

THE REINSTITUTION OF A TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN PRACTICE: A
NATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF RITUALISM THROUGH THE
PERFORMANCE OF HE'EHŌLUA

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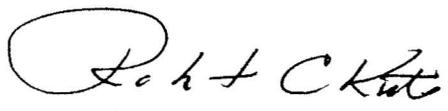
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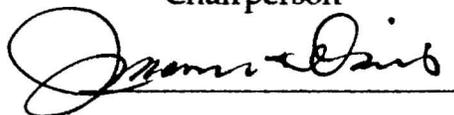
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DEDICATION

As a Kanaka maoli I find that it is important to stop everyday to look at what I can see of the old days and the old ways of my *kūpuna* -- who have since returned to our ancient homelands. To see the vast ocean that we call home, and from which we drink our fill of life and knowledge. From a time long past I have walked forward as my gods, *aumakua*, and people of old had done before me. Always looking to the sun that rises and and the night that follows. To feel the winds that can be heard across the reaches of time, if only we would listen. To hear the voices of those close -- who are with me always. For without their sweet voices drifting on the wind, this relatively unknown facet of our culture would have been lost forever.

E tūtū Kahanu, ka'u Makuakane Pōhaku, 'o Kimo, 'o Harvey, 'o Aolani, 'o Kilohana, tūtū Kaopoiki, me ku'u mau keiki a ka'u mau hoa hānau me hoa aloha a pau, aloha a mahalo nui iā 'oūkou mā no kā alaka'ina. No nā akua, 'o Pele, 'o Kanaloa, 'o Kū, 'o Lono, a 'o Kane, mahalo no nā maka ona, i 'ike wau ma ke ola o ka 'āina i o'u mau moe 'uhana.

A hui hou ku'u 'ohana a pau, Pōhaku Keali'iahonui

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ABSTRACT

He'ehōlua - a ritualized form of athleticism that last took place over 180 years ago on carefully constructed stone ramp ways in the shadow of active volcanoes and under the aegis of fierce gods. Through practical research this is a descriptive interpretation from a native perspective of the cultural landscape relative to constructing and riding the *papahōlua*, and the unique relationship *hōlua* has with the indigenous people of Hawai'i and Polynesia.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Hōlua, or *he'ehōlua*, refers to the ancient art of surfing mountains and lava fields on a specialized sled, a *papahōlua*, constructed of wood lashed together with coconut fiber. It is a traditional form of ritualized athleticism unique to the Hawaiian Islands, and has been lost to time. The nearly complete omission of *hōlua* from the historical record of the Hawaiian people, especially considering the *holua's* abundant surface features, monumental in scale, is absolutely inexcusable. Most known history of *hōlua* was lost over the last 180 years and its cultural significance is now misunderstood. Was *hōlua* just a "game" as the historical record indicates? Or could it have been a form of "ritualistic athleticism" that emphasized a religious practice significant to the native culture of these islands?

This research is the reexamination of all existing material relevant to Hawaiian *hōlua* sledding in an effort to show that it was more than just a "game". If *holua* was more than just a game, did it perhaps play a significant role in maintaining a social or religious balance of power among the nobility, the many gods, and/or the people? It is something to wonder about when we realize that these ancient people at times flung themselves, with total abandonment, down

steep stone ramps into imminent disaster. The primary historical information that does survive are the few *papahōlua* stored in the back rooms of the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i and the Peabody Museum in Boston, and the majestic stone ramp ways that survive in mute testimony to this important facet of ancient Hawaiian society. The problem is, how do we interpret this physical evidence when so little information remains? The answer to that is, it would be necessary to re-examine all known foreign and native accounts of this ancient ritualistic practice in order to set the record straight.

Initially this study of *hōlua* begins with an examination of the possible definitions of *hōlua*, followed by the foreign and native accounts given of *hōlua*. This section of the research includes the historical accounts of *hōlua* provided by historians, and then adds my opinion of how this affected our understanding of Hawaiian practices today. Then there appears an interpretive evaluation of the architectural construct of the slides, sleds, and what we know or don't know about them. This is important to understanding the practice and performance of *hōlua*. There is also a significant portion dedicated to the religious and ritualistic methods of the practice and *hōlua's* possible link to "*Pele*", the mythical Hawaiian goddess of the volcano. Speculative in nature I believe this is important to the placement of *hōlua* within the cultural landscape. The research then continues

with a look at the reinstitution of *hōlua* as a contemporary cultural practice in the Hawaiian community that involves the construction and riding of the *papahōlua*, or sled.

The practice of *hōlua* has become somewhat shrouded in the mists of history. The particular aspects of it, though slightly speculative in nature, are now being explored as a means to better understand the cultural significance of *hōlua*. I have found, through the course of this research, that by studying the physical attributes of *hōlua* (slides, sled, etc.) I had formulated a means of perhaps producing answers that further question our conceptual understanding of what we know about the ancient culture of these islands today.

Tragically overlooked for years, the ritualistic role of *hōlua* sledding in Hawai'i and the significance of the many slides has resulted in an interpretation of *hōlua* sledding as "only a game". I believe that the failure of earlier studies to recognize the significant religious and social importance of these impressive stone ramps and the practice of *hōlua* has notably impacted our understanding of the Native Hawaiian people today. The critical importance of this study is that it produces new information. For example I provide new information the slides, the sled, the performance of *hōlua* (which appear to be ritualistic in nature).

Moreover, there is a need to properly classify (or reclassify) the various *heiau* that

have a vital association to constructed slides that was previously overlooked or disregarded during earlier historical and archaeological reconnaissance. This oversight (or incorrect classification) questions if we are correctly interpreting the religious practices of the old times.

I now offer a fresh interpretation through the survey of slides, an examination of archival materials, the collection of oral histories, and a documentation of extant sleds, and my personal practical experience gained from my athletic performance of *hōlua*. This new perspective is genuine and cross – disciplinary in the sense that it places ritual practice and the athletic performance of *hōlua* within the same cultural framework. Although competitive athletic performance has often been (and continues to be) a forum of ritual expression and political interaction as found in other native societies, studies of *hōlua* have not addressed these linkages in a systematic and comprehensive fashion. Based on the existing physical evidence, this study demands a re – evaluation of the accumulated information regarding this practice, and a re – evaluation of the longstanding interpretation of culture and cultural practices throughout these islands. This research is of great importance to our understanding the religious structure of Hawaiian and Polynesian societies.

Through this study of *hōlua* sledding, I hope to encourage further gathering of information in an effort to expand our understanding of other Hawaiian practices, language, and history. As an indigenous researcher, *hōlua* is my way of re – establishing, promoting, encouraging, and perpetuating the traditional practices of our island home that makes us unique within the global community. The benefit from this study (important to the indigenous people of Hawai'i and the general public) is that it will reveal the important role that *hōlua* sledding played in Hawaiian culture. Perhaps this research might clarify the placement of *hōlua* slides within the cultural landscape of Hawai'i.

From an insider's (or native) perspective, the slides and the *papahōlua* (sled) are unique illustrations of our ancient knowledge. This practice proves that a highly developed technological culture was present long before Western contact. This study, just one aspect of my culture, is far from complete and is only the first step in a more comprehensive understanding of the Hawaiian culture.

CHAPTER 2:
THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE – KAHUAHŌLUA, OR SLIDES

The Definitions of *Hōlua*

How do we define this unique cultural practice from the eyes of a native? I think it would be best if we first begin with a basic understanding of the native language. Within the Hawaiian language, spoken word(s) or phrases usually have more than a single meaning. The true, full and complete meanings of the words or phrases are usually hidden from those unfamiliar with the language, and they can only be understood in the context of the conversation. Given the lack of historical material compiled by western inquisitors and the importance of the practice of *hōlua* for the Hawaiian people, it is essential to have some understanding of the word *hōlua*. Using the Hawaiian Dictionary (Puku'i & Elbert), I extracted a definition of *hōlua* that is vague in its definition, but translates to mean: "sled; an expression of pride in descent from certain chiefly families at *Waipi'o, Hawai'i*, who were famous for their skill with the *hōlua* sledding".¹ The following paragraph offers my own interpretation of *holua* based on my understanding of the Hawaiian language, the interpretive

¹*Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. "*hōlua*".

definitions available in the Hawaiian Dictionary, my experience with riding a *papahōlua*, and my experience constructing a sled.

From my knowledge, comprehension of the language, and practical experience, I believe *hō* (elongated “o” means “to give, to transfer, or to go as in give of oneself, to go in accompaniment”). It shows action to do something, similar to the use of *ho’o*, as in *ho’olauna* or *ho’olauna ‘ana* – an introduction, to introduce someone or something. On the other hand, “*lua*” has variable meanings from which we have to determine the most appropriate meaning. One of “*lua*” translates to a specific type of hole in the ground with a bottom, and is a word that may be applied with deep spiritual and sacred significance and should not be taken lightly. This particular definition of “*lua*” is more often than not associated with the Hawaiian gods of old, and it represents an area where the placement of an offering was made to one or more deities, such as at a *luakini heiau*. Another definition of this word “*lua*” can be a contraction of the number “two or double”. Or, the word can translate to mean “two together” or “to go together” as two things that are connected to one another, such as companions that complement one another. As in the riding of the *papahōlua*, there is the rider and the thing (*papahōlua*) that is ridden. It is important that the reader be aware

of the significance of the use of *hō* or *lua* in *hōlua*. If there is more than one meaning, it could be inferred here that there is a duality of form in this word.

The word *hōlua* or *holua* from my perspective establishes an association of duality between the person and the object, as well as a connection or association of the physical to the spiritual realm, such as a prayer offered at a *luakini heiau*. So, another possible interpretation of *hōlua* is “to become or to be a receptacle from which an offering might be made, carried, or to presented from to a particular god or gods”. This interpretation is perhaps somewhat difficult to comprehend unless you understand the ancient sacrificial practices, where the “*lua*” is in a sense a receptacle in which the offerings to the gods are placed. In practicing *hōlua* you are the rider but also the sacrificial offering placed on the sled, which becomes quite apparent when a person rides one of these sleds down a steep cliff side or through a lava field. As the rider descends down the slope at an increasing rate of speed, it becomes apparent that a mistake will cost the rider his/her life, or serious injury and severe pain. From my experience, I offer another interpretation of the word *hōlua*: “to be equal, a likeness of, a duplicate, or copy of the other”. This is where I would say that the sled takes on the physical and spiritual appearance of a person and vice versa that was the

commonality in ancient Hawai'i. Hence, we should take notice of the word relative to the physical object that is being described.

Another definition of the word "*lua*" is "a gravesite that is usually associated with a specific type of *heiau*" known as a "*luakini*" (*kini* – the multitude, the *Ali'i*, etc.) in which a sacrificial offering would be placed.² It should be quite apparent that such diverse meanings of the word *hōlua* or *hōlua* surely establish the importance of understanding the various definitions of *hōlua* in the Hawaiian language. This is especially necessary for defining the physical and spiritual properties of this unusual and barely understood aspect of Hawaiian tradition, ritually or otherwise.

Furthermore, it should also be apparent from the possible interpretations I have presented of the word "*hōlua*" that the Hawaiian culture is obviously not so 'black and white'. Hawaiian culture is much more complex in its expressions towards physical objects than previously assumed to be by Western scholars. I once again emphasize that a single word does not necessarily contain one meaning or reference to one particular aspect of a native practice. Within the cultural sphere of the *Kanakamaoli*, words and phrases may usually have two or

² *Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. "*lua*", "*luakini*", "*hō*", "*ho'o*".

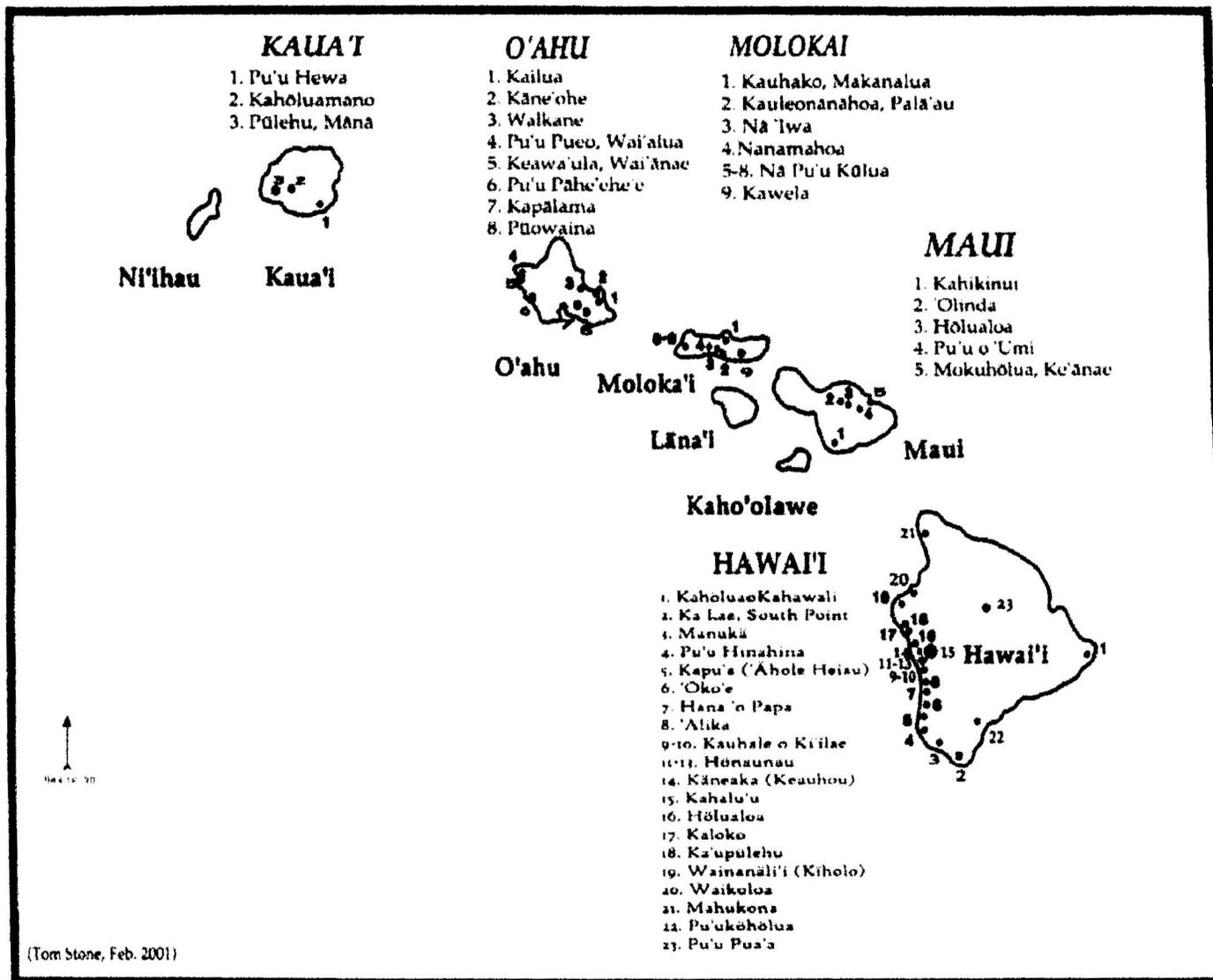
more meanings – some literal, and others hidden. Thus, a word or phrase more often than not may have more than one definition, depending on its application. A word such as *hōlua* may be relevant simultaneously to the physical description of the object(s) and to the object's relationship to another object. This, in turn, may be connected to a spiritual deity. A complex form of continual duality is offered below in an effort to define the spiritual and/or physical association of the names *hōlua* and "*papahōlua*".

The Spiritual Connection to *Hōlua*

The first dual connection occurs with the construction of the sled, or *papahōlua*. The next connection is the joining or combining of the *papahōlua* with the rider, establishing a union of the two physical forms that perform the ritual act of *he'ehōlua*, or sliding on the lava fields or cliffs. As touched on previously, I believe the physical joining of individual and object take on another esoteric dual form that may be sacrificial in nature, in this case a form of self-offering to the god or gods. The significance is in the performance of the ritual act, whereby this is a spiritual joining of human and object meant to be a sacrificial offering to the gods. This is a cultural form of expression that portrays a union between the presumed inanimate object (inanimate by Western standards), person, and gods.

This is an effort to describe the reciprocal nature of the culture and this particular practice that says singularity is non--existent in the native matrix. The concept is simple, in that without one or the other the one alone does not exist. In other words, the performance of a ritualistic act does not occur with a singular entity, object, or individual.

Intricate to this concept of dualism that exists in the practice of *hōlua* are the physical remnants (the constructed slides) that still exist today within the many ancient lava flows, on the slopes of dormant cinder cones, and off the cliffs (*pali*) areas along the coastlines of all the major Hawaiian Islands (Figure 1.). They lay scattered throughout these islands in mute testimony signifying the union that continues to exist between a native people, their lands, and their traditional culture. Why then is *he'ehōlua* assumed to be no more than a just game? Apparently to the majority of early non-native historians and archaeologists, this unique architectural feature held no comprehensive meaning to them. These outsiders only saw the use or practical application of these slides by the native people for recreational purposes, such as racing and gambling. Based on the first account of the practice of *hōlua* given by William Ellis, who makes light of the practice, *hōlua* was just a popular sport of amusement



* Figure 1. Distribution map of holua slides (Tom Stone, Feb. 2001)

performed for many generations.¹ William Ellis is retelling the story of the *Ali'i Kahawali* and his encounter with Pele from Ellis' cultural point of view, but with no comprehension as to the story's cultural significance to the continuous struggle between the forces of nature that is represented by the goddess Pele and the native people, whom their chief represents. This act by the chief is an attempt by *Kahawali* to acquire the *mana* of the land from *Pele*. Ellis does not understand that the challenge of *hōlua* sledding is representative of that and that *Pele* rules over all people of these islands, especially if they reside in the district of *Puna* (with its active volcano). Obviously, Ellis had little knowledge of the practice of *hōlua*. Reflected in his writings is his contempt for such practices, the native people, and their way of life. He characterizes their society and culture as being wretched in comparison to the Christian way of life. In fact, though Ellis and the others who followed received their information by questioning the native people regarding this cultural practice, it is my opinion that the historical information documented or obtained about the slides and *he'ehōlua* have only been secondary – source information. If so, from all the documented information that I uncovered the ritual performance or just the act of riding a *papahōlua* was

¹ Ellis, William. 1979. *Journal of William Ellis: Narrative of a tour of Hawai'i*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company. (p.207)

never actually witnessed in the early years of contact by a foreign person visiting these islands. Why not? Is it possible that a *kapu* (tabu, restriction) was in place? Perhaps this is why the stories continue about *hōlua* being only a sport of the *Ali'i*.

Location and Significance

Approximately 85% of the slides we might view are constructed in extreme locations, such as within ancient 'a'a lava fields, steep mountainsides, and along cliff faces (Figure 1.). In such locations one can only wonder what ancient gods or goddess represented the practice of *hōlua*. Perhaps there existed

the exclusive spiritual connection or recognition of this practice with the female goddess *Pele* or a dual relationship of *Pele* with any one of the other male gods,



* Figure 2. East slope of *hōlua* slide on *Pu'u Pueo* at *Ka'ena Point, O'ahu* (Tom Stone, 1994).

the area chosen for slide construction, and the native peoples in acts of ritualism applied to this practice and deity. There are many historical gaps about *hōlua* that should encourage us to ask questions. As we ask, maybe we need to stop and re-

evaluate the material evidence and earlier studies, in order to further our knowledge about this relatively unknown cultural phenomenon. What we need to do is look for the obvious answers in the most obvious places: the physical and cultural landscape, and the oral history that perpetuates this uniquely native practice. In conjunction with that we intertwine the written accounts from foreign and native sources. Such sources are from native and foreign historians Samuel Kamakau, David Malo, William Ellis, and archaeological studies done on *heiau* by John Stokes and Catherine Summers, with the inclusion of the ancient chants and stories if any. Perhaps then we might begin to get a clearer picture of the high regard and cultural importance of *hōlua*. When we gaze upon such slides laying in silence upon the land, what does our imagination conjure up? From a very Western perspective, what is observed may have no other meaning except that of being a slide, an inanimate object that is a physical construct of the culture, devoid of life. But, from the eyes of the native, a *hōlua* slide is the fluid motion of lava running its course downhill. From a native perspective, the flow was a living form visualized as the living form of the goddess *Pele*. From this imagery the physical form of the molten lava coursing its way down the slope of the mountain undergoes a transformation, whereby the fluid molten rock becomes a tangible bodily form that is the manifestation of a cultural deity. In

this visualized form of molten rock, ancient people set to replicate the act of a god(s) (a volcanic eruption) by constructing *hōlua* slides for reasons of either immortalizing or memorializing the god(s). This sacred act may have been accompanied with a significant offering, perhaps even a human sacrifice. If we accept this train of thought as correct, we might infer that the slides were to the early Hawaiian people more than likely the physical embodiment or representation of *Pele* at a specific time and perhaps of *Kāne*, *Lono*, *Kanaloa*, or *Kū* at another time. The dualistic association of male/female was a realistic part of life in the old time, and quite different, I believe, from the social image created by foreign intervention. If we were to believe that any ritualism exists in the performance of *hōlua*, it would have to be based on the form of the landscape as we imagine the molten lava. It is one of *Pele's* many *kinolau* (physical forms) flowing down the mountainsides and across the lowlands to the sea. As such, in ancient traditions the slide is the physical symbolization of a lava flow that would be a direct association with this deity in defiance, respect, self-sacrifice, in the attainment of *mana*, or as a form of sexual interaction. In a spiritual sense, this establishes a bond between god and person. To a non-native person, this unfamiliarity with Hawaiian lore or spirituality might be considered a myth.

From a native point of view and from the indigenous culture, however, this is reality.

