

About the Cover Art

Cover Essay: *Ka Ahupua'a*

E ulu mau ka lewa, E ulu mau ka honua

Let the heavens continue to live,

Let the earth continue to live

E ho'opulu mau ka ua i ka 'āina

Let the rains continued to dampen the land

E ulu mau ka wao kele

Let the forest continue to grow

Alaila mohala a'e ka pua

Then, the flower (child) will bloom forth

Ho'ola hou ke kanaka.

And man will live again.

—*Pule Ho'ola No Ka Honua*

(Prayer of Healing for the Earth)

We begin this essay in the language of our ancestors who were cognizant of all things in the cosmos as living and communicating, and that if the earth lives and the forests grow, then future generations of mankind will also flourish and survive.

In early Hawai'i, well before Western contact, *kanaka maoli* (indigenous Hawaiians) believed that every thing in nature was alive with *mana*, spiritual power, and coexisted in nature with mankind. *Kanaka maoli* believed in a multitude of gods, and these gods took many different forms. The four primary gods were: Kane, creator of man, symbol of life, god of freshwater and sunlight; Lono, god of agriculture, clouds, and weather; Ku, god of the forest, leadership, medicine, and war; and Kanaloa, god of the wind and ocean.

Early *kanaka maoli* believed that they were direct descendants of the mating of Wakea, sky father and Papa, earth mother. Since we all share the same parents, we are 'ohana or family. And since our parents are living, everything is living. Everything is conscious and communicating,

inclusive of animate and inanimate objects. The wind, the sounds, the rocks—all we have to do is open our receptors—everything is alive. Wellness is the constant interaction between all life forces. When there is proper interaction, things are *pono* or in harmony, and *mana* maintains this balance. Spiritual interrelationships are primary, and proper thoughts and actions maintain *pono*. Ill health is loss of *pono* and loss of *mana*, whether it is in humans or in the environment.

Kanaka maoli believed that our siblings are the plants and animals in nature. Therefore, through these relationships, it was everyone's responsibility to *mālama 'āina*, care for the land and all her natural resources. These were collective relationships with all in the cosmos. The early *kanaka maoli* had a saying, "*He ali'i no ka 'āina; he kauwā wale ke kanaka,*" the land is chief; the human is but a servant.

Artist and illustrator, Ms. Marilyn Kahalewai's painting of an *ahupua'a* on the cover of this issue provides a glimpse of a traditional time in Hawai'i's pre-Western history. *Ahupua'a* was a self-sustaining environment, extending from the mountain to the sea with productive interdependence of all life forms. Each district or territory was marked by an *ahu* (altar) made of stones and surmounted by a carved image of the head of a *pua'a* (hog), which was a form of Lono, the god of rain and agriculture. The *ali'i* or chief of the island divided his land into *moku* or districts. The subdivisions of the *moku* were the *ahupua'a*. An *ahupua'a* contained the range of products and resources from the upland, the plains, and the sea—everything the people needed to survive.

From the *uka* or uplands and mountains, the *koa* trees were cut down and hollowed to make canoes, spears and tools were carved from the *kauila* hardwood, durable cordage for fish nets and fish lines were made

from the *olonā* plant, and the *kanaka maoli* made medicine from the *ko'oko'olau* and *moa* plants. The uplands had areas for valuable bird catching for feathers to make the cloaks and helmets worn by the *ali'i*. Roots of the *'ie'ie* vine were best for weaving into fish traps and carrying baskets.

Between the *uka* (uplands) and the *kai* (sea) laid *kula*, the flat plains and fields. *Kanaka maoli* gathered bamboo for fishing poles and *pili* grass for thatching houses. The nut from the *kukui* tree was used for oil and lighting, the *ki* or *ti*-leaves were used for wrapping food and thatching, many plants were used in Hawaiian medicine, and colorful flowers were gathered for *hula* or dance performances and decorations. *Kapa* or clothing was made from the inner bark of the *wauke* trees. An abundance of food was produced in the *kula lo'i kalo* (ponds for wetland taro) and were built along the *kahawai* (stream) where cool water was running. *Poi*, the most important staple in the *kanaka maoli* diet, was made from *kalo* corm, although the entire plant was prepared as food.

