



Ko'olau Foundation
c/o 45-105A Waikalua Road
Kane'ohe, Hawai'i 96744

"Malama na wahi kapu o na kupuna...care for the sacred places of the ancestors."

For December 10, 1999
East-West Center
Honolulu, Hawai'i

**TESTIMONY RELATING TO RECONCILIATING NATIVE HAWAIIANS
AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD
TO CULTURAL RESOURCES AND SACRED SITES**

Aloha mai kakou.

My name is Mahealani Cypher, and I am representing two organizations -- Malama Kukuioke and the Ko'olau Foundation -- which are deeply concerned about the need to reclaim and repair harms done to native Hawaiian cultural resources and sacred sites.

It is our view that countless numbers of our most treasured legacies of native history have been lost over the past 100 years. Many of them, even in recent years, were destroyed by agents of the United States government, building freeways and air bases on some of the most sacred lands of Hawai'i.

We believe that even though some of the physical structures built by ancient Hawaiians may have been destroyed, these are still consecrated grounds which, wherever possible, must be reclaimed and placed under protective custody.

At Kukuioke Heiau in Kane'ohe, archaeologists hired by U.S. dollars distorted the value and history of this important property in their reports to the U.S. Department of Transportation. As a result, these distortions have made their way into print and continue to be repeated as fact -- even though sadly inaccurate -- by some of the most well-known archaeologists in the world. When anyone misrepresents our history, they steal a piece of each one of us that we may never entirely recover.

What they did in Halawa Valley was equally shameful. They allowed the bulldozers to destroy incredibly unique and important Hawaiian sites, features that are found nowhere else in the world. All of this, mind you, paid for by U.S. dollars.

History today is being cheated by archaeologists who were intent upon facilitating the building of H-3 and allowed the destruction of hundreds of major sites in both Kane'ohe and Halawa Valley.

The final destruction of Kukuio Kane Heiau and Halawa Valley's numerous sacred sites for the building of interstate H-3, however, did not end the tragic legacy of these sacred places. The death toll mounts.

At the Marine Corps Air Station on Mokapu Peninsula in Kane'ohe is one of the foremost sacred sites in all the Hawaiian Islands. As a matter of fact, that entire peninsula is filled with an incredible treasure trove of ancient Hawaiian sites, many of which have been bulldozed to be replaced by military structures or military housing.

Our ancestors tell us the gods Kane, Ku and Lono carved the first man out of the earth of Mokapu. Another legend describes it thusly:

"There on the eastern flank of Mololani, facing the sunrise and near the shoreline, the soil is red earth mingled with very dark bluish black earth. There is where the first man was made. That place was called in the the old times Kahakakea, but in these days it is Pahuna. There, Kane drew the image of a man in the soil; he drew the image in the soil after the likeness of the Gods, with head, body, arms, legs, just like themselves in form. When the image was drawn in the soil, Kanaloa said, 'You will not get your man; you have not the power; I am the person who has power.' Kanaloa therefore made an image of earth just like Kane's image. Kane and his companions said, "Let your earth become man," but no man came forth; his dirt figure of a man remained lying there and it turned into stone. Kane then said to his fellow gods, Ku and Lono, "Listen, you two, to my words and to the words I speak in answer and do you two preserve them and listen." Then Kane said, "Come to life," "Life," responded Ku and Lono. "Come to life," said Kane, "Live," said Ku and Lono. Then the dirt became a living man.

When the first man was made, the gods took the house name Hale-kou (house of Kou wood) which they had made, and there the first man lived; but the woman was not made. The man observed how his shadow followed his body going outside the house and coming into the house, and he ran to the beach of Nu'upia and Oneawa and found to his surprise that his shadow stuck to him. Now when this man had fallen asleep, as he awakened suddenly a pretty woman was at this side and he thought it was his shadow that was sticking to his side and that God had changed his shadow into a wife for him. He therefore gave her the name of Keakahulilani (the shadow made of heaven). This means that God had turned the soil of the earth into man. In various genealogies we often find other names given to this man. This is the story given us by the great historian, Samuel Kamakau.

During the 16th century, the royal palace of King Peleiholani was situated there at Mokapu adjacent to Nuupia Fishpond alongside Kaneohe Bay. Many years later, Kamehameha the Great selected this same site for meeting with his alii. It became known as the sacred land of Kamehameha.

It was said that the ponds figured in our legends as well. Abraham Fornander wrote that "Nuupia was the father and Halekou the mother of Puniakaia. The parents of Puniakaia were of the royal blood of Koolauloa and Koolaupoko."

There are many other incredible stories of the rich history of this place, now totally controlled by the United States government. But perhaps the most tragic loss is the displacement of Hawaiian burials taken from the sands of Mokapu. So many iwi disturbed, taken from their resting place -- a sacrilege, in our tradition. Artifacts, hundreds of artifacts, taken away from this place.

There is much to reconcile in terms of cultural losses, not just in these examples, but throughout our islands. It is our fervent hope that your meetings will result in mechanisms for return of lands that contain cultural resources, restoration of resources that have been damaged, wherever possible; and additional reparations for use in establishing a new Ko'olau Museum to house native Hawaiian artifacts and to further education on Hawaii's rich cultural heritage.

Our organizations stand ready to offer our kokua, support and involvement in such efforts, should the U.S. government proceed to take corrective actions for wrongs committed against our history and our heritage.

Mahalo for this opportunity to offer comment.