The physical presence, geographically, of the *hōlua* slides still found today in great numbers casts a light on the significance of this female deity in the ritualism of Hawaiian cosmology that has been tragically overlooked. The spiritual and physical exclusion of *Pele* (no specific constructed site for worship) from the religious order of the Hawaiian culture has surely impacted our understanding or comprehension of the ancient world of the Hawaiian. *Hōlua* for these hundreds of years has been assumed to be of lesser importance culturally. What I have found is that *hōlua* provides new cultural information that contradicts earlier western research. Such early research does not account for the interaction of two or more gods that are representative of both the male and female simultaneously existing spiritually in the same cultural space. This is contrary to early reconnaissance that tended to expound on the separation of the male/female cosmological world rather than interdependency. Apparently, this is not the case today with *hōlua* that was a very ritualistic practice. This is significant because it impacts earlier interpretative ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological interpretations of the Hawaiian people and

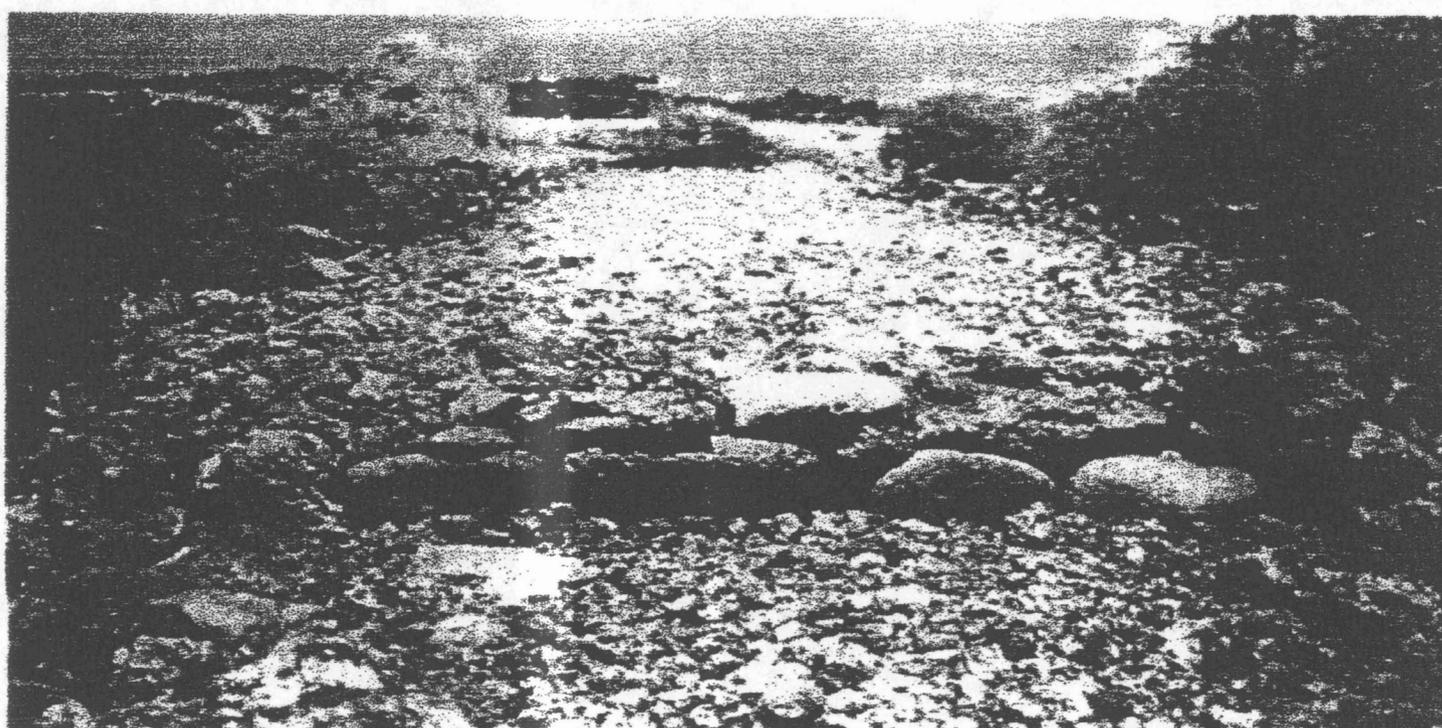
their cosmological relationship to their landscape, and now requires reinterpretation of this landscape and the culture.

Physical Construction of Hōlua Slides

How do we account for these massive architectural undertakings that not only rivaled, but also in some instances surpassed, *heiau* construction in sheer size and detail? The native population had fallen from an estimated number of 800,000 (up to 1 million) inhabitants at the time of first contact to approximately less than 1/3 that number at the time of the Christian missionaries arrival in Hawai'i.² This had been due partly to the introduction of foreign diseases that had run rampant throughout these islands, and by the promotion of Western values and ideals by early traders and missionaries that promoted a cultural upheaval that apparently proved to be devastating to the traditions of the native people. What was noted during this early period of contact is that the native people of Hawai'i had established a highly developed social and technological consciousness, indicated by early foreign observers journals and ship logs, such as Cook, Vancouver, Ellis, and others who followed over time. This is in reference to the architectural feats of construction, such as the *heiau*, slides, and

² Stannard, David, E. Before the Horror – The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Contact. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press. (1984)

the sled or *papahōlua*. This also questioned the energy necessary to build such structures, which we presume required a large population. If we were to account for say the massive slide at *Keauhou, Kona*—which had an approximate length of 4,200' ft. and a width of 60' ft.—there is no doubt that a large group of people were required to construct it.



* Figure 3. *Hōlua Slide at Kapu'a*-view from runway (Stone 1996).

Through experimentation, I set out to try and establish a number required for accomplishing such a task. By working on a smaller slide (approximately 487' ft. in length x 25' ft. in width) in the area of *Kapu'a, South Kona*, with seven individuals we made a valiant attempt at reconstructing a portion of the slide (Figure 3.). In eight hours we were able to restore a section no larger than 25' ft. in width x 10' ft. in length, approximately. This was moving only stone material that we could carry individually, which included bags of gravel. The slide at

Keauhou required the moving of massive boulders and cut slabs of lava rock, not to mention the need to align each stone in order to get a fairly even surface prior to carrying in small surface fill, or accounting for depth and incline. From archaeological surveying of this particular slide, I was able to produce evidence that the majority of large slabs of *pāhoehoe* lava (Figure 4.) had been cut or quarried from the area surrounding this massive slide, which accounted for much of the larger material,



* Figure 4. *Pāhoehoe* type of lava flow. (Stone)
but large stones weighing hundreds of pounds were carried or moved from the shoreline to a much higher elevation.

So, with this information we might be able to deduce that to build a massive slide would take a minimum of two thousand five hundred people working for five years and nine months, approximately. Now that is just one slide on an island coastline that had more than seventeen slides within just one *moku* (district) that still do exist, or were known to have existed at one time prior to modern development. Further study will have to be conducted in order to

present an accurate picture of the population size that may have been required to undertake such an architectural endeavor. Speculation by Edmund Ladd in his 1986 archaeological report on *Hōnaunau* is that this slide and others were constructed well after contact. But this is questionable, based on the existing oral and written historical information that provides no physical evidence to support his hypothesis. The portion of slide that remains today and the existing information (oral and written) would contradict any contemporary themes that imply that these slides were constructed after contact. Ladd infers that the great slide in Keauhou, Kona was constructed by *Pai'ea* (Kamehameha I) in recognition of the birth of his son Kamehameha III (*Kauikeaouli*), but I can find no chants composed by the native people of the time or written accounts from the traders or missionaries present at the time that is supportive of his claim. It has to be remembered that such a massive undertaking for and by a great *Ali'i* would not go unrecorded. It was the tradition of the native people to record in chant any significant undertaking, such as the construction of this great *hōlua* slide for an *Ali'iNui* such as *Kauikeaouli*, and it would not go unnoticed or remembered by the people of these islands. The exact time and for what purpose this great *hōlua* slide and associated *heiau* were constructed still remains a mystery.

CHAPTER 3 STYLIZATION AND FUNCTION

A Form of Ritual Sacrifice

The *hōlua* slides and the *papahōlua*, the structural embodiment of this ancient ritualistic practice, are the only surviving historical remnants left to us to wonder exactly what its importance was to the native culture. The slides and the sleds that were ridden appear to be the unique forms of self-expression for purposes and means that appear to have been intended for self-sacrifice. Perhaps meant to honor or challenge the gods, an individual willingly risked his/her life in an attempt to ride a *papahōlua* successfully down a constructed course or perhaps from a massive cliff face, knowing that any mistake will almost certainly mean death. As such the slides and *papahōlua* remain as the only functional repository of the ancient knowledge of this ritual practice that was apparently important enough culturally to construct them in many regions throughout the islands, allowing us a glimpse into the spiritual interactive relationship of the human form, the constructed object(s), and the landscape. The near decimation of the native population brought the ritualistic performance of *hōlua* sledding and slide construction to the edge of cultural extinction. What is evident in these constructions, based on archaeological evidence, is that no one

understood or comprehended the importance of physical association of architecture, names, and oral histories as a means to determine the probable applications and uses of these relatively unknown and magnificent structures. Even with the physical evidence (burials, association to *heiau*, etc.) staring at these cultural researchers, not one of them ever took notice of the obvious facts (important ones at that) that would have forestalled the destruction of these features. All of the known constructed slides have burials or internments that were, from all appearances, incorporated into the initial construction phase. This phase had never been determined to be significantly important by any researcher. The burials or internments that are found within the foundations of the sliding area or at its beginning and /or end I believe are more than merely simple burials where families just decided to place the deceased. I doubt that the native people randomly selected this particular spot simply because it seemed like a good place for a burial. Not to mention that each of these *lua* or burial pits show methodical preparation and placement of the stones (swirling-circular pattern) and body alignment (direction facing) in a fashion similar to other ritualistic internments found elsewhere. Each slide clearly has a central section for purposes of worship on the same scale as a *heiau* that is within the cultural scheme of things, and for the performance of *he'ehōlua* could be considered a site

of worship. This is contrary to popular belief that we find recorded in the historical material (which is very minimal) – such as *Hawaiian Antiquities* (Malo), *Pele & Hi'iaka* (Emerson), *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* (Kamakau), and others – that promotes *he'ehōlua* as little more than a game played by the natives during the time of *Makahiki*: or the celebration of renewed life, held from October to February. All *hōlua* sites, from what I have found in the collection of these histories, leads me to believe that in one way or another *hōlua* sledding may have been a means of empowerment for the *Ali'i Nui*, commoners (at times), and such gods as *Pele, Kū, Kāne, Lono, Kanaloa*, and others. Empowerment through the practice of *hōlua*, as I see it (based on my own experiences), was the willingness of an individual to place themselves above everyone else by their willingness to face death. Places such as *Kauhako Crater at Makanalua, Kalaupapa, Molokai, Kapu'a, Kona, Ka Lae Kā'ena, O'ahu, Kahikinui, Maui*, the Royal Slide at *Keauhou, Kona – Kāneaka*, and the many other *hōlua* sites were obviously, from all appearances, ritualistic in nature: I assert this based on the physical association of the internments and place for worshipping prior to initiating the practice at a particular area and in compilation with the written and oral histories that remain. The omission of accounting for such significant aspects and unique

features incorporated into the slide structures, and their near equivalence in number to the many *heiau* spread out across the Hawaiian Islands, has resulted in a devaluation of *hōlua* and the slide's structural importance culturally. The sheer physical presence of these *hōlua* slides and their physical association to ancient *heiau* (religious sites), associated burials, and *ki'i pōhaku* (stone figures) obviously suggests that there is a need for a new classification of ritualized structure or *heiau* previously unaccounted for during earlier reconnaissance. The physical integration of slide and *heiau* apparently went unnoticed since the time of contact, and the presentation of these unique complexes continues to be described as separate structures rather than one ritualistic complex, such as that found at *Makanalua* on *Kauhako* Crater, where the slide and *heiau* are obviously integrated.⁵

Hōlua – A Native Construct

Within the native culture there does not exist a separation of one form from the other, especially when they are physically attached. As with this *hōlua* slide and *heiau* they are integrated features physically, of a native construct. They are integrated features maintaining a basic cultural concept of being

⁵ Summers, Catherine, C. *Molokai: A Site Survey*. Hawai'i: Bishop Museum Press, 1971. (p.192 – 193).

reciprocal rather than linear or one dimensional, as erroneously assumed to be from early surveys and inspection of such architectural features (Figure 5.).

Additionally, much of the methodological research of *hōlua* has continued to be based on these early historical records acquired from the many ships journals, missionary letters, trader correspondence, artistic romanticizing, and the like with minimal use or understanding of the native language, way of life, and cultural landscape encountered. William Ellis, Hiram Bingham, Andrew Bloxom, Geogre Amritage, George Bates, Abraham Fornander, and a host of others were the early so-called observers, historians, and researchers whom perhaps may have been somewhat prejudicial in their descriptions and explanations of traditional practices and the ritualistic practice of *hōlua*. Though essential as major sources of historical information, these men's accounts fall short of enlightening us to the ancient practices of the Hawaiians. These are inadequate interpretive sources based on personal cultural values and ideals of what the native society, religion, and acts of ritualism were or were not. These sources devalue the historical importance of *hōlua*, and as such it was allowed to fall to the wayside (Figure 6.). Though there was a basic style to the construction of the slide, its overall design, construction, and distribution were determined by



* Figure 5. *Hōlua* slide marked with arrows & sections of *heiau* are to either side at *Makanalua, Molokai* (Stone).



* Figure 6. *Makanalua-Kauhako* Slide showing method of construction (Stone, 1995).

the spiritual significance given to a particular slide as a *kinolau* (body form) of a particular deity or deities.

The Structural Foundation of Slides

This brief explanation of what the structural foundation of a *hōlua* slide entails requires the reader to dispel any idea that the slides were just a bunch of rocks haphazardly heaped together. To the contrary, the technology that went in to the initial architectural design and construction is an extremely magnificent piece of cultural craftsmanship. It was an ingenious creation when you stop and think about the contemporary views of ancient people as being somewhat primitive from a European mindset. The slide was designed in such a fashion that it allowed for changes to the angle of the slope or for the replacement of rock material without disturbing a larger segment of the slide. It appears that all the slides, with a few exceptions, were constructed with faced dry stone cobbles to a width, height, and thickness in the same manner otherwise reserved for ritual architecture. This form of slide construction was first recorded in 1995 during an archaeological reconnaissance of the slide at a *heiau luakini* complex on the slope of *Kauhako Crater* at *Kalaupapa, Molokai*. This slide mostly dismantled, exhibited a unique feature. Cornerstones outlining the structural foundation (Figure 7.) of

the slide remain, displaying a uniform segmentation in the construction of the slide of equal length and width on all sides. From this it was concluded that the slide might have been constructed in cellular segments similar to the technique of constructing a *heiau*, or a wall. The cornerstones and patterned outline of this part of the slide was compared with the remaining parts of this and other slides. The comparison showed evidence that confirms that each of the segments was



* Figure 7. *Makanalua-Kauhako* Method of Construction (Stone, 1996)

constructed to remain independent of one another yet was simultaneously integrated and supportive of the greater whole of the structure.

In other words, if there was ever a need for renovations on any section of the slide, a particular section could be completely removed without any other

portion (upper or lower) being disturbed. My inspection of the entire slide confirms this. There also are sketches and illustrations of slides done for archaeological purposes, but those do not portray a detailed or realistic design of the slide. The slides are not as linear and straight as depicted in the illustrations I have inserted here, and there were also curves and various obstacles, deliberately incorporated into slides to make it much more challenging ride. The *hōlua* slide at *Kaloko* National Park, Kona, Hawai'i actually has a wall constructed down the center of the sliding area, a very important aspect, which should have been drawn into this picture so that we might get the true symbolism of the slide and what the sledder would have seen when navigating down this slide. So not only do we lose the true sense of the architectural feature, but any depiction of it is lost due to inaccuracies in sketching. All such works should be a true rendition of the architectural feature if we intend to accurately depict and record the feature(s) we are studying, and to do this we must understand the methodology of construction.

The Largest Slides - A Form of Self-Sacrifice?

On another point, it should be noted that not all slides were constructed for what I consider to be ritualistic purposes. Building of a slide for ritualistic purpose required that a strict protocol to be followed and certain *kapu* be in

place, as during times that human sacrifices were made to the gods that Hawaiians worshipped. Based on the research I have conducted it appears that those ritualistic slides were usually the largest and most elaborate structures built, and usually in association to a *heiau* or place of worship. A large structure such as the one found in *Keauhou, Kona*, and aptly named "*Kāneaka*" is perhaps one of the largest constructed features occurring on the Hawaiian landscape. It has an original length of approximately 4,200'ft., width at 60'ft, and a depth varying from ground level to perhaps 6' ft. It is a massive technological engineering feat of the old time that has survived erosion and neglect.

Appearing more like a modern day four-lane highway, this slide (and its name) points to the ritual importance given to it. It rises and falls, winds and twists, in a flowing pattern down the slope of the mountain to a *heiau* located along the sea cliff of *He'eia*. On the island of Maui, in the area of *Kahikinui* a slide complex recently found may rival the *Kāneaka* slide or be the largest architectural creation of the old time. Its overall length has not been confirmed, but it may be over 5,500' ft. in length with one of the most unique characteristics and features built into the slide that would more then challenge the athletic ability of an individual or god. This slide, which I will elaborate on later, was made for two sledders to begin simultaneously on two separate slides, ramps side by side that

were only five feet wide. This is different from most other slides that provided a width that would allow for two individuals to begin on the same slide track.

As I have mentioned, most of the slides found throughout Hawai'i are of similar rock construction. They are identical in basic faced-stone (smooth surface stones) that overlays the initial foundation of *'a'a* or *pāhoehoe* (hardened lava rock of two types) material acquired and transported from the nearby surrounding area, followed by smaller rock or gravel material fill as the second layer, with packed soil or ash as the final top layer to even out the sledding surface. In these slide constructions were found evidence of burials (probably sacrificial) that appear to have been incorporated during the primary construction phase, along with other secondary burials, and a *heiau* or (worshipping place) that completed the complex. The secondary burials may have been those persons who were not successful in their attempts to accurately navigate the slide.

But, each of these slides has their own unique construction characteristics based on the topography of the land, materials available for construction, and the inclusion of obstacles within the design of the slide. The unique design and construction characteristics of slides were dependent on geographical location. Some had walls built through the center of the slide that were of varying length

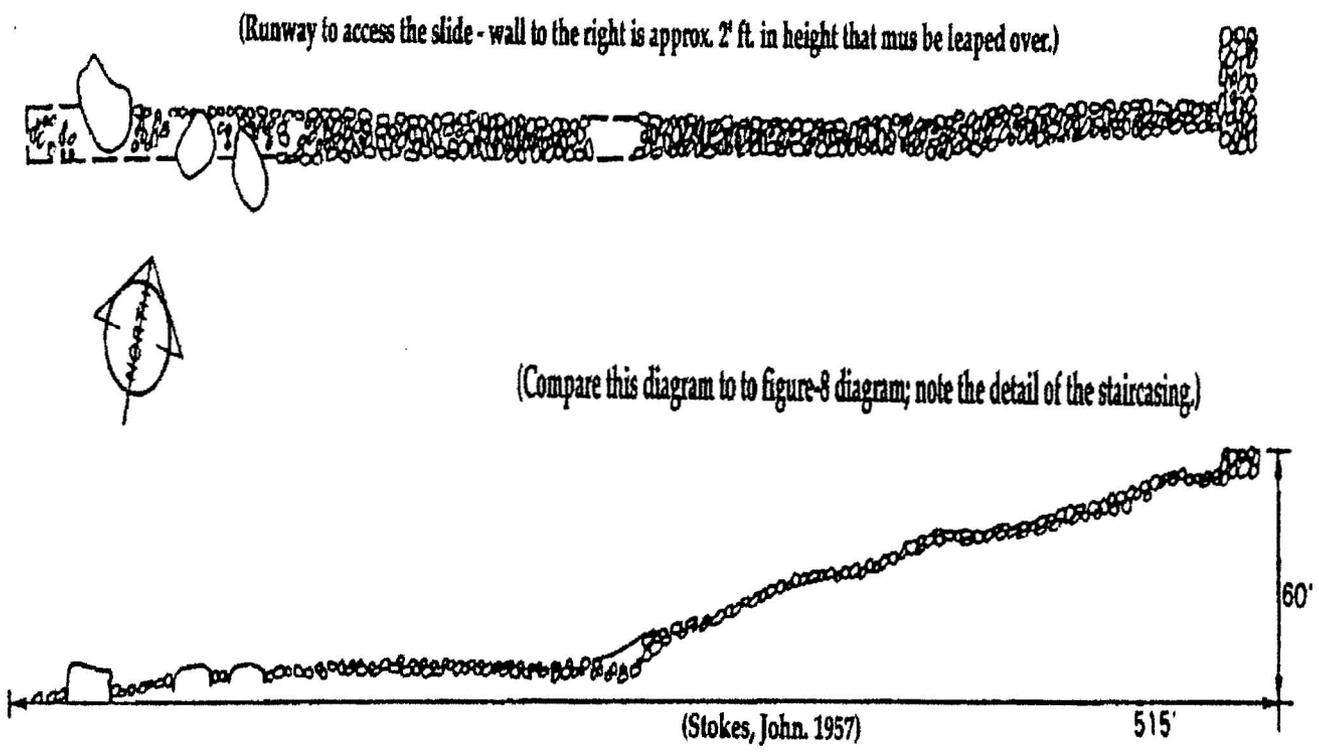
and width, as is found at *Kaloko* National Park, Kona, while others incorporated varying widening or narrowing of the slide, such as that found on the slopes of *Haleakalā* at *Kahikinui*, *Maui*. The use of walls extending from both sides of the slide reduced the width of the slide. This particular slide design at *Kahikinui* forced a rider to maneuver the *papahōlua* through a narrow channel opening between the walls that would injure or kill the rider if they failed to successfully maneuver through it.