The *kai*, the sea and the shore area, provided *kanaka maoli* fish and other edible seafood's, *limu* or algae and seaweeds, and *pa'akai* or sea salt used as a food seasoning, as medicine, for preserving food, and in sacred ceremonies. Growing along the shore was the coconut tree: the coconut provided food and drink, the shell was used as bowls, the husk surrounding the nut was used as cordage, the leaflets were used as brooms or fans, and the trunk made useful bowls, drums, small canoes, and spears. The *noni* shrub produced a fruit that was used for medicinal purposes.

Throughout the painting you will notice *kanaka maoli* working in groups, multigenerational gatherings where the *kūpuna* (grandparents) cared for the *kamali'i* (children) and taught them games of skill while their parents were hard at work in the *lo'i*, or fishing, or gathering plants, studying with a *kahuna lā'au lapa'au* (medical practitioner), or removing a roasted *pua'a* (pig) from an *imu* (underground oven). The *kanaka maoli* life centered in subsistence planting and fishing within the *ahupua'a* and this shaped their temperament of sharing, cooperation, hospitality, mutual exchange, peace, and reverence for nature.

The *ahupua'a* was a self-sustainable system providing many different products for the well being of the people.

Central in the painting, and this lifestyle of *ahupua'a*, is *wai* (freshwater) from the steep waterfall in the uplands, down the river that nourishes the *lo'i kalo*; *wai* is an

essential resource for the survival of mankind and nature. *Kanaka maoli* believed *wai* was a gift from the gods in the uplands whom provided *wai* for the *maka 'āinana* (tenant workers) agriculture, aquaculture, and other human uses. The *ahupua'a* system of land management served to protect the water resource in the upland that sustained life for the people. *Kanaka maoli* worked the land and in return were able to use the land for raising a family and having the protection of the *ali'i*.

Kanaka maoli had developed the most complex organized society in pre-colonial Polynesia, requiring a high degree of planning and organizing abilities. Exceptional building skills were needed to grade and build the terraces for producing wetland *kalo* or taro, constructing irrigation ditches and aqueducts to transport the *wai* to the terraces, and the construction of both freshwater and saltwater fishponds.

Although the *ahupua'a* of our past have all but vanished, the spirit and traditional knowledge remain in *pule* (prayer), *mele* (song), historical accounts, and the values still held by *kanaka maoli* today. Our *'āina* still provides life through the islands unique topography, influencing how water moves to the ocean from the uplands via streams and rivers, or underground. Hawai'i's forested mountains, our island's watershed, efficiently capture and retain water that recharges the underground aquifers.

The health of our upland watershed, of the shore environment, the sea, and people of Hawai'i remain connected today. Activities in the upland affect the life downstream. Excessive sediment flows and polluted runoff impact the coral reef ecosystem and, along with over fishing, degrade fishing resources along the shoreline. A healthy watershed regulates water flows and filters sediments and pollutants, while providing the essential nutrients for spawning and fish nursery habitats near the shoreline. The health of today's mountain-to-sea ecosystems and that of today's people and livelihoods remain intertwined.

More than this, though, protection of Hawai'i's ecosystems and natural heritage is an imperative that tests the values and commitment of today's culturally diverse society. With one-third of Hawai'i's native forest birds threatened with extinction, and introduced animals, plants, and pathogens threatening the integrity and health of our ecosystems, we would do well to learn from our ancestors and predecessors. "*He ali'i no ka 'āina; he kauwā wale ke kanaka,*" the land is chief; the human is but a servant.

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THE ARTIST

Marilyn Kahalewai (1932–1990) moved to Hawai'i when she was 21, where she became well known as an artist, illustrator, and writer of children's books, and immersed herself in Hawaiian language, life, and culture. While a

graphic artist at Kamehameha Schools in the 1970s, Marilyn painted a colorful picture of an *ahupua'a* which was used as a teaching tool by Hawaiian Studies Institute staff as they visited schools throughout Hawai'i, and subsequently became the inspiration for an *ahupua'a* teaching text. After becoming an independent artist and illustrator, she was commissioned to paint a larger and more detailed version. A second painting, shown on the cover of *Eco-Health*, measures 4 feet by 6 feet and was painted in 1974. A text entitled "*The Ahupua'a*" was published as an accompanying text in 1979, and was the first publication by the Kamehameha Schools Hawaiian Studies Institute. A third edition *Life in Early Hawai'i: The Ahupua'a*, is compiled by the Kamehameha Schools Hawaiian Studies Institute staff for use with the "*The Ahupua'a poster*" by Marilyn Kahalewai. More information is available at Kamehameha Schools Press, <http://store.ksbe.edu/kspress/>.

Cover Art

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