.

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