This slide begins with a double – ramp feature (one high and one low) that allowed for two participants to take to the slide at once. After the start, the riders were faced with a gauntlet of obstacles, the first being a wall constructed in the center of the sledding path running in a parallel direction with a turn that immediately follows the previous turn. From there the riders found a mound in the center of the slide that they could pass over or to either side, but not far from this point there are two walls entering into the slide course from either side. The intention here appears to have been to minimize the width of the track so that only one sled and rider could pass through at a time if they have navigated the course properly. Once passing safely through this opening, the sledder was immediately met with the steep drop of the next incline, where the rider's speed surely increased significantly while they attempted to maintain a correct course

on a very narrow path. From this description, it becomes obvious that there were severe penalties involved for the slightest miscalculation. There is no diagram or photograph that accurately presents this particular slide.

Other slides featured extreme vertical drops with the incorporation of a change in the angle of a segment of slide, creating something sort of like a staircase effect that is found at the *Keokea* slide at *Hōnaunau*. This is where the rider had to lift or lower the sled accordingly by distributing their weight forward or backward so as not to crash directly into the critical changes in the angle of the slide that can be seen on the slope and at the end of the incline. This slide was somewhat shorter than the large slide located a short distance from this one named *Keokea*. Though basic similarities exist between the various constructed slides, some had unique features that required greater skill by the rider if they were to survive the sledding course. Another *hōlua* slide (*Figure 8.) is located close to the slide described above; this was a long slide and had a design that was radically different. The *Keokea* slide was constructed as a flat surface that probably did not require as much skill and allowed for greater speed and distance, and its structural length and height were significantly greater than what was previously noted above.

* Figure 8. Keokea Hōlua Slide at Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii'i. (Stokes 1957).



Still other slides used a rock base as a foundation at their initial starting points, from which the slide eventually flowed into the existing natural terrain. A unique and consistent feature in the vast majority of the slides is that they end facing the ocean. Exceptions are found in the high mountains of the islands in *Waimea Canyon, Kaua'i, Pala'au – Nānāhoa – Nā 'iwa, Molokai, Hōlualoa at Pu'u Lele iwi, Maui*, and the slide located in *Kalaupapa* on the slope of an ancient crater named *Kauhako*. Like the others mentioned above, the *Kalaupapa* slide is on the south side facing the *pali* (cliff face) of the main island of *Molokai* and obviously away from the ocean. Archaeologists have suggested that these islands of Hawai'i had been settled somewhere between 0 – 300 A.D., which would be considered late in the geological development stage of the islands, but what is noted in the same context is that it does not infer that settlement of the islands did not occur sooner. As Patrick Kirch notes, "The chances of our ever finding the earliest Hawaiian site are, sadly, very low".⁶ My opinion – based on the compilation of historical chants, inferred myths, and in conjunction with the archaeological and geological evidence – is that discovery and occupation of these islands by early Polynesians may have occurred much earlier 0 – 300 A.D.

⁶ Kirch, Patrick, V. *Feather Gods and Fishhooks – An Introduction to Hawaiian Archaeology and Prehistory*. p.67-68.

Is it possible that, due to insufficient data regarding the first settlement of these islands, archaeology has remained inflexible, locked into choosing a singular event or time period in which to “prove” or estimate the settlement history of the Hawaiian Islands? What if we allow ourselves to imagine or computer – image (CGI) what the landscape probably have looked like in this area (*Kalaupapa*) perhaps three thousand years ago in 1,000 B.C. Using computer simulations and geographic data to estimate looked like at the time when maybe the earliest Polynesian voyagers passed through this particular area, perhaps we can better “see” the geological layout of the period, and see today that in 1,000 B.C. an ocean channel separated the peninsula of *Kalaupapa* from the main island of *Molokai* itself. This presents a unique question: was an eruption phase and continued formation of this peninsula witnessed by the early inhabitants of these islands? If so, was it recorded in the oral histories and given a name? And did the eventual construction of a *hōlua* slide and *heiau* acknowledge this geological event?

We know that *Kalaupapa* was formed in the Late Pleistocene Epoch, which ended approximately 8,000 years ago.⁷ This does not mean that volcanic activity had ceased, it just says that the peninsula was formed by that time period and

⁷ Abbott, Agatin, T. and Gordon A. McDonald. *Volcanoes in the Sea: Geology of Hawai'i*.

that the eruptive phase that closed the channel separating this landmass from the main island was more than likely continuous. Is what we see today of the physical landscape at *Kalaupapa* the same as it was during the arrival of the Polynesians as suggested by Western science? Or was it very different? If the Polynesian settlers had arrived earlier than archaeology presumes they did, perhaps the fundamental concept for designing the many *hōlua* slides that dot these islands were a means of recording volcanic activity that was occurring?

From the scant historical information that has come down over time from journals such as Ellis, Bloxam, Bates, and others, it appears there was a logical reason for designing the *hōlua* slides and *papahōlua* in a particular manner, apparently when observed from a native perspective. *Hōlua* was a means of perhaps recounting the geological events (volcanic eruptions) that were occurring at specific locations during a specific time period. An experimentation effort on my part involved the construction and practical application of the *papahōlua* was a way to understand how the relationship between native artifact and a geological event might be associated. I believe that the native intention behind constructing the *papahōlua* was a method to withstand the rigorous demands of the rock material that made up the slide. So too must the slide be structurally sound to withstand the test of time, thereby remaining not only an

integral part of what I would consider a form of ritualism (by acting out the riding of a lava flow), but also it historically recorded the geological event.

William Ellis made no mention of *hōlua* until he had reached the district of *Puna* (located on the eastern side of the island) during his travel around the island of Hawai'i. It was at that time that his native guide told him about the *hōlua* competition that occurred between *Pele* and the *Ali'i Kahawali*, and about the chief's losing the competition to the volcano goddess. Edmund Ladd, during his archaeological excavations at *Hōnaunau, Kona* in 1966 – 68, considered a hypothesis that the five *hōlua* slides constructed there were a post-contact phenomenon. Thereafter he assumed that all *hōlua* slide construction could not have taken place without foreign influence. His hypothesis was based on the reasoning that William Ellis had not mentioned *hōlua* until his arrival in the *Puna* district. To support or disagree with Ladd's hypothesis, I searched native text references (translated from Hawaiian). John Papa 'I'i made no mention at all about *hōlua*, and David Malo's, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, (which Ladd considers incomplete in its references to *hōlua*) is indeed incomplete in my opinion. Ladd felt that every *hōlua* – slide whether it existed in the district or on the island at the time that Ellis made his trek around the island would – have been quite obvious

to such a cultural observer, and since *hōlua* was not noticed Ladd speculates that it therefore could not have been an early cultural practice.⁸ One answer to that is that perhaps at the time of Ellis traveled around the island there may have been a *kapu* placed on the practice of *hōlua*, so Ellis was not meant to know of it. Ladd's theoretical assumption regarding the time of construction of these slides is obviously questionable when we stop and consider the massive amount of labor necessary to construct a *hōlua* slide (large or small), especially such as the one found at *Keauhou, Kona*, in a post-contact period. The post-contact period in Hawaiian history has been a dark time for native people, a time in which the impact of foreign contact devastated our native culture. Thus, I refer to it as "the time of great dying". Therefore, research becomes all the more important because it provides a new insight as to the proper history of *hōlua* and perhaps its pre-contact origins. The re-evaluation of the existing information on *hōlua* directs us to the fact that these slides are definitely of pre-contact in origin. This is an opportunity to reassess early archaeological theories regarding these sites, and explore the broader role that this practice, perhaps ritualistic, probably played in ancient Hawaiian society.

⁸ Ladd, Edmund, J. 1986. Test Excavations at Sites B-105, B-107, and B-108: Archaeology at Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park. (p. 45-53)

Names of Hōlua Slides – Interpretive Significance

In the following section of this paper I offer interpretations of slide names (if known) and the significance of their location geographically as a means of drawing together the parallels that connect the name of a place, the possible ritual application, and if plausible the deity a slide may have represented and why. For example, the great slide at *Keauhou, Kona* mentioned in Samuel Kamakau's, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* is named "*Kāneakā*". Samuel Kamakau is a renowned Hawaiian historian, so the source, I believe, is quite reputable and reliable, but following my own investigation and experimentation I consider the name mentioned for this slide to be suspect because of a possible error in the name when translating Kamakau's original text from Hawaiian to English. Apparently, as it stands now, the name *Kāneakā*, if correct, appears to be in reference to the Hawaiian god *Kāne*. I am not sure about the literal translation referring to this particular deity because Hawaiian words usually have more than one meaning associated with it. There could be more than one definition to this name or word that was not considered. The sheer size of this slide (the largest architectural feature in Hawai'i) implied that it was/is culturally significant to the native populous so the name could be in reference to one of the

most revered ancient gods of the Hawaiian people, but there could also be several other possible definitions. The name *Kaneakā* may be translated as follows, "1) the coming or returning of *Kane*" or " 2) the thrusting, flinging, hurling, dashing, tossing, or the turning of the soil by *Kane*".⁹ Then there are other possible literal translations of the name that I presume to be the most relevant and best describe the physical attributes of this particular *hōlua* slide. In search for a definition, we can also consider the name "*Kane*" as a reference not to the Hawaiian god, but instead it may simply translate as a "man". Hence, though the existing written history may describe the slides and sledding to be in recognition of the male gods (*Kane, Lono, Kū, and Kanaloa*), it is my position that the slides are not merely the physical representation of the *male* gods. I believe these structures to be also the representation of one or more of the *female* gods, with *Pele* as the primary deity represented in the practice of *hōlua*. I will try to explain this concept in the following chapters. I consider the practice of *hōlua* a unisex practice of the old time that in one way united the male/female beliefs through this cultural performance. The female/male relationship that perhaps existed through this medium may have reflected a spiritual convergence and/or

⁹ Pukui, Mary, Kawena & Elbert, Samuel, H. 1986. Hawaiian – English Dictionary. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press.

simultaneous separation of beliefs that was/is commonplace and enduring within the native society as the gods (through various *kahuna* – spiritual leaders) maneuvered for governance of the native people. This is reflective in the old religious structure of the Hawaiian people of the time and their belief in either the *Kumulipō* or *Kumuhonua* that had very different concepts of origin, but yet involved the same gods.¹⁰ The Hawaiian people had or have a very different cultural view of religion from the Western concept, so I would encourage that any Western notions be dispelled when trying to understand the ways of the Hawaiian.

From this concept, the women (as far as I can deduce) are inclusive in the course of this performance. Because it is my premise that they are physically represented by the physical construct of the *hōlua* slide and *papahōlua* (sled), and because the stories (myth or reality?) that live are those told about *Pele* and her exploits with *hōlua* sledding and not of any male gods. These are important points that must be carefully considered regarding this cultural practice. A perfect example of that is the story of the *Ali'i Nui wahine* (female chief) *Kaneamuna* from *Ho'okena, Kona*, who was renowned for her *he'enalu* (surfing) and

¹⁰ Kame'eleihiwa, Lilikalā. 1992. *Native Lands and Foreign Desires – Pehea lā e Pono ai?* Bishop Museum Press: Honolulu.

hōlua sledding. According to Bishop Museum cultural specialists, her 600-year-old *papahōlua*, one of only eleven in existence (from the old time), now resides in the Bishop Museum's Special Collections.¹¹

The Kāneakā Slide

I have also considered another possibility regarding the name *Kāneakā*, and that is perhaps the name is just being pronounced incorrectly, which is not uncommon in this contemporary time. Where, or how, this great slide acquired its name remains a mystery for now, and I have not been able to uncover any other written or oral text. But, besides it being mentioned in "*Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*" (Kamakau), the name was later mentioned to me from the *kūpuna* or community elders present during a community presentation I was making about this great *hōlua* slide at Keauhou, Kona for the Kamehameha Investment Corporation. When I questioned the *kūpuna* (elders) regarding the origin of the name, they had no knowledge except that their elders told it to them, and it became the accepted name of the slide from that day forth. Though my research has not yet revealed the origin of the name or the time the slide was constructed;

¹¹ *The Hawaiian Gazette*. December 8, 1905 issue.

I am confident this will be revealed through source material that has not yet come to my attention.

Even though I believe that the aforementioned might possibly be the correct name, I still want to offer this option – that perhaps the name is not “*Kāneakā*”, but rather “*Kaniakā*”. If my interpretation were correct, the name would mean “the sound or noise that flings, tosses, hurls, strikes, hits, etc”.¹² The similarity in pronunciation implies that there could be another interpretation, which I believe is the correct one that involves a deeper kind of spiritual association between sledder, slide, and gods. This is my perception based on my personal experience constructing and riding the *papahōlua*, as well as my restoration efforts with the slides, though experimental. It is the sound you hear as you ride the *papahōlua* down a slope. I can only attempt to explain this sound from a native perspective – it becomes something tangible that *tosses* you about, which *hits* or *strikes* at you, constantly trying to dislodge you while you attempt to keep the *papahōlua* upright. Determining or questioning the correct name for this slide or any other is difficult, but a person’s perspectives change when riding a *papahōlua*. There is no other way to express this conceptual definition except to

¹² Pukui, Mary, Kawena & Elbert, Samuel, H. 1986. Hawaiian – English Dictionary. Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press.

describe it as if you were literally being hurled or flung from the hilltop. The sound that you hear is that of the wind-rushing past you as you hold steadfast to the sled flying along the ground passing effortlessly through the tall grass down a thousand foot slope or over exposed rock surfaces that wait to rip the very skin from your bones at twenty to forty miles per hour or more. So what is the correct name? Either name if correct, would be quite befitting of this magnificent man-made feature. This invokes, or gives life to, the meaning and names of each slide. In a native world, the name is the spiritual essence that is ritually worshipped.

Hōlua – Acknowledging the Male & Female Gods

In true native fashion perhaps a major god -- usually the male gods *Lono*, *Kane*, *Kū*, and *Kanaloa* -- were ritualistically held in high esteem during the performance of *hōlua* and other ritual ceremonies typically at the time of the *Makahiki*.¹³ But, in the practice of *hōlua*, is it possible that the male gods were not the primary deities worshipped? Perhaps they were only recognized as secondary in conjunction with *Pele* as the primary deity worshipped. It is a possibility that this was the way it actually occurred, and I base this hypothesis

¹³ Malo, David. 1992. *Hawaiian Antiquities*. Bishop Museum Press: Honolulu, Hawai'i.

on the names, the geographical location, and material used for construction of the slides. Any new cultural or archaeological information about *hōlua* has remained minimal since Ellis first reported it in his journal, and over time Western writers have just obscured its history and practice by creating conflicting stories or myths about *hōlua*.

For example, I have read Ellis' first journal report of *hōlua* and compared this to several different versions of the *Pele and Kahawali* story written by Westervelt, Howell, Bingham, Thorpe, Thrum, and others that have been radically altered from the time it was first recorded so that the historical information became more fantasy than fact. Furthermore, Ellis did not fully understand the Hawaiian language, so it is even questionable if Ellis's version is even correct. Despite the language barrier that existed, Western historians may still want to credit Ellis for his language skills, but this does not say he had any realistic understanding of the cultural context except his own. In true Western (i.e., rigid and compartmentalized) fashion, any recording of historical information regarding religious worshipping of the ancient gods by the Hawaiian has always been documented as a practice that involved each god *individually* during certain times of the year. But I believe this to be contradictory to the reality of the native world, because the history tells that worship of gods

was not exclusive to any particular time of year or individual (See "*Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*" by Samuel Kamakau or "*Hawaiian Antiquities*" by David Malo). I will elaborate on this further in this chapter.

Obviously there was worshipping of more than one god (*Lono* and *Kū*) at this particular time in Hawaiian history that apparently no cultural historian, Western or native, has addressed. Believing that various ritual practices invoked one god or another, I see as cultural ignorance based on concepts of worship from Christians who did not understand or believe in the native theology, and who were conditioned by their religious standards. The religious order of duality within the Hawaiian culture -- the female-male, female -- female, or male-male relationship among the gods and people -- I believe was incomprehensible to these Western/Christian interlopers. Within a native culture such as this one, this sense of duality also passed over to the materials used to construct the *kahua hōlua* and *papahōlua*. The materials used reflected the *kinolau* (physical body form) of the different male gods and association of their female counterparts, and was selected appropriately and ritualistically through various forms of offerings made by the native. This ritualistic worshipping was a normal cultural practice that invoked a god (or gods) for various construction projects or specific work to begin (houses, *heiau*, cutting of certain trees, etc.), which was inclusive of the

preparation of food and its consumption.¹⁴ This all signified inclusiveness rather than exclusion or separation of the male–female form of co-existence.

It is apparent to me that the native religious and social order has been misunderstood by early foreign historians and writers based on their personal views of the male–female relationship that exist within their own societies, and this misunderstanding still continues today. We have to keep in mind that for more than a century it was believed that only men, of chiefly lineage, had ever practiced *hōlua*. Various foreign writers and historians have erroneously promoted information until recently, when it was brought to light that many women practiced this ritual of life and death and were actually quite renowned for their prowess at it.

The examples of women who practiced *hōlua* are the female gods such as *Pele*, *Poli'ahu*, *Haumea*, and female *Ali'i Nui* (such as *Kānemuna* of Ho'okena, So. Kona), but what male god is directly associated with this cultural practice has never been alleged in any written or oral information. Apparently, foreign historians (or the few Christianized native writers) of Hawaiian history did not recognize women for their athletic abilities, while the men of the time sadly

¹⁴ Malo, David. 1992. *Hawaiian Antiquities (Mo'olelo Hawai'i)*. Honolulu: Bishop Museum. 81 – 87.

received the historical recognition relevant to *hōlua*. This I have to pass off as selective historical ignorance even though they believed they were correct in their assumptions regarding cultural practices, but it remains a problem that we have to deal with today – correcting the interpretations and replacing the missing segments of our native culture of which *hōlua* is only one.

He Launa'ana o ka Papahōlua me 'Āina

That now brings me to this point: how do I explain from a native perspective the relationship of the *papahōlua* (sled) to the landscape or the medium in which the sledding takes place? It has been promoted and assumed since the foreigner first heard of *hōlua* sledding that it was an act that occurred seasonally. Apparently this was not true. *Hōlua* took place at different times of the year, and such an example can be found in the "*Journals of Toketa*". A Tahitian Christian convert that contradicts the aforementioned assumption, *Toketa* in his journal talks about spending time in *Kahalu'u, Kona* with *Kuakini* for 32 days in May 1822 while a *hōlua* competition was taking place.¹⁵ Note that the month mentioned in his journal is May, which is not a month of *Makahiki*, which

¹⁵ Toketa, "Tahitians in the early history of Hawaiian Christianity: Journal of Toketa", *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 13 (1979): 29 - 30.

extended from October – February. Why did *Malo* or *Kamakau* not consider this is something I still ponder? I can only suspect that they may have been instructed by the missionaries to selectively record specifics about the culture that would account for historical discrepancies. Though *Toketa* does not mention much about the actual practice, it is the only visual account that I believe changes any earlier concept of when it was practiced, because *hōlua* was only heard of and was never actually seen being performed by any other person in recorded history.

The Makahiki

Hence, if we attempt to hold to this myth that the act of *hōlua* was a practice that occurred only at the time of *Lono* or the *Makahiki* season, we will continue to perpetuate this myth. We know that this was the time when the native people were relieved of the many *kapu*. It was also a time when the native people celebrated agriculture and fertility by participating in what was referred to as games.¹⁶ This is the time of the rainy seasons during the months of October to late January early February, depending on what island you were on. It was a time when, presumably, there were no tribal conflicts taking place, a time of

¹⁶ Malo, David. 1992. *Hawaiian Antiquities*. Honolulu, Hawai'i: Bishop Museum Press. 141.

peace. In my effort to revitalize the practice of *hōlua*, I then would have to argue that this written historical information is not entirely correct. Based on the surviving oral and written accounts, Captain James Cook arrived in these islands twice during the time of the *Makahiki* season: a time of supposedly no conflicts, but this is untrue if we accept as truth the written historical records.

The first arrival of Cook was at the island of *Kaua'i* (January 1778) during the reign of the *Ali'i Nui Ka'eo*. The other when he was sighted off of the island of Maui (November 1778, i.e., during the *Makahiki*) when *Kalaniopu'u* (the *Ali'i Nui* of Hawai'i Island) was doing battle with *Kahekili* (the *Ali'i Nui* of Maui). This battle during *Makahiki* debunks the myth that the practice of *hōlua* and the *Makahiki* occurred only during peacetime.¹⁷ The other months were reserved for *Kū* (the god of war), but there is more to *Kū* than just war; this will be discussed somewhat later because this male god does have some relevance to *hōlua*.

Hōlua – A Form of Ritualism

In this discussion of gods and the primary focus on *Pele* worshipping as a function of *hōlua* perhaps as of appeasement or to challenge this deity, as well as the other gods. The paramount chiefs and commoner alike would ride down the

¹⁷ Kamakau, Samuel, M. 1992. *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press. 92- 98.

massive slides constructed out of *'a'a* or *pahoehoe* (volcanic rock) as perhaps a ritualistic performance of honoring or challenging *Pele* and the other gods. This would either be in life or in death depending on their skill and ability to navigate the length of the slide to the sea or reach the end of it. In a native culture such as this one it is important to understand the relationship that existed between the actual physical element such as the constructed slides made from the lava rock material and to the particular god or gods who are the embodiment of the physical construct – the slide. In the Hawaiian world this would be in reference to one of the *"kinolau"* or body form(s) of the gods. So, since most of the slides obviously are in ancient lava fields, *hōlua's* primary *akua* would have to be *Pele*, the living embodiment of the natural forces of the volcano. Imagine the Hawaiians of old attempting to simulate the flow of lava in the construction of the slide as it slithered down the mountain in a form that symbolizes her and her *mana*. It is possible then that the slide would be considered a *kinolau* (body form) of *Pele*. The slide would also be a representation of the female construct, a physical feature representative of the female that is integrated with the male form of, perhaps, the Hawaiian gods *Kū*, *Lono*, or *Kane*. The many naturally occurring and constructed objects (phallic stones, burials, etc.) that we find at most slides are representative of these male gods. There is a sense that at these

places there exists a relationship of duality or sharing of space, but it is apparent that in this co-existence the male gods are secondary, though very much a necessary part of the cultural construct. The slide built in the lava field is in all respects the physical representation or physical form of *Pele*. From my study of the *hōlua* slides – primarily those built in lava fields, ancient craters, shear cliffs, and on the vertical slopes of mountains (that is, almost all of them that I know of) – I can say that they are in all respects the physical form of *Pele*. The *papahōlua* represents the method applied from which offerings (I believe sacrificial in nature) would have been made by the willingness of a person (male or female) to leap on to one of these sleds and slides, where life is for those who successfully rode the slide, and death (or severe physical injury) for those who did not.¹⁸

Why such evidence has been ignored is difficult to understand. Perhaps it has been due to the way the native culture has been recorded by the early foreigners, presented from a male perspective and a society totally alien to the native one of the islands. Thus, when they wrote about the native culture, perhaps they assumed it to be a male dominated society, where women were subservient even within the realm of the gods. This subservient role of women,

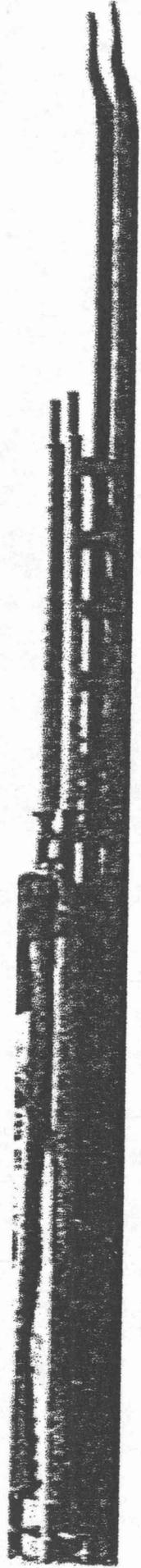
¹⁸ Kamakau, Samuel, M. 1992. *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press. 242.

we are aware of today, was definitely a reflection of a Western white male society at the time, rather than an accurate reflection of Hawaiian society and the mutually supportive female/male relationship that probably existed. This cultural aspect is now being scrutinized through this research that reflects that a female/male dualistic society was probably the norm, and that a form of gender equality was always present within the culture. When we look at surviving evidence (physical, written, and oral) the cultural intent in Hawaiian society was not to separate one from the other, male versus female. Instead, through the medium of *hōlua*, we might catch a glimpse of or begin to understand the working mechanics of (and/or the philosophical significance of dualism within) the cosmological framework of the Hawaiian culture.

Dualism was an important factor and became apparent to me when I began practicing *hōlua*. I realized the direct involvement of the gods in this ritualistic performance, though on varying levels. In understanding what I previously mentioned, regarding the link to the gods and self-sacrifice, the body of the *papahōlua* and rider in this practice would then be considered a *mōhai* or sacrificial offering. "How so"? Might be the question here. Before attempting to answer that, I would like to make clear that this was by all appearances an offering that was not forced upon an individual when they decided to make the

long descent down one of the great slides. Rather, it was performed freely in acceptance to and in honor of *Pele* and all the other gods, or as a means of acquiring “*mana*” or spiritual empowerment by successfully riding one of these slides. To understand how the *papahōlua* and human rider are considered the offering, without actually having ridden one, you must understand the cultural principals of the *mōhai*.

The *mōhai*, as defined, is a unique form of offering a gift to the gods at a *heiau* or other religious site, or to great chiefs that required a person to be prostrated in a manner that physically resembles the *papahōlua* (Figure 9). To comprehend this form of offering, imagine you are going from an upright (standing) position to a kneeling position, and then to a prone position, without dropping the offering held in the palms of your hands (such as a cup or bowl of *‘awa*), and in a manner that maintains a specific body posture while lowering oneself to the ground. In other words, you are moving from standing to kneeling, and then with the back of your hands supporting your weight you slide forward into a face-down laying position. If you can envision or comprehend this ritualistic act, the *papahōlua* in its design is representative of the actual body form of this ritualistic process. The front or forward section of the



* Figure 9. *Papahōlua – ka mōhai* - an offering to the gods.

papahōlua is its arms and hands that are outstretched, the rear section is its feet and toes pointed down to the ground that is representative of you. So, while a person has gone from a standing position to a kneeling position, they would (in the same principle design as the *papahōlua*) extend forward on to the back of their hands so as to lift the knees off the ground with just the toes and hands while supporting their body. Imagine if you were this object, the *papahōlua*. You would then slide forward on to the back of your hands, while maintaining the balance of the offering (to drop it would mean certain death). Then, keeping your belly flat and your back straight, you reach forward until you have completely laid flat, face down, on the ground. Then, with your hands and arms extended forward and upward, you make the offering with the desire that the chief, Pele, or another god receive it honorably. Thus, if the *papahōlua* was the person, and you, (the human rider) are the sacrificial offering being supported on the back of the *papahōlua* (where you would position yourself when riding), that would be the body (laying flat on its stomach) with its arms and hands extended; you are the *papahōlua* offering yourself up to the gods.

Again, this explanation of the prostration ritual is from a native perspective. This interpretation is presented, and this concept is supported by, the physical evidence (*papahōlua and kahuahōlua*) and oral history of the

Hawaiians. To cover this concept any further is another story in itself so rather than expand any further on this particular aspect of the subject, I would rather move onto the immense distribution of these *kahuahōlua* (slides), because they are known to have existed in great number on almost every island.

CHAPTER 4
**PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HÖLUA
SLIDES**

Architectural Technique

How do we account for these massive architectural undertakings that not only rivaled, but in some instances surpassed, *heiau* construction in sheer size and detail? The native population having fallen from an estimated number of 800,000 (up to 1 million) inhabitants at the time of first contact, to approximately less than 1/3 that number at the time the Christian missionaries arrived in Hawai'i.¹⁹ The native population decline was due partly to the introduction of foreign diseases, which ran rampant throughout these islands, and by the promotion of Western values and ideals by early traders and missionaries. This furthered a disruption in their culture that apparently proved to be devastating to the traditions of the native people.

What early foreigners to these islands, beginning with Captain James Cook's arrival, noted is that the native people of Hawai'i had established a highly developed social and technological consciousness, which was indicated by their journals and ship logs. This is in reference to the architectural feats of

¹⁹ Stannard, David, E. *Before the Horror – The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Contact*. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press. (1984)

construction, that included most the *heiau* (sites of worship), *kauhale* (homes and villages), some slides, and the *papahōlua* (sled). The size and scale of these structures stirred me to ask the question – how much energy did it take to build such structures? My presumption based on experimentation, is that it required a large population.

When I looked at the massive *hōlua* slide at *Keauhou, Kona* – which had an approximate length of 4,200 feet and a width of 60 feet – there is no doubt to me that a large group of people were required to construct it. So, I set out to recreate this ancient feat of construction by: 1) randomly determining the number of people that may have been required to accomplish this task; 2) locating the material needed to for the restoration of the structure; 3) transportation of this material from one location to the other. For this experimentation I decided to work on a smaller slide (approximately 487 feet in length x 25 feet in width) in the area of *Kapu'a, South Kona*, with seven individuals we made a valiant attempt at reconstructing a portion of the slide (See Figure - 3.). The outcome of this experiment after eight hours, we had restored a section no larger than 25' ft. in width x 10' ft. in length, approximately. This was moving only stone material that we could carry individually, which included bags of gravel.

The slide at *Keauhou* required the moving of massive boulders and cut slabs of lava rock, accounting for depth, incline, and the need to align each stone in an orderly fashion to get a fairly even surface prior to carrying in small surface fill. From archaeological surveying of this particular slide (*Kāneakā*), I was able to produce evidence that the majority of large slabs of *pāhoehoe* lava (See Figure – 4.) had been cut or quarried from the area surrounding this massive slide. This accounted for much of the larger material of that type, but large boulders weighing hundreds of pounds were also carried or moved from the shoreline and incorporated at the higher elevations of the slide. So, with this information I was able to reason, that to build a massive slide such as *Kāneakā*, would take approximately two thousand-five hundred people working for five years and nine months. Now that is just one slide on an island coastline that has more than seventeen slides within just one *moku* (district) that still do exist, and other slides that were known to have existed at one time prior to modern development.

Further study will have to be conducted in order to present an accurate picture of the population size that may have been required to undertake such an architectural endeavor. Early speculation by Edmund Ladd about *hōlua* and the slides came in his 1986 archaeological report on *Hōnaunau*. Ladd, speculates that

this slide (*Kāneakā*) and others were constructed well after contact. But this is questionable, if not impossible, based on the existing oral and written historical information that provides no physical evidence to support his hypothesis. The upper two thousand-seven hundred foot portion of slide that remains today, the existing information (oral and written), and the experimentation conducted my group would contradict any contemporary themes that would imply that these slides and the practice are post-contact.

Edmund Ladd continues to infer in his research that the great slide at *Keauhou, Kona (Kāneakā)* was constructed by *Pai'ea* (Kamehameha I), in recognition of the birth of his son Kamehameha III (*Kauikeaouli*). As of this time I have been unable to locate any chants composed by the native people of the time, or written accounts from traders, merchants, and missionaries present during the period Ladd claims this slide was constructed. An important note, culturally, is that such a massive undertaking for and by a great *Ali'i Nui* (chief) would not go unrecorded. It is a tradition of native peoples to record in chants any significant undertaking, such as the construction of this great *hōlua* slide or important *heiau*.

If we look at the physical landscape and the number of constructed slides that exist or did exist prior to rampant development, the count is staggering. The architectural structures entailed many man-hours to construct and with the

presumed significant ritualism conferred to *hōlua* it is just inconceivable to imagine that *hōlua* has been considered simply - a game played by the native's just fun. This pattern of thought serves to minimize the significance of their cultural practices, thereby rendering need to preserve the physical and cultural landscape.

Obviously, this needs to be reconsidered when we realize that not one of the many archaeologists and historians who took the time to evaluate the importance or unimportance of this practice and its related structures had any inkling as to its cultural significance. The Native Hawaiians are recognized as intelligent and knowledgeable people who are revered for their navigational and architectural abilities and prowess by our modern world. Why then have we been reduced, the Hawaiian Native, to a level of ignorance when it comes to the preservation of our native structures? As a native, we have navigated the Pacific, mastered the seas and stars in the same way that we now drive around the island. So, why would we not understand our own culture, our native technological methods and techniques of construction (and restoration)? We understand its sacredness -- special and finite; a place shaped by "our" Hawaiian values. We are aware, that the remaining structures (of our ancestors) are the

cosmological cornerstones to our Hawaiian essence and lifestyle. We have not forgotten how to “*malama iā lākou*” (care for them).

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution of the many slides from early surveys indicate that they were found on all the major Hawaiian Islands, though there is still a need to confirm whether any were constructed on the islands of *Kaho'olawe* and *Ni'ihau*. New information for *Lāna'i* regarding the practice of *hōlua* has been provided by archaeologist Boyd Dixon, who recently surveyed the archaeological remnants on the island. Dixon's survey partially confirms my suspicion that at least one slide had existed prior to its destruction by the early pineapple interest. In order to fully verify this, a physical survey must be conducted to either confirm or rule out the possibility of that.

Regarding the wide distribution of the slides throughout *Hawai'i*, those that are known to have existed and those that still exist are abundantly prevalent across these islands and are culturally significant (See map – Figure 1.). Why, then, were these majestic structures – apparently so abundant on the land, with an obvious ritual association categorized as inconsequential (culturally)? This is a question that perplexes me. What was, or is, the research methodology applied

to determine what portions of the physical and cultural landscape would be investigated and recorded for future generations? I have inquired, but no one seems to know or have an answer to what criteria were used for the process of selection or delineation of pertinent information about the physical landscape and the cultural history, except that someone took interest in that particular aspect or feature of the landscape and deemed it to be relevant to history of the native culture. Such questions are endless as I search for the answers by the practical application of *hōlua* as a means to understanding this ancient practice in an effort to find answers to these questions. I decided to dedicate a portion of this research on *hōlua* to describing the ritual athleticism and competitive feats of the Hawaiian that is legendary, as performed by the *Ali'i Nui* (chiefs), *nā koa* (warriors), and *maka'āinana* (commoners).

The purposes of such ritual performances were to formally acknowledge the existence of the gods and goddesses and their religious significance to the people. One popular "arena" of religious competition was the ritualized athletic performance of *he'ehōlua* (or the riding of) a *papahōlua* (wooden sled) down a *kahuahōlua* (or steep stone ramp way) constructed usually within 'a'a lava fields (*Figure 10.) that can be found in abundance on the island of Hawai'i, on the slopes of ancient craters, steep mountain faces, and cliff sides.

The constructed lava or faced rock *kahuahōlua*, or slides, found on most of the major islands – except for *Lāna‘i, Ni‘ihau, and Kaho‘olawe* – were covered lightly with *pili* grass (a grass native to Hawai‘i)²⁰ or *nā pua o ke kō* (flowers of the sugarcane) (See – Figure 3.).²¹ Every slide was unique in design and method of construction (with the exception of the basic foundation), depending on available materials and terrain, while the sled itself (also of unique design and construction) remained quite constant, with variations, mostly in length. Based on my experimentation with *hōlua*, it is my opinion that the construction of the sled and slide showed no technological deviation over hundreds (or perhaps thousands) of years because both performed exactly the way it they were intended to. Also I, reason, from a cultural point of view, that this consistency in design was due to the intimate relationship established between the objects built (sled and slide) and the person, which forms a bond linking the spiritual and physical construct of the body and the object thereby creating a duality (or the combining of the two forms) to create one living entity. Remember that I did stress that this opinion is from a cultural or native point of view, and in order to

²⁰ Malo, David. *Hawaiian Antiquities* p. 23.

²¹ Puku‘i, Mary, Kawena. *‘Ōlelo No‘eau – Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetic Sayings*. p.295; 2703.



* Figure 10. 'A'a Lava Flow (Stone).

comprehend this concept a person has to discard the learned contemporary notions that such bonds cannot occur.

Some of these ancient constructed sleds in the Special Collections of the Bishop Museum are estimated to be over 600 years old, and the remaining slides we know through archaeological reconnaissance were more than 4,000 feet in length. That they still survive today exemplifies the ritual prominence of *he'ehōlua* here in Hawai'i, and that of other Oceanic island societies, such as Aotearoa, Tahiti, Mangareva (Elsdon Best, Edward Tregear, & William Ellis), and Rapa Nui (Patricia Allen).

Based on surveys conducted and practical experience, I present the following observations and comments with some accompanying illustrations to the geographical location of various slides. My basic map (Appendix - A) gives the number of *hōlua* slides found on each island. I have also provided brief descriptions of selected slides on each of these islands, the condition of these slides, type (natural, terraformed, constructed), and the importance of their association to the surrounding environment. I will begin these descriptions with the island of Kaua'i, which is the northern most inhabited Hawaiian island, and finish at Hawai'i Island, which is the southern most island in the chain. Then I

will present an opinion as to what this all means culturally when taken as a whole.

During my research of this ancient practice, I had the opportunity to visit nearly every known *hōlua* slide on the islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Molokai, Maui, Lāna'i, and Hawai'i. There are several more that have recently been brought to my attention; though I have not had the opportunity to personally inspect them all, the descriptive information I received from informants after talking with them makes me confident that they are *hōlua* slides with the same similarities in design and construction as all the others that I have seen. What is disturbing and relevant to this research is the unwillingness of the Robinson family to allow anyone to perform archaeological or cultural site survey of the island of *Ni'ihau*. Unless we as cultural researchers are allowed access to this island for verification and accounting, preservation of our native cultural sites will be virtually impossible, and we will never know if *hōlua* was practiced on this island or not.

As for Kaho'olawe, what was perhaps once there is more than likely lost forever due to the insensitivity of the military and federal government, compounded by the years of missionary and other foreign influences to have us, the native people, abandon our native ways and cultural history. This amounted to the almost complete destruction of the island's architectural features. Though

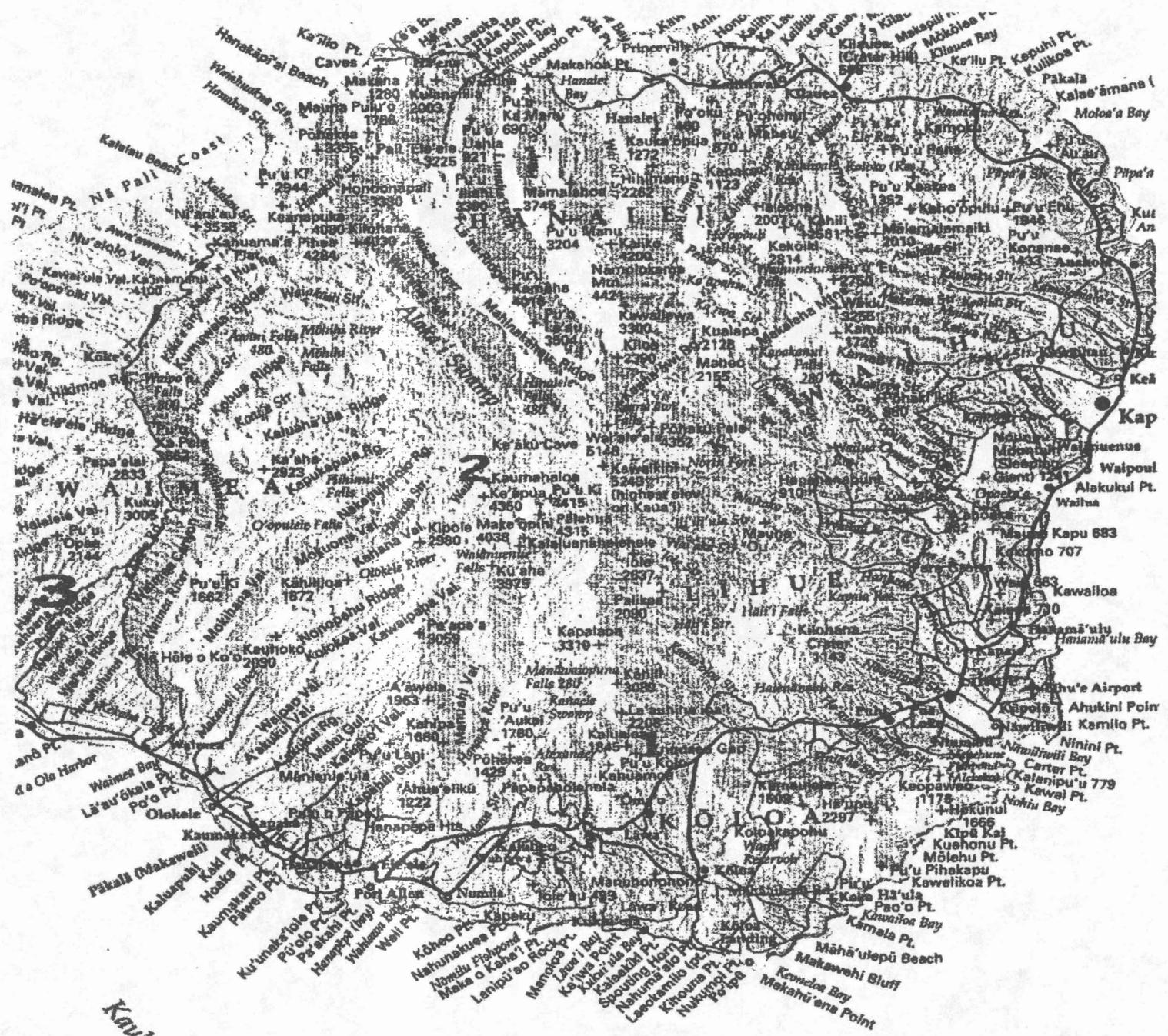
they indicate that cultural practices were conducted regularly on this island, what remains physically does not truly encompass the greater whole of what did exist at a particular time in our native history on that island. Hence, unless there is any documentation I have not encountered in oral or written form, we might never know if a *hōlua* slide complex existed on this island either.

On *Kaua'i* it appears that the three (3) known slides are all located on the leeward or southern side of the island, but it does not eliminate the possibility that such slides were also quite common on the windward or northeastern sides of this island as it is for the other larger islands (*Figure 11.). The slide at *Pu'u Hewa* (1) had a raised platform and was of laid faced stone construction similar to the *Mānā* (3) slide, but the slide of (2) *Kahōluamano* (or *Kahōluamanu*) was an integrated natural terrain and laid stone slide similar to slides found on the other islands. The first two slides (sites 1 and 3 on map) have only partial remnants of the slide remaining and have almost been completely decimated over the years by the interest of the now defunct sugar plantations. The slide of *Kahōluamano* (Site – 2 on map), as I will refer to this slide, is very isolated and its location is in the far back of *Waimea Canyon*. The slides might never have been known to exist

if it was not for brief mentions in early journals and archaeological reports done in the 1960's that marked the location of the *Pu'u Hewa* slide.

The *Pu'u Hewa* slide, or what is left of it, had been archaeologically recorded by Francis Ching during a site survey in the early 60's and is mentioned on the State of Hawai'i – Island of Kaua'i map. The slide is located in a sugarcane field within the district of *Kōloa* on the upper slopes. The other slide is located in the back of *Waimea* Canyon on a cliff face (or *pali*) and is aptly named in Hawaiian *Kahōluamano* or (“the place of the many *hōlua* slides or the slide of the shark”) or *Kahōluamanu* (“the slide of the bird”) depending on which name is applied (See – Figure 11.). There is very little historical information regarding this slide that is now degraded due to neglect over time. There is at least one story written by George T. Armitage about this slide and a young boy named *Manu* that enjoyed the thrill of riding this high cliff against the wishes of his parents and their efforts to stop him.²² Their efforts proved unsuccessful, and *Manu* went on to become Kaua'i's renowned *hōlua* sledder and probably was renowned throughout the islands of Hawai'i for his prowess. Mary Kawena Puku'i also recounts another story about this *hōlua* slide and *Hōlua – Manu*

²² Armitage, George, T. *Ghost Dog and Other Stories*, p.103.



* Figure 11. Kaua'i Island map - location of *hōlua* slides (Atlas of Hawai'i, Third Edition, 1998).

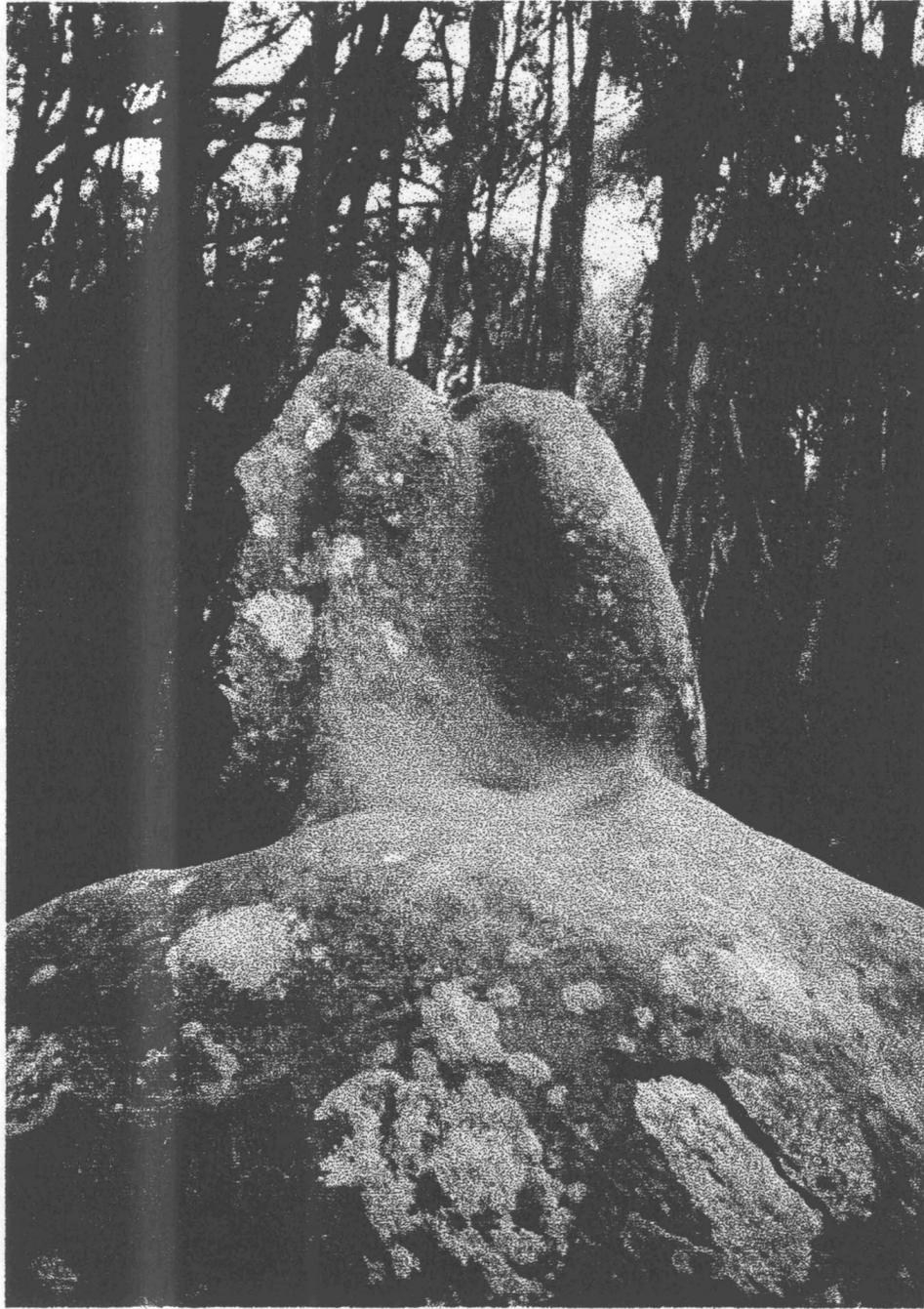
in "Tales of the *Menehune*".²³ This slide is located in the far eastern back corner of the canyon. Though difficult to access, the opportunity to see the area and remnants of this slide would make it easier to understand why the contradiction in names given, and stories told about, this particular slide existed when George Armitage wrote his story of the practice of *hōlua*. Rising from the floor of the canyon to a height of 3,700' feet, this slide is no doubt one of the ultimate slides to have existed, and surely required the rider to prepare himself or herself for self - sacrifice. This slide is constructed of partially laid faced stone integrated into the natural terrain of the slope or the cliff similar to what is found on O'ahu and Molokai, so I would have to designate this slide as terraformed in design. I have not established if this slide has a *heiau* and burial association because of the difficulty in surveying the area due to its remoteness, but I assume it would.

Further west of the small town or community of *Kekaha* is *Mānā*, where a slide once existed extending from the cliff face of *Pūlehu Ridge* into the plains below. It appears to have had an approximate elevation of 70' feet and a sliding surface that may have been at least 600' feet in length, with a width of about 8' feet, from what remains. The slide has since been destroyed during the planting

²³ Puku'i, Mary, Kawena, *Tales of the Menehune*, p. 73 -75.

of sugar cane and when it was cut in two separate places for a water irrigation system with all the rocks from the slide used for the ditch that at one time transported water from the mountainous area of *Kōke'e* to these dry lowlands for the sugarcane fields. But now, with the sugar industry dead and gone, the cultural devastation it leaves behind is immense and quite obvious when I looked at this slide, and wondered how much more of our cultural landscape was lost due to foreign economic interest that we may never know about. I have very little information as to what the slide actually looked like, but from the looks of the remnants that exist in the upper section, similar other slides there more than likely were some slight variations in design, but it exhibited the same faced stone construction traits – raised fitted stone and soil packing – but with minute differences based on the ritual significance of the slide to the surrounding area it is (or was) constructed in. This particular slide in *Mānā* has a very unique characteristic feature, a protruding red rock. This rock is an “*ule*” or penis resembling an erect male penis and is similar to that found on *Pu'ulua*, in the district of *Pala'au* on the island of Molokai, near the *Kalaupapa / Kalawao* lookout named *Kauleonānāhoa* (*Figure 12.).²⁴

²⁴ *Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. “ule”.

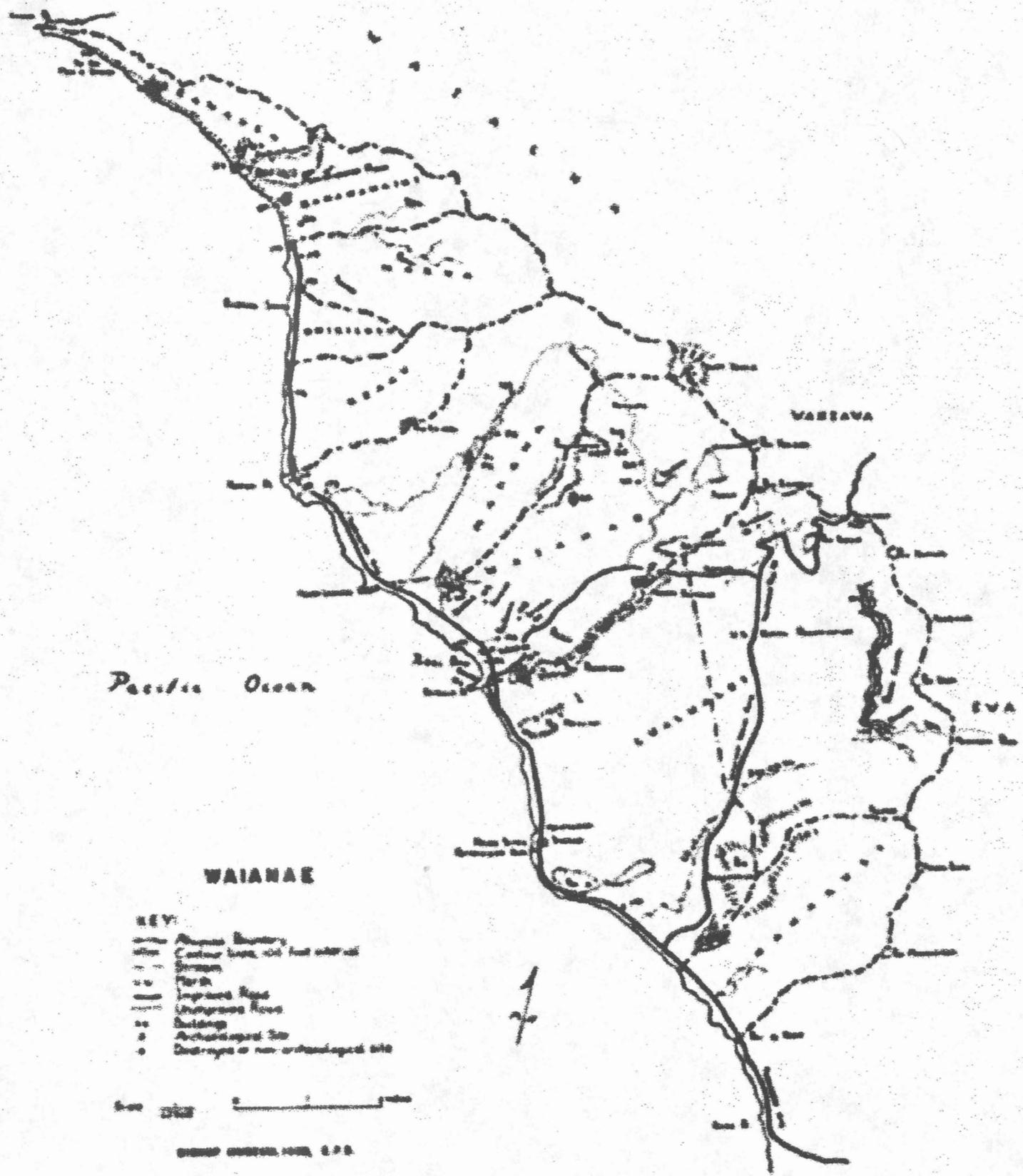


* Figure 12. *Kaulenānāhoa* at *Pala'au*, *Molokai*. (Stone)

The symbolization of this *pōhaku 'ula* (or red stone) is that it protrudes from the cliff face where, if you look closely enough, there is an entrance to a concealed cave, where the *'iwi* or bones of our ancestors are kept stacked individually within the cave. I point out the altered stone protrusion and burial cave because of this occurrence at all slides and the importance bestowed upon the performance of *hōlua*, which portrays that ritualistic concept existed in the planning and construction of the slide, with the choice of area for the slide to be built, and its association physically with the burial cave and rock protruding from the cliff face. If *hōlua* were a cultural practice void of ritualism and only a simple game, as has been the belief since contact, then why would the ancient people construct the slide in a similar fashion, in association with burials, and the pageantry consistent with ritualistic performances usually reserved for worshipping at a *heiau*? When looking at this particular slide, I had to account for what is missing or had not been recorded on the plains below this area. Did a *heiau* exist at one time in close proximity to the slide or in alignment with the slide but further away along the coastline? I do not know, because the entire landscape has been devastated and its cultural history lost for all eternity. It is these missing factors that do not allow for a definitive answer regarding this

slide and the environment it was originally constructed in, only speculation that should not be taken lightly.

On the island *O'ahu* I would assume there existed many slides of varying sizes and design, but very few are in existence today, and what is left is in complete disrepair. Most of the *hōlua* slides were magnificent features on the land, in the old time, from all remaining physical accounts. As one of the known *hōlua* slides on *O'ahu* that is similar in design to *Pu'ukahōluamano*, *Pu'u Lele iwi*, *Kahikinui*, and *Kānekā* is the slide located at *Kā'ena* Point in the gorge of *Alau*, which is the northwestern tip of the island on a section of mountain named *Pu'u Pueo*, with the name of the slide lost in time (Figure 13.). This slide is on the *Wai'alua* side of *Kuaokalā* (back of the sun), an area that is part of the *Wai'ānae* mountain range that faces north and approximately one and one-half miles from roads end heading west-northwest from the town of *Wai'alua*. There are many old stories about the ancient gods, chiefs, and people of this place. Here, in the name chants of *Pele* and *Hi'iaka*, are found or have been recorded the many names of *heiau* that at one time existed in this area; the name chants recount the historical passage (physically) of these two sisters on their voyages between this



*Figure 13. *Pu'u Pueo* (Ka'ena Point) and *Pu'u Pāhe'ehe'e Hōlua Slides* (Poka'i Bay, Wai'ānae).

island, the northern islands, and their island home of *Hawai'i*.²⁵ Also in this area is a *hōlua* slide that in modern times has been referred to as “Prinnles Slide” by archaeologist John F. G. Stokes through informant Oscar Cox, who had spoken with a native named *Aila*, of the *Wai'ānae* district, regarding this slide. As it was told to him, Cox conveyed the information to Stokes that *Aila* did not know of the slide's existence, neither confirming nor denying its existence. But his son Henry offered an account that it was built to haul tractors and equipment up the cliff while a switch-back road was being built simultaneously, but this information was never been confirmed by the original investigator or by any other archaeological survey.²⁶ The slide may very well have been unknown to *Aila* and his son at the time (1933) due: to the time that had passed since it was probably used; a *kapu* placed on such traditional ritualistic practices following the missionary intervention; and the fact that the native informants were not from the *Wai'alua* district, so may they not have been privy to certain ritual information regarding the area. Consequently, for years it was assumed that this particular structure was built by a man named Prinnle, as a lift to haul supplies up the side of the mountain to his pineapple plantation and to lower the

²⁵ Emerson, Nathaniel, B., *Pele and Hiyiaka – A Myth from Hawaiyi*, p. ix – xvi.

²⁶ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 96 – 97.

pineapple to the railway below; it was therefore aptly named *Prinnle's Slide*, but my research has revealed that this was not the case.

Rather, I believe that Prinnle saw the possible advantages of using the existing *hōlua* slide as a means to move equipment for the construction of the road and access to the plantation on the summit. But the use of the slide for this purpose was never fully realized because it fell well short of the summit and was not adequate for his needs in the end. Also, with my survey of the site and that of earlier archaeological surveys by civilians and military, there has never been any physical supporting evidence produced by these various archaeological inspections to support the theory that the slide was a modern construction. I argued against this point with archaeologist Tom Dye from the Historic Presrvations Office. Dye was at the time one of the last archaeological investigators who could not produce any physical information to support the Prinnle hypothesis either. My site survey of this *hōlua* slide also revealed that early surveys could not produce evidence of mechanical pullings or post holes to support the theory that this feature had been a post-contact archaeological feaure used for contemporary purposes, such as hauling equipment and supplies up and down this ridge. In contradiction to the archaeological reports previously produced, I argued that the existing or non-existing evidence proved that this

was a structure made well before western contact. The argument is based on the fact that the overall structure is constructed in the same form as all the other slides found throughout *Hawai'i* and that there exists no evidence produced to support modern construction. The slide has a staging or preparation platform at its uppermost level where the sledder sized up his proposed angle of descent



* Figure 14. *He'ehōlua*, Ka'ena Point, O'ahu (Stone).

before leaping on to the slide (Figure 14). A survey of the lower section revealed (covered by brush) an organized stone-paved area spreading (or widening) of the slide face so that, as the rider neared the bottom of the slide during the descent, it provided the sledder sufficient room to maneuver, at a high rate of speed, his sled to a selection of drop offs into coves that did exist before construction of the railway through the area.

During these early archaeological investigations, it was never considered how the various oral histories, place names, and features were related except in a romanticized style. *Ka'ena Point* has names mostly associated with *Pele* and *Hi'iaka*, but does include stories of *Kaua'i*, the demi-god *Maui*, and *Ka'ena*. From

an interpretation of mine, a function of these traditional names was in association to the practice of *hōlua* based on such ancient chants or oral histories. One story is about a time when *Pele* and *Hi'iaka* stood looking up at the ridge of *Kuaokalā* from an area along the coastline and offering a prayer to restore life to a person named *Ka'aniau* as they voyaged to *Kaua'i*.²⁷ My interest in this story is that it is my opinion that this story, given in native fashion, infers that *Pele* is offering this prayer not from just any location, but rather from a very particular area that was more than likely a *heiau* that was already there, or one that they had constructed. The story does specify exactly from where the prayer offering took place. But when we look at the landscape today and the architectural features that remain (or were known to have existed), and name references, it is obvious that there is a connection from which an interpretation of the history can be made. *Pele* and *Hi'iaka* in this instance were more than likely offering their prayers from the *heiau Ulehulu (esteemed penis)*. A portion of this *heiau* still exists just west of the end of the slide, another symbolization of fertility and sexual innuendo that connects the importance of *hōlua* to the culture. This ritual offering may have been followed up by the construction of a *heiau* or a continued offering of prayers from the *heiau Mōka'ena* (which has many meanings – 'ena: glowing, abundance, opening in the

²⁷ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 98.

clouds, etc.; *mō*: story, lizard, moku, etc.), as they ascended to the top of the ridge above *Alau* and the slide.²⁸

What is the *kaona* (“concealed reference or double meanings”) in the name of this *heiau*? This *heiau* was said to have been built by the chiefs of *Kaua’i*, and would be, in my estimation, the proper site for *Pele and Hi’iaka* to make their offerings and prayers for a safe crossing from *O’ahu* to *Kaua’i*.²⁹ In the chant to restore life to *Ka’aniau*, they asked for a canoe to take them to *Kaua’i* which may be the first step to entering the sacred area of *Mōka’ena*. By entering into the sacred area they were able to make a signal fire that could be seen from *Kaua’i*, at which time a canoe was sent to transport the two sisters to the island. *Pele and Hi’iaka* may also have had to prove their status as gods, as the *Ali’i* were considered, by riding the *hōlua* down to where the canoe landed. This is a perspective of what the native way of thinking may have been and can be questioned. But I present this based on my own experience of riding down a portion of that slide and of crossing the *Ka’ie’ie Waho* Channel at various times of the day and night and knowing that the area where *Mōka’ena* is known to have existed is the last section of *O’ahu* that can be seen from the channel and for the

²⁸ *Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. “ena”, “mō”.

²⁹ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O’ahu*, p. 97 – 98.

most part the only section that can be seen clearly from the island of *Kaua'i*.

What should be mentioned here, since I am focusing on the ritualism of *hōlua* and how it fits in to the landscape and culture, is the fact that this area is also considered the jumping-off point for the departed souls of the native people – “*leina a ka'uhane*”, which is a spot on the *Wai'alua* side just west of *Ulehulu heiau*.³⁰

The slide and *heiau*'s are one complex that was, from all appearances, a part of the overall complex of this entire area and was more than likely *kapu* to all but a few and may be the reason why the slide was not known, and an individual has to review the historical information available and see this area in order to develop a comprehensive understanding this area. The names associated with the various *heiau* and ridge line have meanings that are important to understanding the significance of the area ritually and why many of the commoners may not have ventured out to this area in the old time. The name *Alau* translates to mean “dividing, branching as of winds and lineage”.³¹ The hidden meaning may be that this is an area where a division is enforced, or a spot that separates the living from the dead, and gods from human. This meaning would support my concept of the ritualistic significance of *hōlua* in the

³⁰ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 94 – 96.

³¹ *Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. “Alau”.

process of the old religion or ritual performances and the reason why people in the old time did not venture into the area – a respect for the gods? It is also important to mention that directly opposite of this area on the *Wai'ānae* side of *Kuaokalā* was the *hōlua* slide *Keponookahōlua* (the head of the slide) that faced the area that was known as *Keawa'ula Bay*, or “Yokohama” as it is referred to today. Do we need to account for such apparent connections between place names, location, and oral histories in our contemporary society? Yes, because it has to be remembered that a native account of the placement and naming of places and objects such as this are of the utmost importance to our understanding the organization of the ancient society and how that society functioned in the past. And, if we were to look elsewhere in the area, we would notice a *hōlua* slide to the east with a similar function. It exists (or did exist) over on the *Wai'ānae* side of the island at *Pu'upāhe'ehe'e heiau luakini*; though it may or may not be in direct association with the physical passage of *Pele*, it does have its own history and function. This slide complex, now a Japanese graveyard, was once a prominent *hōlua* sliding complex that has been completely destroyed and was located above *Pōka'i Bay* (See - Figure 13.).³² During my visit to this sight, I surveyed the area

³² Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 68:152.

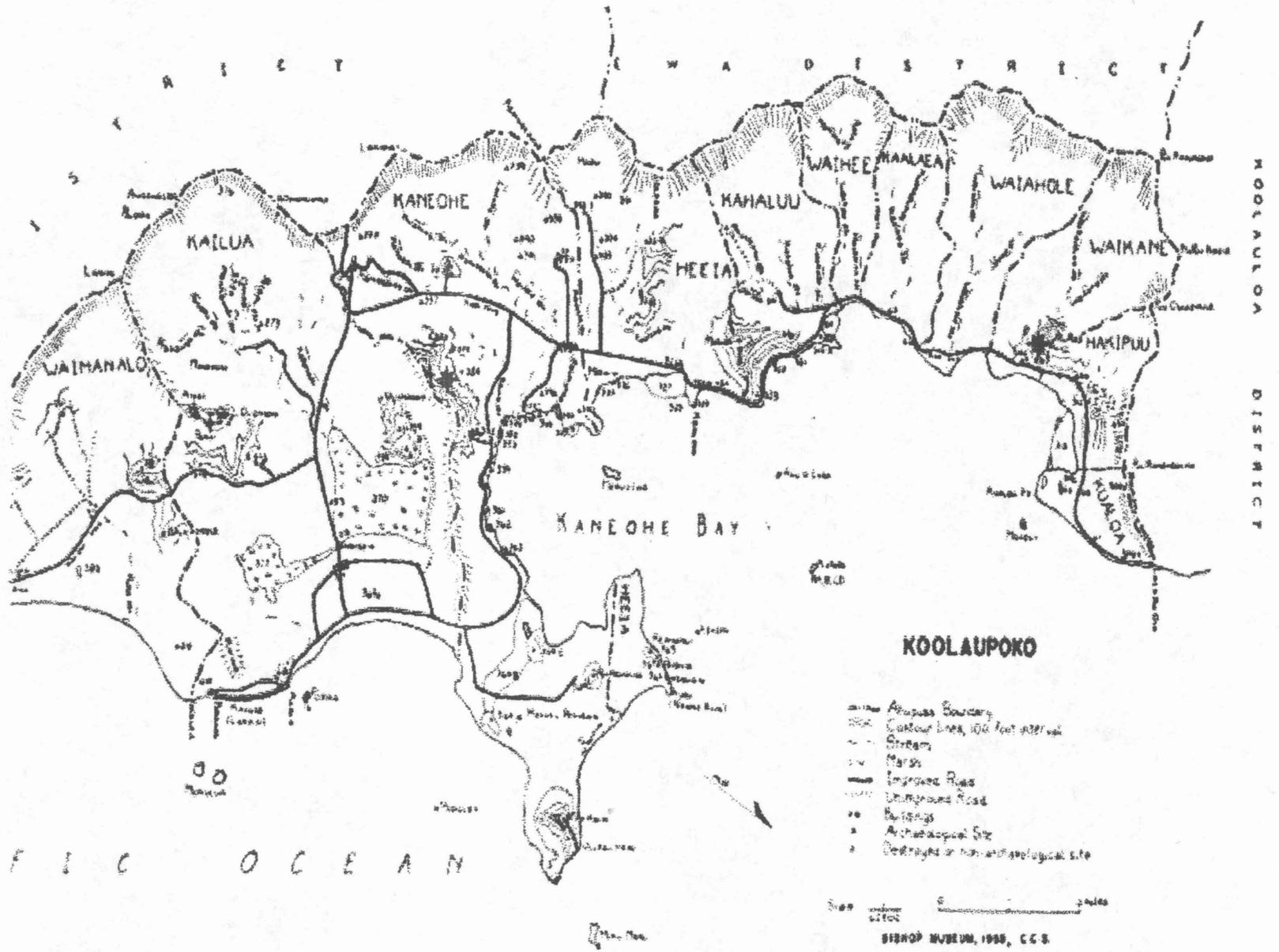
and realized that all the stones from the *hōlua/heiau* complex have been used for the various contemporary burials and that very little history is known about this complex that apparently was held in high regard by the Hawaiian people of old, based on the name. This slide not only had a *heiau luakini* at the uppermost portion of the slide, but also a *heiau* that exists today on a lower section at *Ka Lae 'o Kane'ilio* (*Kane'ilio* Point) that is in a direct line with the path of the *hōlua* slide. I point this out because in this research I focus also on another aspect of slide construction: that is the alignment, which is a point of importance again because the association of *hōlua* and *heiau* had never been considered in early archaeological or historical surveys. The interpretation of the *heiau* located on the east side of *Pōka'i Bay*, as a navigation *heiau*, I believe, has to be reconsidered, but this is not to say that it is not, just that it may be more than what we believe it is today. In this ongoing research I firmly believe that there is a cultural link between slide and *heiau* (s), navigation and canoes, and the practice of *hōlua* that has never been noticed that I will present in a following chapter. Also of great importance is the name of the *pu'u* (hill) relevant to the performance of *hōlua* here at this site. Is it just coincidental that the name "*Pu'u Pāhe'ehe'e*" would translate to mean "the slippery hill, hill of the sliding, of the spear sliding, of the shallow

grave, and a particular type of green *limu* or seaweed”, or was the naming of this place intentional, for purposes that are lost to us today? The actual meaning may be lost, but in the name we may speculate as to the purpose of the slide if we apply the various definitions we find in the language culturally.³³

As I have mentioned before, we rarely stop to consider the importance of names given in early times to places and objects and the relationship or link between those names and the geographical location of the architectural structures. The history of these various places is found in the name if we can learn to translate the old meanings of the language to understand the hidden meanings and the association of it to describing the physical object (s). This should be a constant source for understanding the complexity of the performance of and *hōlua*'s cultural and ritualistic relationship to structures of worship.

On the windward side of *O'ahu*, I am only aware of the existence of two slides of a different sort (with perhaps a third that has not been confirmed), but similar in their ritualistic construction and performance. The slide and *heiau* complex in *Kāne'ōhe* (named *Kawa'ewa'e*) is located above *NāoneaLa'a* Beach on the slope behind *Pōhai Nani* elderly home today (Figure 15.). This complex, which I know from my site visit still partially exists today, was mentioned by McAllister

³³ *Hawaiian Dictionary – Revised and Enlarged*, 1986 ed., s. v. “pu'u”, “pahe'ehe'e”.



*Figure 15. Map of Kane'ohē with *Kawa'ewa'e* and *Hakipu'u Hōlua* Slides (McAllistor).

in *Archaeology of O'ahu* and this same information was quoted by Sterling and Summers in *Sites of O'ahu*.³⁴ McAllister's work mentioned that Andrew Bloxam, while travelling aboard the *HMS Blonde* during a ship visit to the island (not the area of *Kāne'ohe*) in 1853, was believed to be an eyewitness account of *he'ehōlua* being performed from a great distance, with no one going to investigate further this cultural practice. The allegation has proved to be incorrect. I could find no mention in the journal of Andrew Bloxam of his ever seeing the practice of *hōlua*, only a description of the *papahōlua* (sled) and how they might have ridden it.³⁵ After looking through the bibliographical sources in each of these books, I could not find the source information to support the claims made in *Sites of O'ahu* or *Archaeology of O'ahu* that the practice had actually been witnessed. But, what appears to be quoted incorrectly in each of these publications is that Bloxam reported that the native people were sliding down the slope at speeds that if the rider did not navigate the course properly he or she might surely end up injured or worse, and that they were sliding for great distances on to the flat plains below, on a contoured track that was a terraformed slide. The slide, during these archaeological surveys, was reported to have been completely destroyed by the

³⁴ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p.219:355.

³⁵ Bloxam, Andrew, *Diary of Andrew Bloxam – Naturalist of the "Blonde"*, p. 42.

planting of pineapple; with the exact location of slide and *heiau* remaining unknown though its assumed location is designated in *Sites of O'ahu*.³⁶

What is uncanny about this historical information appearing in various historical-contemporary sources is that a George W. Bates published his notes in 1854 on the practice of *hōlua* in *Kāne'ohē* that are almost similar to what Andrew Bloxam wrote and published in 1925, except that Bates gave a description of the sliding area whereas Bloxam does not.³⁷ This may actually be the source material that is quoted in *Archaeology of O'ahu and Sites of O'ahu*. The later reports about this area appear to be re-tellings of the same story from Andrew Bloxam and George Bates that is an alteration of the *Kahawali and Pele* story that Bates also recounted in his published notes. So I have to question the validity and accuracy of any later information about the *hōlua* slide and its association or disassociation to the *heiau Kawa'ewa'e* that I have physically confirmed to be in association to one another.

Reported by these informants, supportive to what was supposedly reported by Bloxam, is that the *he'ehōlua* was performed in a narrow channel that was dug out to keep the rider on the track, but I dispute this based on what I

³⁶ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 219.

³⁷ Bates, George, W., *Sandwich Island Notes by a Haole*, p. 106 – 110.

have recorded about the various types and differences in slide design and construction between the windward and leeward sides of the islands. A terraformed slide of this type also existed in *Waikāne, O'ahu* and on the island of *Molokai*. It is more than likely that what was assumed to be dug out channels were merely the depression formed by continuous use of this section of the slope for the performance of *he'ehōlua*. If these early informants had actually seen *he'ehōlua* performed, which I can not verify, why none of these early informants ever went to investigate the actual practice or to get a close look at the track area if they were that close just makes the information questionable.

Also, it is important to note that, from my personal survey of the area and experience with *hōlua*, I believe *Kawa'ewa'e heiau* and the slide were closer to one another and of the same ritual complex than is shown in *Sites of O'ahu*, which I have marked accordingly (See map - Figure 15.). A note of importance is that Bloxam also stayed overnight in the *Kāne'ohē* area, where he saw a *papahōlua* (hung from the ceiling of a hut) that he describes in complete detail, but he does not mention ever seeing *hōlua* performed. It appears that "artistic liberty" was taken in reporting this practice, so the description of a channel being dug for the *hōlua* course is more in the ideal of what the practice of bobsledding is like, which

is very western. I believe that because McAllister, Sterling, and Summer had only a vague idea of what *hōlua* was from the short mentions of this practice (from journals such as Bloxam's) that they just assumed *hōlua* was similar to bobsledding, unaware that it was performed in a very unique medium. By presenting material that was not culturally accurate, they have created a modern myth that has affected and influenced the way *hōlua* and other Hawaiian practices are or have been interpreted. Mistakes are always possible when we attempt to interpret the past, and thus it is also important that as researchers we have to know the initial sources from which cultural information is gathered, and its accuracy.

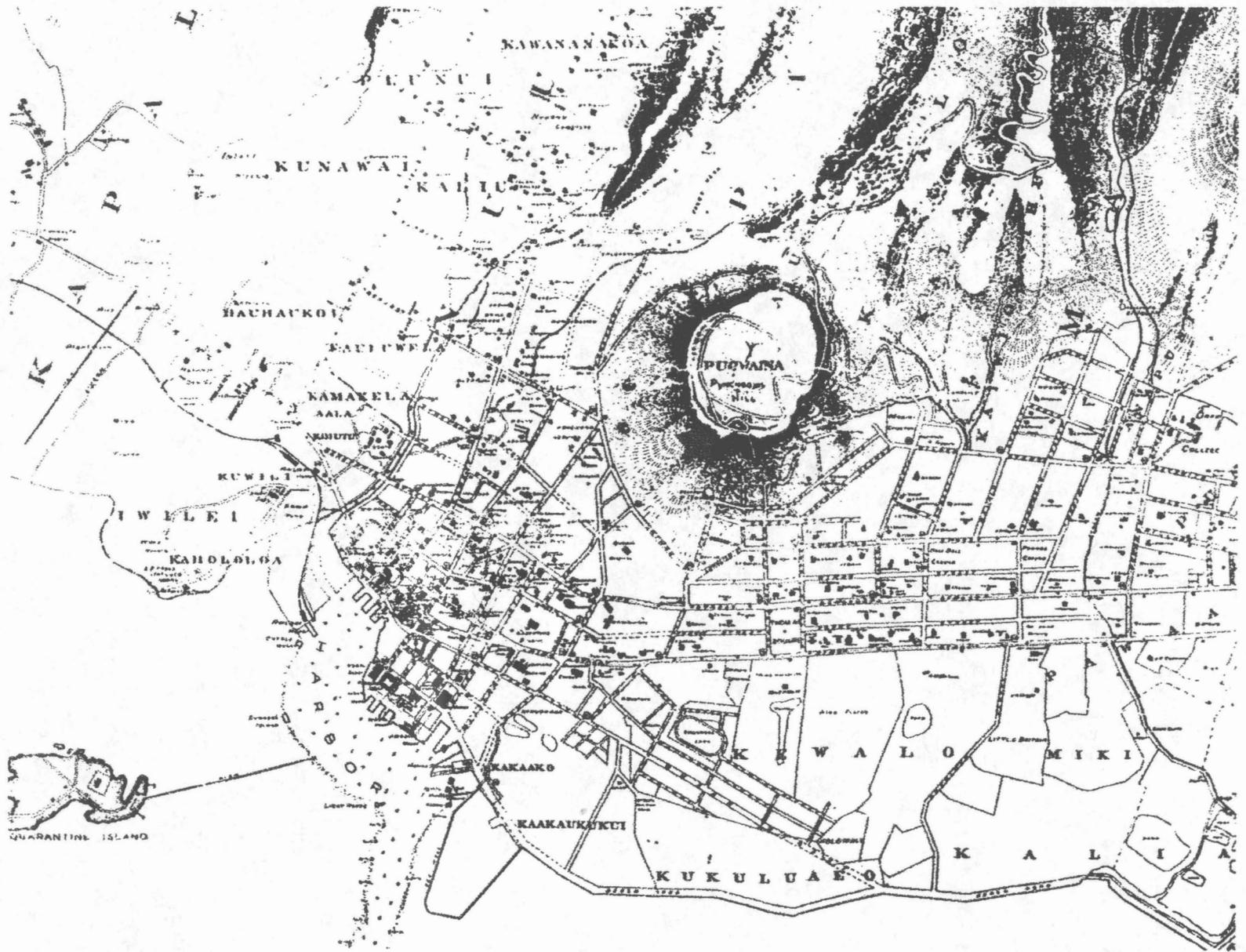
Another slide also existed directly across from this one on the opposite side of *Kāne'ōhe Bay* in the *ahupua'a* of *Waikāne*. It was a *hōlua* slide named "*Kapahu*", located on a *pu'u* just in back and to the right of an old Catholic Church where today stands Mt. Carmel Church. Until about 1950 the slide was the location where the McCandless house was situated.³⁸ I have not found any trace of this slide, but I have not looked over the entire area and much of the landscape has changed since it was first recorded. There has been extensive landscaping for a flower nursery and residential homes built on the area, but the

³⁸ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 188.

upper sections of the *pu'u*, though overgrown, may eventually provide some physical information. From all indications, I suspect that this slide was a terraformed slide; there is high clay content in this area, and the slide probably had a starting faced stone platform and utilized the natural terrain similar to the *Kawa'ewa'e* slide and a few of the slides of *Molokai*. In the *Kailua, O'ahu* area just east of *Kāne'ohe*, archaeologist John F. G. Stokes mentions in his 1936 manuscript the existence of a *hōlua* slide located on a banana plantation (though not operating as one, it is still there today).³⁹ I have not been able to confirm or deny that a *hōlua* slide had once occupied the location. No other slides are reported for this side of the island, but this does not imply that others do not or did not exist. It just says that we have not found them at this time. This indicates all the more reason, and of the utmost importance, of gathering and presenting accurate information that may remove that veil of ignorance that surrounds this cultural practice.

O'ahu boasted many other slides similar to one another, but each slide was unique based on geographical location and given appropriate names that carried *mana*, such as the slide that was once on the slope of Punch Bowl (*Pūowainā*) with its associated *heiau* (Figure 16.). In olden times, this slide supposedly

³⁹ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 243.



*Figure 16. Pūowainā Hōlua slide and heiau

allowed the rider to sled from the top of the ridge all the way into the area where the city of Honolulu sits today. The historical account is that *Pūowainā* was also a place of sacrifice, where individuals were taken to be strangled or burned for breaking a *kapu*.⁴⁰ But, *Pūowainā* is a name with a history that is tossed about freely and may not have been a place of sacrifice as perceived by Western accounts. When we look at the slope of *Pūowainā*, we realize that when leaping from that height on to its incline of more than 50 degrees the sledder was surely offering themselves as the ultimate sacrifice, something I have continually referred to as self – sacrifice -- as in the first to die in battle, or *lele pali*, leaping from a cliff with a cape to catch the wind, etc. -- throughout this study, which was very common among native peoples. Many modern tales are told about this particular slide, but very little is actually known. I have not found any trace of the slide except perhaps the *heiau* that still remains, so I cannot add any new information to what is already known, other than that most of the contemporary stories about this place are romanticized versions of reality. What I do find ironic about these ancient places – e.g. *Pu‘u Pāhe‘ehe‘e* and *Pūowainā* – is that both were significant to the native people of old as a place of worship or ritual practice and also eventually became sites of worship or sacred ground – i.e.

⁴⁰ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O‘ahu*, p. 291.

Punchbowl National Cemetery of the Pacific – revered by the foreigner that destroyed the very structures that we, as natives, used and worshipped.

There is another relatively unknown slide that existed and was noted by Dr. Eduard Arning when he published his 1883 – 1886 notes. Again by J. F. G. Stokes, who was made aware of Arning's notes by Brigham in 1900, then provided that information to Kenneth Emory. Emory made a search for it but could find no trace of the slide that was pictured on a photo plate taken by Arning.⁴¹ This slide was located in *Kalihi*, on the slopes of *Kapālama* where *Kamehameha Schools* now sits, and a portion of the slide can still be found above the old girls dormitory. This slide, before it was destroyed, is purported to have had a width of eighteen feet and must have extended the length of the slope for perhaps 3,000 feet (from my estimation), which I am sure a sledder would have found to be a most challenging course to ride the sleek *papahōlua* on.⁴² Not much is known about this slide, and I have not found any more information about it except that it has been recorded, but this does not mean that more information is not archived somewhere. A vital point here is that this is not the extent of all the slides that may have existed on this island, but rather only what we know

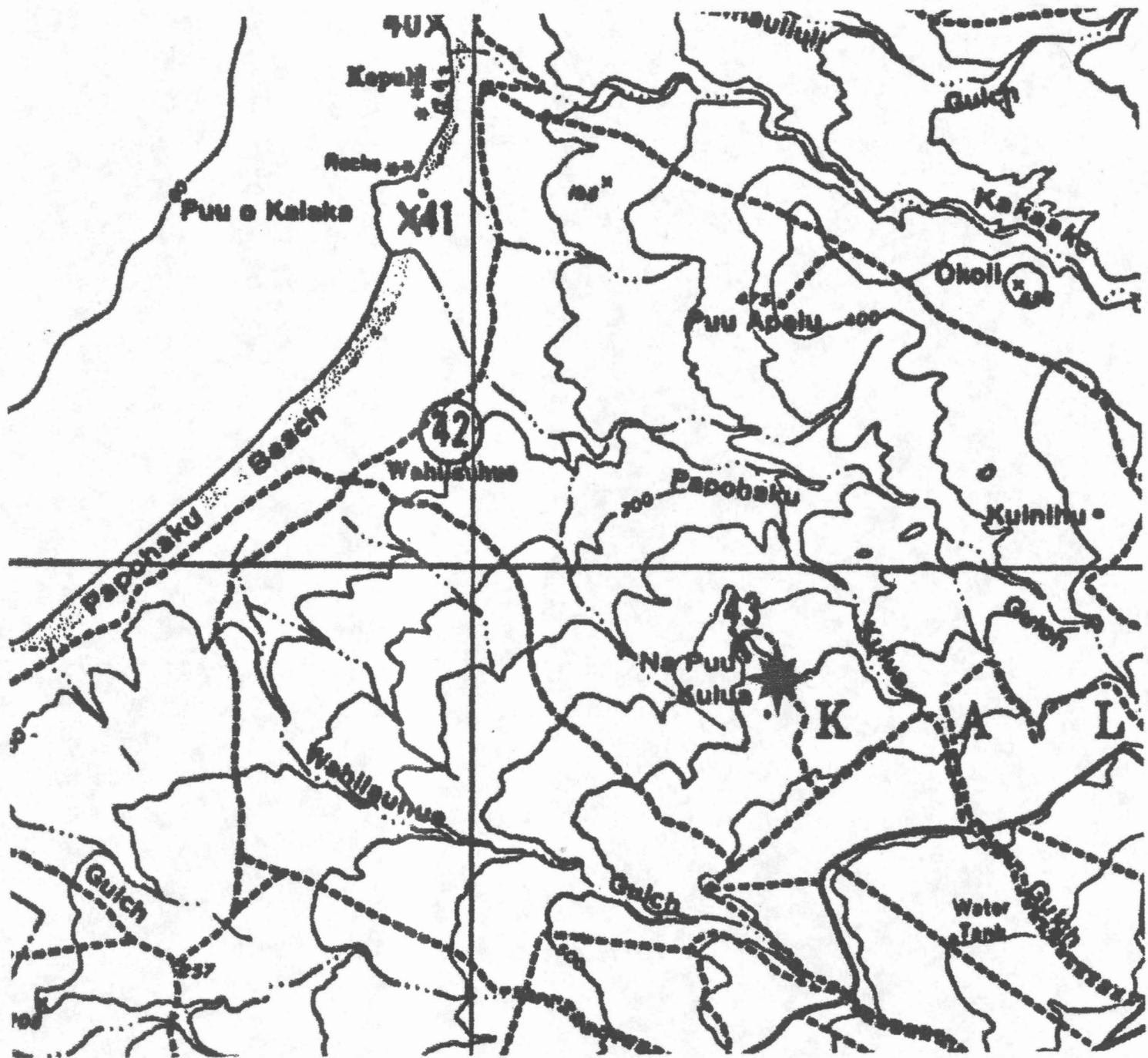
⁴¹ Sterling, Elspeth, P. and Summers, Catherine, C., *Sites of O'ahu*, p. 321.

⁴² Malo, David, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, p. 224.

existed. Moreover, it is highly possible that others were constructed but completely lost informationally.

Moving on to the next island, and located on the western end of *Molokai* in the *mauka* (uplands) section of *Kaluako'i*, there is an ancient cinder cone on the western flank of *Mauna Loa* named *Nā Pu'u Kūlua* (*Figure 17. *Nā Pu'u Kūlua*, West Molokai.), which could be described as having a terraformed slide, a combination of a constructed slide integrated into the natural terrain. The slide, partially constructed on a natural terrain, consisted of an *ahu* (platform) at the very top (or beginning) that was a rock foundation with extensions that protruded out from that center point to form the starting point of the *hōlua* slide. From here, each extension went off in three separate directions that appeared to turn back on to one another, establishing one sledding course heading north towards *Pu'uoKaiaka* and the shoreline before vanishing into a natural terrain.⁴³ When I walked along what appeared to be the sledding course, it passed through various ravines while maintaining a downward incline throughout the entirety of the course. Most of the area has been devastated by erosion, which is caused by the many years of livestock grazing and mismanagement that completely decimated any cultural sites. Most knowledge of their existence or cultural

⁴³ Summers, Catherine, C., *Molokai: A Site Survey*, p. 51.



*Figure 17. Nā Pu'u Kūlua, West Molokai.

meaning and relationship to the native people, as well as *hōlua*, has disappeared from the landscape, leaving some oral history. When I asked the local community about the *hōlua* slide in this area, all but a few could recall hearing about one, but one *kupuna* (elderly man) suspected there might be a relationship between the *hōlua* course, *Pu'uoKaiakā heiau* (which was destroyed by the military), and what we refer to as the “night marchers”, whose path passes through the *Kaluako'i Hotel* grounds to this *pu'u* on the beach. It is a concept that cannot readily be discarded because of the name of this *heiau* and hill.

The slides found in the uplands located east of *Ho'olehua* utilized the natural terrain and hard clay surface. Though construction of slides may have varying traits from island to island (and island district), the majority of these slides remained constant in their design, which included an area (associated *heiau*) for ritualized performances and preparation prior to riding the course, and a staging area: that is a constructed rock platform with an accompanying runway that would be the first segment of the slide, where perhaps a final chant of commitment was given by an individual or *Kahuna Nui* (priest), before launching themselves head-first down the slide. I can only think of two exceptions to this, which are a sliding area at *Pala'au*, Molokai (*Figure 18.) and at *Pu'ukōhōlua* at



*Figure 18. *Pala'au Hōlua Slide, Molokai.*

KaLae (or South Point) in the *Kā'u* district on the island of *Hawai'i* (no photo of this area), and the steep grass slope that still exists today in that district. The sliding area at *Pala'au* has since vanished due to the forestation of the area for the purpose of logging after the photo was taken in 1919. The depression on the slope from sliding can be seen extending downslope from the stone on the left that is the female fertility symbol. This natural slide without any stone ramp construction was very significant because of the stone *Kauleonānāhoa* (stone to the right), which was considered a fertility symbol, located at the head of the sliding area, symbolizing the presence of the male gods, which I believe to have been *Kū* (See - Figure 12.). The two things that interest me about this slide are a.) its orientation in a north – south direction (as is the slide at *Kauhako*, *Kalaupapa*) just below the three thousand foot cliff from where this slide is, and b.) the *Kauleonānāhoa* stone, a phallic symbol of perhaps the male gods, facing towards the crater of *Kauhako*, which is significant to *Pele*. *Ka-uha-kō* is the name of this crater at *Kalaupapa* / *Kalawao*, a land section at *Hōnaunau*, *Kona*, and a *pu'u* in the *Punalu'u*, *Kā'u* district of *Hawai'i* Island. The literal translation of this name means, "the dragged large intestines".⁴⁴ As the story goes this name was in

⁴⁴ Puku'i, Mary, Kawena, Elbert, Samuel, H., & Mo'okini, Esther, T., *Place Names of Hawai'i*, p.91.

reference to a chief of the area at *Hōnaunau* and / or *Punalu'u* who forced his people to drag him up the *pu'u* on his sled. Eventually they tired of this and plotted to kill him by having the slide collapse on him. They then dragged him up the slope, dumped him off, and buried him under the slide. The people in both *Hōnaunau* and *Punalu'u* lead me to wonder whether this chief was in both districts. That is a question I may never find an answer to, but it does point out that there were *hōlua* slides in both districts.

As for the crater, this is also the first spot, but after striking water *Pele* and her sister *Hi'iaka* moved on to *Maui*.⁴⁵ That is what leads me to speculate that perhaps there existed an intimate relationship between these two geographical sites as a union of the gods (*ule and lua*), because this is the first crater, pit, or *lua* dug by *Pele* on *Molokai* that is significant to recognizing the female deities; and then there is the *ule* (penis) located at the top of the cliff, which surely signifies the male deities. *Kauhako Crater* is also the place of the slide which was erroneously described by Stokes and again by Summers, because the slide mentioned by both of these individuals is actually an earthen area on the west side of the actual slide that is a raised stone ramp that forms the east section of

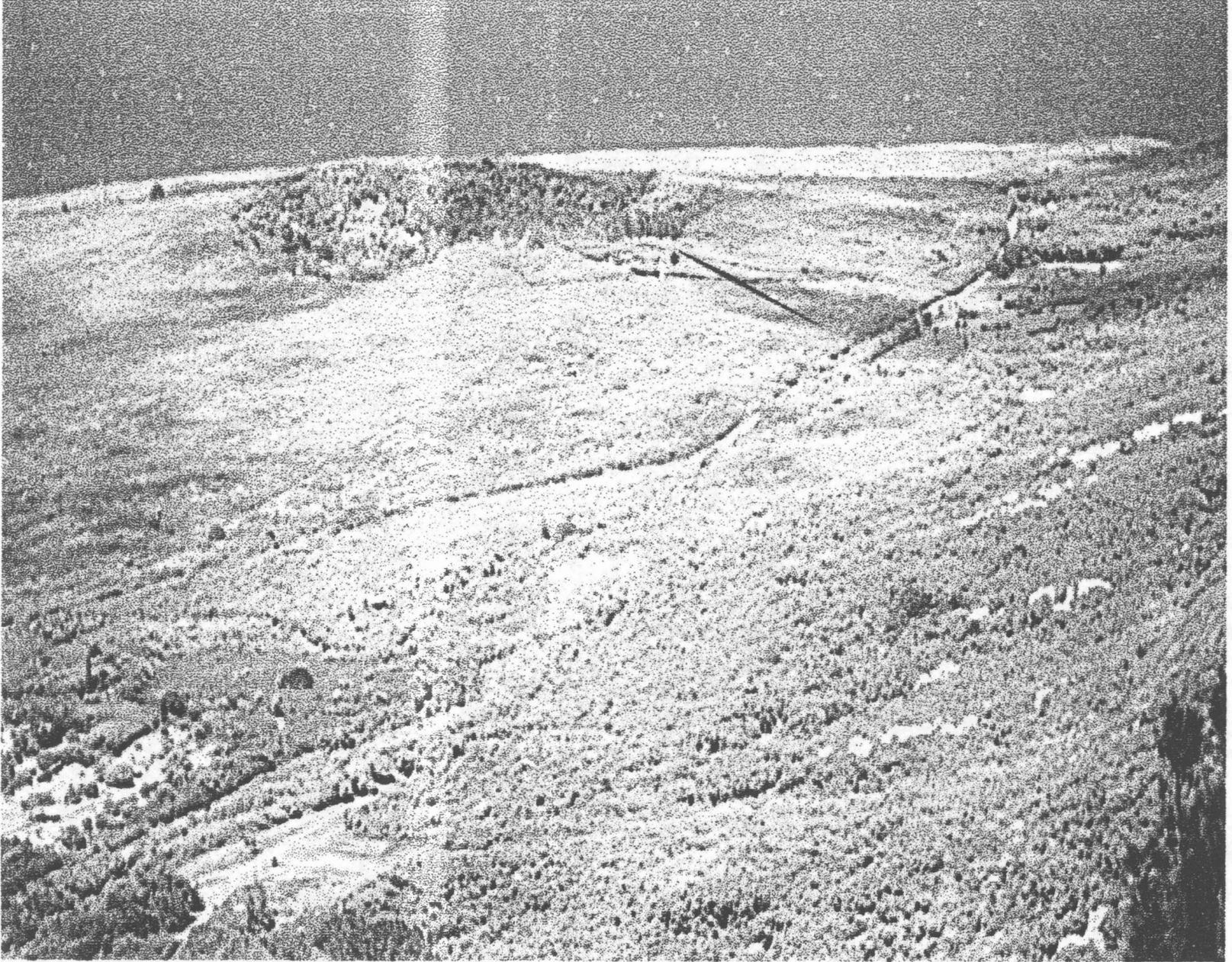
⁴⁵ Puku'i, Mary, Kawena, Elbert, Samuel, H., & Mo'okini, Esther, T., *Place Names of Hawai'i*, p.92.

the *heiau luakini*. The earthen area described by Stokes was used for *tī leaf* and *mai'a* (banana stump) sliding.⁴⁶

This is a place very relevant to the passing of *Pele and Hi'iaka*, as I mentioned, that we could distinguish by the interpretation of the names given to the surrounding areas. At *Kalaupapa – Makanalua at Kauhako* it is situated on the south side facing towards the *pali* (cliff) of the main island of *Molokai* and obviously away from the ocean, but geologically -- i.e. when we view this area as it was thousands of years ago -- perhaps we notice that we face that ocean channel that separated the peninsula of *Kalaupapa* from the main island of *Molokai* itself (*Figure 19.).

The plain of this area is called "*Kōloa*" that fronts "*Waihānau Valley*", and the wind of this area is the "*Kūhonua*" wind. What does this all mean culturally? And what is the interpretive importance of these names? It is my opinion that each name historically describes and records the event of creation on this point of land. This presents a unique question: was the eruption and the eventual rising of this peninsula from the sea witnessed by the early Polynesians -- *Pele and Hi'iaka*? We do know that this peninsula was a post-erosional eruption that

⁴⁶ Summers, Catherine, C., *Molokai: A Site Survey*, p. 28 – 32.



*Figure 19. *Kauhakō* Crater, Kaulaupapa, Molokai. (Stone)

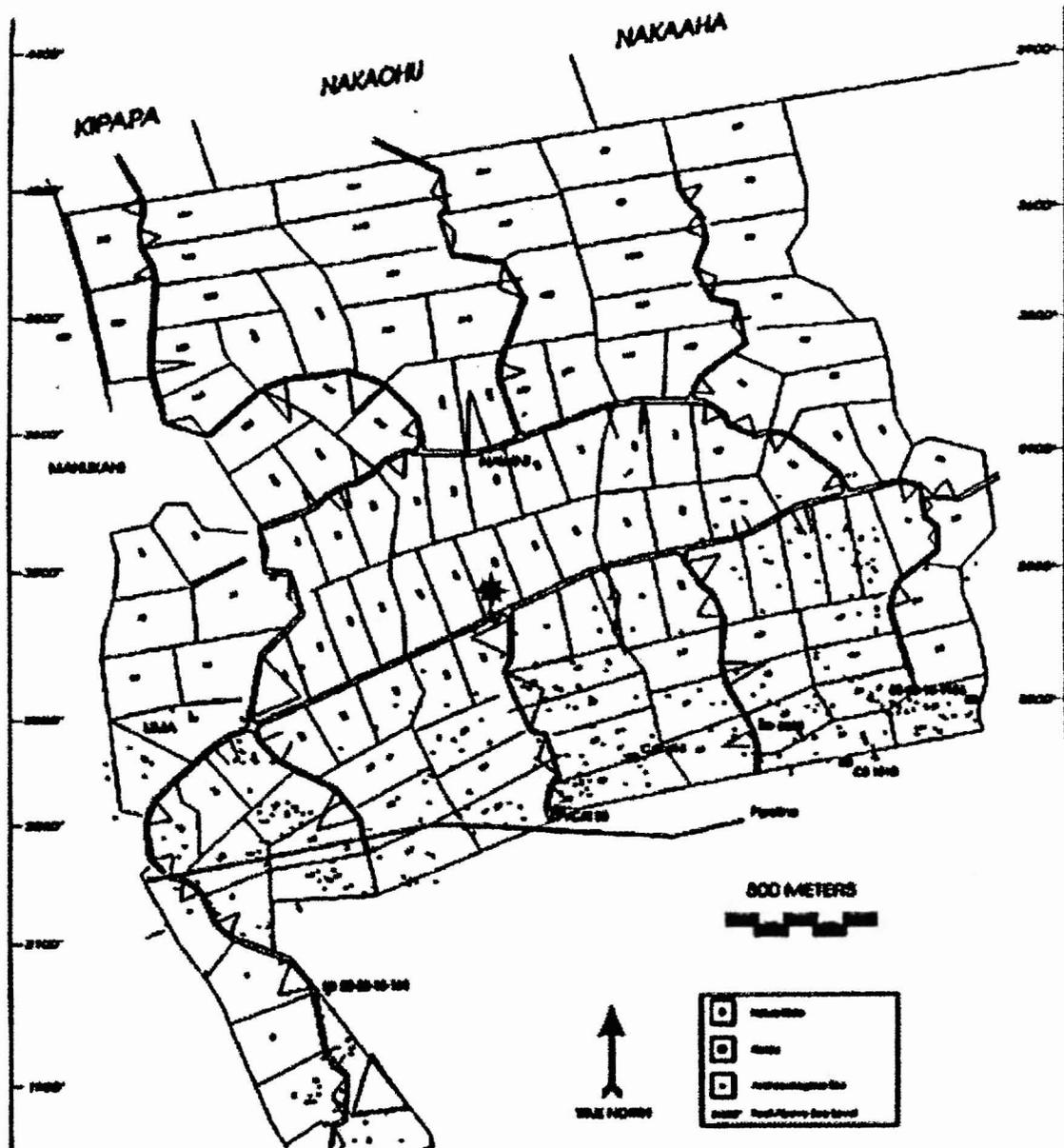
could have been witnessed by the early Polynesians.⁴⁷ Interpretation is one based on an individual's understanding or knowledge of the language, culture, and the landscape from where these names derived. "*Kūhonua*" I interpret to be – "the rising earth" or "standing earth". This name given to the wind of this area perhaps refers to the heat that hovers over a hot spot that we know is visible. As long as the area is hot, or in its eruptive stage, the trades that blow almost relentlessly through this area would remain visible. The definition of "*Kōloa*" perhaps refers to the sound or roar that is heard during an eruption. And, "*Waihānau*" is perhaps referring to the waters that are born or occur after the formation of dikes, which is part of the geological formation of the islands. This is just an abbreviated review of Hawaiian history that may have been recorded in detail orally of events relative to name association and are of great importance to areas used for the practice of *hōlua*.

As for the discussion here -- based on my practical experience with *he'ehōlua* the information, and stories gathered from various sources -- these areas (such as *Kaulenānāhoa* and *Pu'ukohōlua*) were the areas more for learning to ride the *papahōlua* in preparation to ride such places as *Kauhako Crater*. At these particular places like, (*Kaulenānāhoa* and *Pu'ukohōlua*), the people of old would

⁴⁷ McDonald, Gordon, A. and Abbott, Agatin, T., *Volcanoes in the Sea*, p. 146.

come to practice and develop their skills in preparation to ride the larger, rock-constructed slides. Here also I would assume, based on the terrain and heavy soil content, that *ti* leaf and *mai'a* (banana stump) sliding also occurred, similar to what is still practiced on the island of RapaNui, and as a boy I also did regularly in the mountain areas of *Maunawili*, *Nu'uanu*, and the valley known as '*Āina Haina* (*Wailupe*). These are practices that can be done on almost any one of the islands today and are less hazardous than riding the constructed slides of old.

On Maui, there are three known slides to have existed (*Kahikinui*, '*Olinda*, and *Pali Lele iwi*) and two yet to be confirmed (*Moku Hōlua*, *Ke'ānae & Pu'u o 'Umi*, *Ha'ikū*) as *hōlua* slides. On this island, I am most familiar with the slide located in virtual isolation. This slide is set apart from almost all other pre – contact domestic residential sites or architecture on the south slope of *Haleakala*, at a place called *Kahikinui*, which is part of the *ahupua'a* of *Nakaohu* (*Figure 20.). Efforts to confirm the existence of other *hōlua* slides are ongoing here on Maui (and every other island), but it is a difficult process considering the massive destruction the cultural landscape has undergone during the plantation era and now due to the tourism and residential development. I do not have much information about *Lahaina, Maui*, which may have once had a magnificent *hōlua*



*Figure 20. *Nakaohu*: Location of *Hōlua* Slide at Kahikinui, Maui.

complex that we may never confirm existed because of the indiscriminate destruction of the landscape and the *kapu* that surrounded the area. I cannot physically (or orally) find evidence that a *hōlua* slide might have existed in this area, but the possibility cannot be ignored considering that one out of the 11 *papahōlua* or remnants of sleds in the special collections at the Bishop Museum was discovered at *Lahaina*. Also, I have not had the opportunity to confirm the existence of a slide at *Ke'ānae* because 1.) the information recently discovered has not allowed me the time to verify the information during the writing of this research paper and 2.) on *Pu'u o 'Umi* in *Ha'iku* there has been private residential development on these slopes, and this access is denied at the moment, but I continue to press the issue here that may reveal very little physical evidence in the end due to development. At *'Olinda*, near the old prison that is now the bird sanctuary, the remnants of a slide still exist a short distance from the end of the road. Upslope from the area, in the forest, the slide can also be found on most of the older maps marking sites of archaeological interest. As for *Pali Lele iwi* - the cliff of the leaping bones - may have been a site for *hōlua* sledding, and the name should say it all. I would rate this sliding area at the level of *Pu'ukahōluaokamanu* (*Kaua'i*) and *Ka'ena Point* (*O'ahu*) as far as looking at the very extreme side of the

performance or practice of *hōlua* sledding – extremely hazardous. This is a natural slide with a vertical drop that needs no *pili* grass for a sledding surface, and I could not even imagine someone but a god leaping from here, such as the legendary *Maui, Kū, Kāne, or Pele*. From practical experience, I know that if the sled is going fast enough it will slide on a loose pebble or cinder surface without catching, and with minimal resistance or friction from the rock surface. From my observation of this area for *hōlua*, it is possible to make and survive the leap, but one mistake would surely mean massive injuries or death.

As for *Kahikinui*, is a recently discovered *hōlua* slide that may be one of the largest architectural features of cellular construction that remains from *Hawai'i's* past. The symbolic positioning of this slide complex may be twofold: a.) with it being positioned above the region of agriculture and at the transition of the original dry land to wetland native forest, and b.) at this elevation of (3,500 feet), perhaps just within the previous cloud belt zone, it suggests that this *hōlua* slide was used for more than just the *Makahiki* and the celebration or worship of *Lono*, the god of fertility and agriculture.⁴⁸ This is also the area in which the oral history of the native people describes how *Pele* fought a great battle with her sister *Namakaokaha'i* and of *Pele's 'iwi* being scattered over this land at *Nā iwi o*

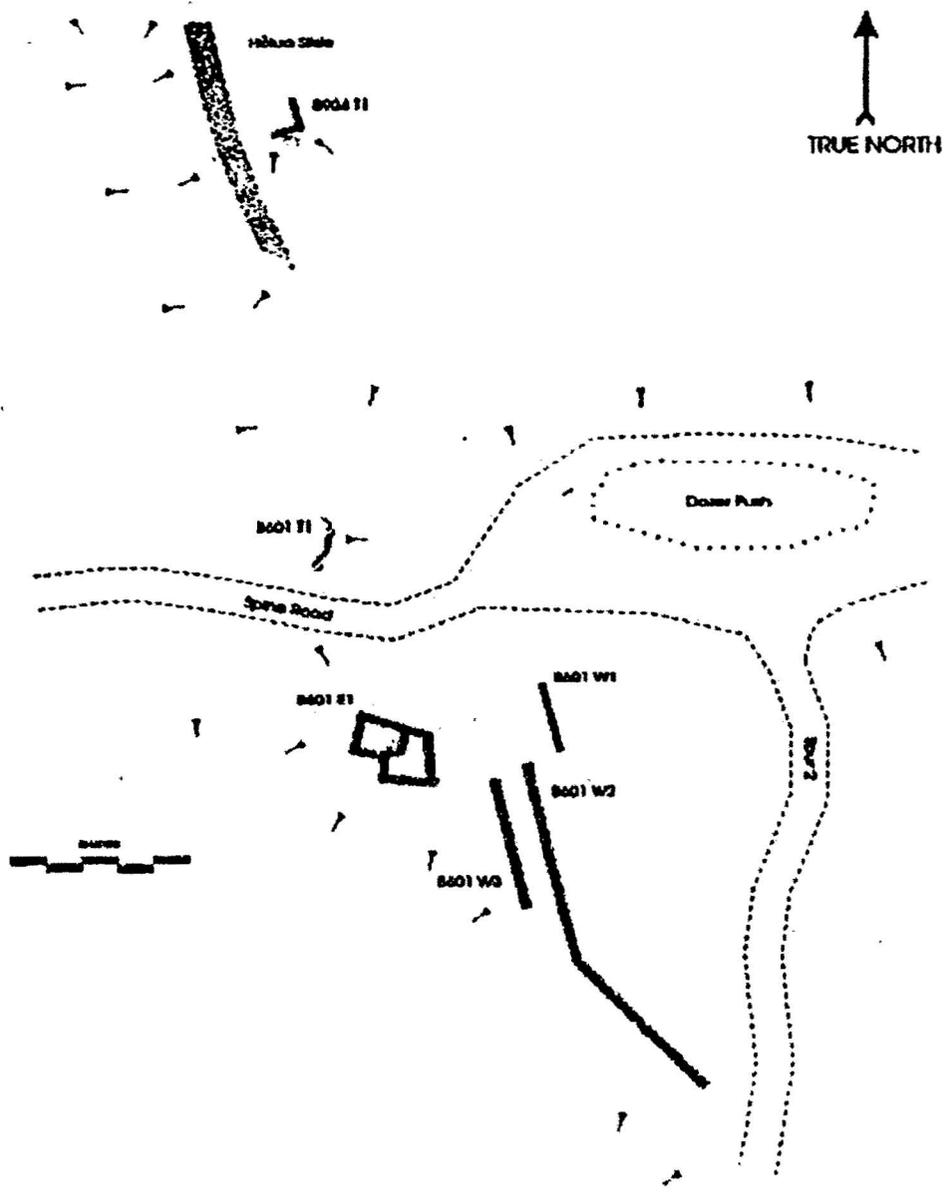
⁴⁸ Malo, David, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, p. 141 – 159.

Pele (a short distance from this slide). *Pele* was thought to have been defeated by her sister, but instead she took spirit form and could be seen from this point on *Maui*, living as the fires on the mountaintops of *Mauna Loa* and *Mauna Kea* on *Hawai'i Island*.⁴⁹ Hence, the important question here is: how do we interpret various aspects of such physical architecture as they relate to the native history, language, and landscape?

As previously mentioned, what is known of this slide physically is that its construction incorporated many modified natural features and constructed cellular components that would designate it as a raised stone ramp rather than a terraformed slide because 98 % of the slide is of fitted stone construction. But, I guess that this and its actual size remains suspect due to both the significant damage done to this cultural feature (while bulldozing an access road) and the incomplete archaeological investigation that was conducted in 1997, when I was a secondary consultant for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. The area inspected by the team was limited to a delineated zone so as not to compete with other contracted archaeological teams conducting cultural surveys for the department. The approximate size of the upper section of the *hōlua* slide (within the specified area) spanned 300 meters in length, 100 meters in width, and

⁴⁹ Emerson, Nathaniel, B., *Pele and Hi'iaka – A Myth from Hawai'i*, p. xiv.

dropped 50 meters in elevation from its beginning, which is delineated by a wall and viewing complex, with a separating wall running down the center of the slide for approximately 25 meters before dropping once again (*Figure 21.). This wall feature, that runs down the center of this slide, is also similar to that found on a *hōlua* slide at *Kaloko National Park, Kona*. What is not “officially” documented is that -- after further survey, on my own accord and beyond the specified survey boundary, I found that -- the *Kahikinui* slide continues uniquely designed downslope for approximately another 4500 meters to a leveled semi – circular area adjacent to a *heiau* complex on the east side of the slide (Unpublished manuscript compiled by authors Dixon, Stone, and McAnany, “A Newly Discovered *Hōlua* Slide Complex In *Kahikinui*, Island of Maui, Hawai‘i: Its Traditional and Theoretical Context”, 1997.). After discussing this discovery with the following renowned archaeologist -- Boyd Dixon, Patrick Kirch, and Patricia McAnany -- there was never a follow-up per my suggestion; and furthermore the archaeological survey program by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, to my disappointment, was concluded with no further study of this site. For years, *Maui* had only one known slide listed (the ‘*Olinda* site in upper *Makawao*), but with this research it appears that more information is beginning to



*Figure 21. *Hōlua Sldie Complex* – Kahikinui, Maui (B. Dixon).

surface about the possible locations of other slides that may have existed. With further study, I am sure we will uncover more sites in the future for this island. Of note, another *hōlua* slide that was located in the West Maui Gold Links at *Honolua – Kulaokaea* – was decimated by the pineapple plantation.⁵⁰ This slide has not been noted on the map (*Figure 1.) included in this research because I am still researching the material to confirm its existence.

For the island of *Hawai'i*, and the 23 or more known slides distributed across the land, it would be a complete topic just to describe in detail each individual slide. Rather than doing that, I believe that grouping the slides by size and type, with a mention as to their importance, will be of great value in understanding the study of *hōlua* and its cultural significance relative to those slides that are an intricate part of this island. I have been intrigued by all the slides that I have visited over the years, but elected to focus my interest on the slides of this island on those that are fairly intact and which I have spent much time studying and conducting practical experimentation. Additionally, all the slides on the south, east, and west sides of this island are known to be of cellular construction.

⁵⁰ Sterling, Elspeth, P., *Sites of Maui*, p.53:30.

I have already mentioned briefly the great slide *Kāneaka* in *Keauhou*, but less well known and yet historically important is that at least one other slide was constructed in *Kahalu'u* just west of the large slide, which is mentioned in "*The Journal of Toketa*" (1822) and is the last documented slide ever used for competition.⁵¹ There is no mention as to its size, but considering that it is in close proximity to the larger *Kāneaka* slide, one would suspect that this slide was smaller and used on a regular basis since death or injury on the larger slide was probable. The design of the slide and material used for construction can be assumed to be the same as the larger slide or for the slides located on the west side of the islands when we consider that the primary material available for construction was 'a'a and *pāhoehoe* lava.

Not far from this area and in the mountains above *Kailua, Kona* there are also the remnants of what was perhaps a great slide from which the area gets its name – *Hōlualoa*, or "the long *hōlua* slide". My investigation of this area found just a small portion of the slide, in an old coffee field behind the *Hōlualoa Lodge*, located just below the store. No one today remembers the existence of the slide or any stories about it. From this location and from what we know about the

⁵¹ Toketa, *Tahitian's in the early history of Hawaiian Christianity: The Journal of Toketa*, p. 29-30.

length of the *Keauhou* slide (4,200 feet) I estimate this slide (in its time) may have been perhaps 6,000 feet or more in length, with a width ranging from about 10 feet (in the area of this particular segment) to varying widths throughout the slide. Because there is no other segment surviving it is difficult to determine whether the slide had a 60-foot width, as does the slide at *Keauhou*, or if it was narrower. Of greater importance is that there are no contemporary records of its origin, time of use, or when it ceased to be used; I found however, that it was rumored to have existed, and this lead me to do a site inspection. But, the oral history of the islands is extensive, and it may take some time to perhaps uncover a chant that actually records some information about this slide.

Further west, in an ancient 'a'a lava field above *Kiholo Bay*, in the *ahupua'a* of *Pu'u Wa'awa'a* is a small slide measuring 400 feet length, 10 feet in width, with an elevated runway that was used to leap on to the slide. The slide is somewhat degraded, though still relatively intact, that provides not only clues to the style and method of construction, but also the geographical history of the area that is now non – existent. At the time this slide was built, the topography of the land was completely different. What is now a barren *pāhoehoe* lava field that fronts the bottom of the slide there was once a lagoon that extended to near the foot of the slide and that would be similar to the slides still in existence at other places: such

as *Kapu'a*, *Ka'upūlehu*, the *ahupua'a* of *Pu'u 'Anahulu*, *'Oko'e*, *Papa Bay*, *Mahukona*, and others. All these slides have a relationship to the ocean reminiscent to fluid lava flowing into the sea and representing an affiliation to a particular deity (such as *Lono* during the time of the *Makahiki*, or perhaps *Pele*) or some of the many other gods worshipped in the old time.

The distribution of these slides and areas designated for such performances we do know are full of history in a Hawaiian form, and far-reaching throughout these islands. But how much of the physical aspect of this practice has actually been lost? And how will we really know? Nor does there exist any more information than what I presented here regarding its ritualistic or simple culture functions. Based on architectural features that still exist, however, I can safely say that a significant number have been removed from the landscape due to misinterpretation and cultural ignorance.

New research focusing on the ancient oral accounts and archaeological information has provided further clues about *hōlua* and its ritual practice. Such new cultural information has led to the awareness that these slides are of pre-historic origin (before western contact), provides an opportunity to reassess early archaeological theories regarding these sites, and explores the broader role that this ritualistic practice played in our ancient society. The *hōlua* slides and the

papahōlua remain as the only surviving remnants of the structural embodiment of this ancient ritualistic form. They are the only repository of the ancient knowledge of this cultural practice, a direct link to the spiritual interactive relationship of the human form, the constructed object(s), and the landscape.

Therefore, let us ask ourselves, as researchers and/or natives of these islands, what is the reality that we see today of the cultural and physical landscape of the old time? Understanding the cultural significance of this practice – *hōlua* – is to more profoundly appreciate that we, as “modern people in 2001”, are so far removed from the truth about this era and thus are likely to misinterpret the history (our native history) of the cultural and physical landscape as it really existed.

CHAPTER 5
HE'EHŌLUA AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON – A THEORITICAL
APPROACH

Through my experimentation with the practice of *hōlua* and my cultural background, I have always wondered how the practice of *hōlua* originated. There is no written or oral account of the origin of *hōlua*, not even a speculative one. Why not? If we were to look at the physical landscape and the number of constructed slides that exist (or did exist), it is staggering. The architectural structures entailed many man-hours to construct, and with the presumed significant ritualism conferred to *hōlua*, it is just inconceivable to imagine that *hōlua* has been considered simply a game. Obviously such a label needs to be reconsidered when we realize that not one of the many archaeologists and historians who took the time to evaluate the importance (or unimportance) of this practice and its related structures had any inkling as to its cultural significance.

There is no record to account for the origin of *hōlua* and how it evolved into what has erroneously been referred to as a “sport”. But I theorize that it might have its beginnings not as a form of ritualistic athleticism but rather I believe that it was used a tool by the Hawaiian people and their Polynesian

ancestors. It is my opinion, based on the cultural information gathered and its apparent ritualistic association to the architecture, that *hōlua* may have been important for use in the early native forest. This is a native forest that consisted of many large species of hardwood trees that were significant to the culture. These were trees that were important in the construction of the *papahōlua*, canoes, and large idols of worship. The practical use of the *hōlua* sled, an ingenious one, that should be seriously considered is that perhaps it was used as a heavy transportation vehicle to move the many large trees from the upland regions of the islands to the populated coastal areas. This entailed crossing rough terrain. The *hōlua* sled may have been built to fit and carry a semi-carved log (say for a large voyaging canoe) weighing thousands of pounds, that we in this modern world assume these ancient people dragged or carried across some of the most hostile landscape.

This theory that I present says that the Hawaiians needed a means by which to transport these large logs. Hence, in the process of hewing out the canoe, they also constructed the vehicle that would carry it out of the hardwood forest. The trees that were found in the same area, as the giant koa trees – *māmane*, *‘uhi’uhi*, *‘ohi’a*, and *kauila* – were the primary hardwoods used for weapons, tools, utensils, and the *papahōlua*. The Hawaiians did not waste time or

energy unnecessarily by trying to drag or carry such a massive object. These were intelligent and knowledgeable people revered for their navigational and architectural abilities and prowess by our modern world. Why, then, would we reduce them to a level of ignorance when it comes to moving large objects from one point to another? They mastered the seas and the stars and navigated the Pacific in the same way we drive around the island, so why could they not have devised the *papahōlua* for just that particular purpose? Perhaps the modern world cannot comprehend that such isolated island people possessed such advanced technological capabilities, and that their applied technological methods and techniques were in harmony with and accommodating to their island environment.

To answer these questions I knew I had to put this concept to the test, since there is no existing information. I set out to do just that, using *papahōlua* (sleds) that ranged in length from 6 foot to 12 foot. The width and depth remained constant at 4 inches in depth and approximately 5 ½ to 6 inches in width. The shape of the *papahōlua* narrows in the front, which is 2 inches at the tips, its widest point about 1/3 back from the front, and the end reaching a width approximately one inch less than the widest point. This formed a shape similar to what the ancient canoe design looked like. Because I did not have any large

koa trees available for my experiment, I set out to use different size weights that would affect balance and distribution across the sled. I needed to know what was required to stabilize and balance the sled in order to know what it would take for me to move the weighted sled. My first attempt was to place 600 pounds of sand in bags on a 12-foot sled distributed evenly across its length. I then attempted to push the sled, which I achieved effortlessly. Keep in mind that the runners were generously oiled with *kūkui* nut oil to minimize resistance and friction, and I also placed *lauhala* (pandanus) mats down where I did not have a nice grass surface. But the experiment was tried on both surfaces, and I had no problems moving the sled with the weight more than 50 yards effortlessly. Now that I knew I could push the sled and weight, I had to find out if I could pull that same weight without breaking the front of the sled. Using coconut sennit rope, I made a secure lashing to the front of the handrail and first crosspiece in a loop fashion that I could put around my waist, and I began to pull, which proved to be even easier than pushing. I had conducted this experiment on a very flat area, so I decided that the next step was to redo this experiment on a slope. Finding a small sloping hill, I repeated this procedure and found that pushing the sled uphill with that weight was a bit difficult, but not impossible. Pulling the sled up proved to be easier than I expected, and reversing this I attempted to let the sled

make a controlled descent that also proved to be the same. I eventually worked my way up to a weight of 1,200 pounds to test the carrying capacity of the sled as well as to see if I could move that much. The sled's ability to support that kind of weight without collapsing was superior. While my ability to move that much weight proved to tax me a bit more, I was still able to move the sled for a short distance. As much as I tried, I could not get the weight and sled to the top of the small incline, but I could control its descent with a longer rope; thus, I could remain at the apex of the hill, where I had a secure foothold to support the weight of the sled. What does this all say?

Well, from this experiment, I truly believe that the original purpose for the papahōlua and the slides constructed was to move the large trees from these mountain areas to the coast. As the tree was felled, the pathway to transport it was being prepared, and the slide on which it would slide was under construction. We have to get in mind that the tree was not always cut in a day. Depending on the size of the tree or trees, there was also the ritual that went into blessing a tree chosen, which entailed various offerings. But once the tree was chosen, the correct course to extract the tree was mapped out. Then began the movement of people would support those who would remain with the tree until they had completed their task. They would be fed by all the villagers from the

ahupua'a using the chosen path that was over time laid with stone and packed in with whatever fill material was available to establish a firm and even surface.

Once prepared, the log could have been loaded on to a *papahōlua* built to specifics, then moved downhill with a minimal amount of people. During this moving process, there was always one individual (maybe an *Ali'i* or *kahuna*) that directs the movement of the log.

That provides me with my next theory of the evolutionary process of the *hōlua*. It is possible that, during the time a tree was being transported, there may have been a *kahuna* standing on the log, directing everyone. As they began the descent on one these slides constructed for this purpose, perhaps this one time the line slipped from the hands of those holding the sled from descending too quickly, or maybe the rope snapped and control was lost. As this happened, the *kahuna* standing on the top of the log had no time to act, so he jumped forward, or maybe he stood erect on the log, and rode it to the bottom. Believing it was an act of the gods, there might have been a great commotion created over the incident because the *kahuna* or priest is not as high a rank as the *Ali'i* (chief), who is recognized as a god that walks upon the land. So, after seeing the *kahuna* ride the great log down the mountain and survive, the *Ali'i* now had to prove himself

to be of greater worth to the gods than his priest. The *kahuna* could not be put to death for an act of the gods, so the *Ali'i* had the log (or perhaps just the sled made for the task) taken back to the top, where the *Ali'i* mounted the sled and zipped down the slide, and thus the *hōlua* challenge began.

Now this is all speculation, but it is possible that it began that way.

Today, we can find the practice of log riding done every seven years in Japan, called "*Onbashira*". From what I know of it, this Japanese ritual is the moving of the great logs (in three stages) that will be used for the construction or reconstruction of specific temples. At the time that the trees are ready for movement, they are ridden by hundreds of individuals into a river and then down a mountain slope as the people attempt to stay on the logs. Then the logs are washed and moved to the temple area, where they are raised while as many individuals as possible attempt to stay on each log as it raised into a standing position.⁵² This Japanese ritual might be similar to rituals that occurred in Hawai'i hundreds or thousands of years ago. The Japanese religious or ritual practice of *Onbashira*, I believe, is only 700 years old, which indicates that *Onbashira* may be a ritual practice that was taken to Asia in a reverse migration by Hawaiians or Polynesians. More research has to be conducted regarding this

⁵² *Onbashira*, <http://www.root.or.jp.onbashira/o-st001.html>

theory, which I believe will open more windows through which to see the culture and history of the Hawaiian people and the importance of this unique practice - *hōlua*.

CHAPTER 6 THE REINSTITUTION OF A RITUAL PRACTICE

The history and duration of this research on the ritualism and practice of *hōlua* began in April of 1994 as a cultural project for a Hawaiian history class I was taking at Windward Community College. I found myself traveling to *Hawai'i Island* in search of native woods in order to construct my first *papahōlua*, this trip being necessary due to the lack of native woods on *O'ahu* or any islands. In addition to a search for raw materials to build a sled, I wished to travel to the Big Island in order to view up-close the *hōlua* slides that I was aware of and that I could study first-hand.

As a native of these islands, and having been reared in a traditional way, with a focus on forms of ocean athleticism (such as surfing) I was intrigued by the parallels between surfing and *hōlua* sledding and by the fact that while surfing today enjoys a worldwide cohort of devotees, *hōlua* sledding had slipped into the obscurity of time. The slide facilities themselves, moreover, were (and still are) under constant assault by virtue of economic development interests and under – appreciation of their heritage value and significance. Initially I devised a two – pronged approach to the study of *hōlua*: by replicating the *papahōlua* (sleds) and conducting sledding experimentation, and secondly through the collection

of information on these ancient slides. The study on this topic of ritual and performance has been conducted through innovative and comprehensive approaches to finding primary sources of information regarding *hōlua*, which have proved to be few. I compiled a collection of field data, with assistance from various individuals – such as Dixon, McAnany, Kirch, *kūpuna* Solomon, and others -- on the methods of slide construction and associated ritual structures (*heiau*) that have been complemented by the compilation and critical analysis of both European accounts and manuscripts. I interviewed my elders or *kūpuna* about the oral histories of *hōlua* that might exist. I began a program of experimental research on sledding techniques that eventually provided a fuller understanding of the *papahōlua* and the range of techniques and skills required to properly ride the sled.

In my desire to learn more of this practice, I developed a greater interest in what was physically remaining, which were the remnants of the slides, their respective locations on the landscape (physically and culturally) that existed prior to the holocaust (our great dying), and the way in which the *papahōlua* was constructed and performed when actually riding down a slope. I did this with informational support from various old *oli* (chants) or *'ōlelo no'eau* (proverbs or sayings) that alluded to various ritual acts, and the archaeology information

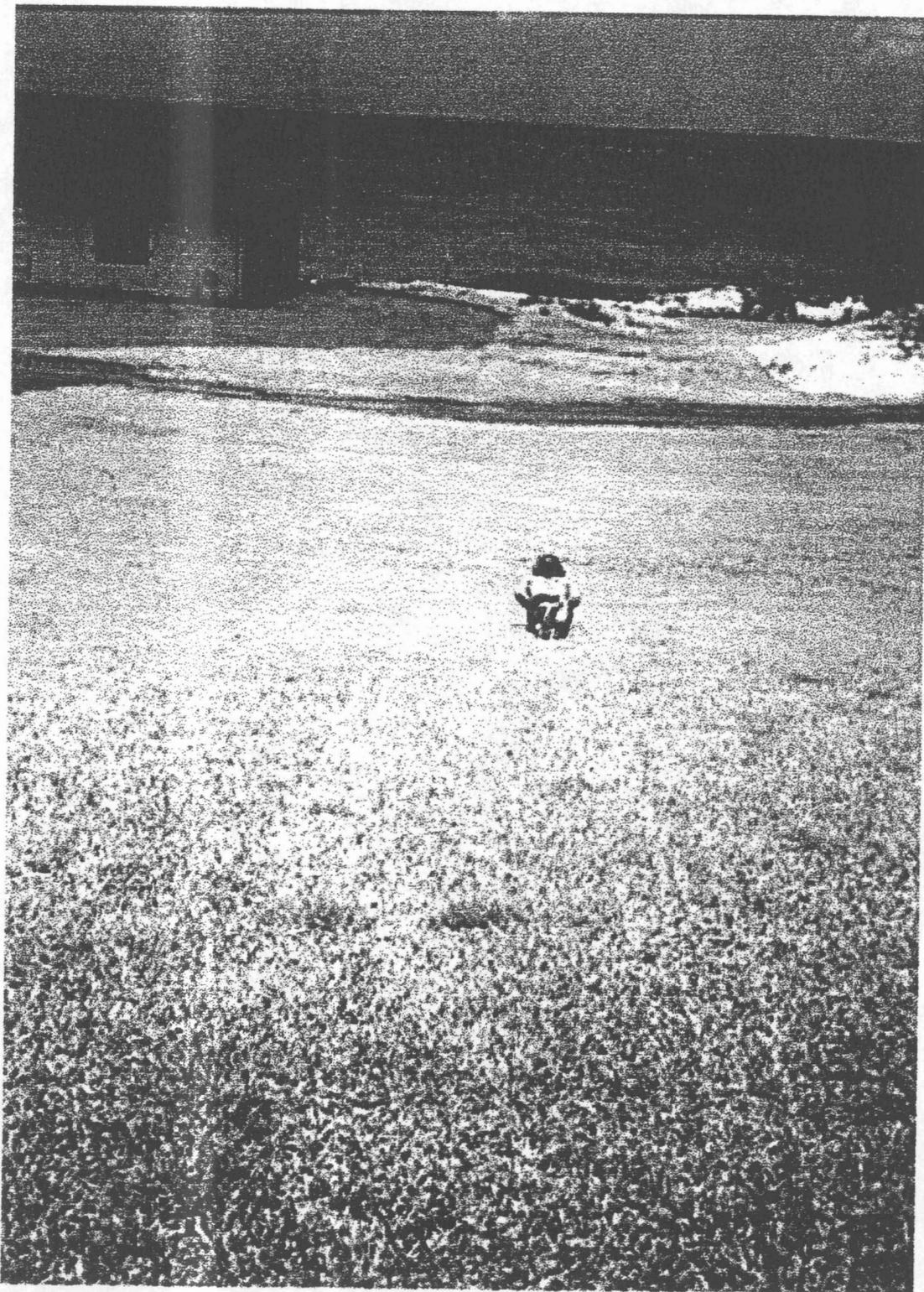
provided physical clues. I searched out numerous locations that, today, allow me the opportunity to experience in similar fashion the way *hōlua* may have been performed in the time of my ancestors.

In the beginning the actual slides were in disrepair and not available for use, so I sought open grass slopes that ranged in length, height, and degree of slope. Starting with the smallest hill, located at *'Upolu Point* on the northwestern end of the island of Hawai'i in the area where *Kamehameha I* was raised I rode my first *papahōlua* on open grass slopes (*Figure 22 & 23.). After that first experience and some minor injury, mostly to my ego, I eventually developed the necessary skills and was able to ride the largest grass slopes in the islands with confidence before moving on to riding a traditional stone constructed slide that can be viewed on video that has been donated to the University of Hawai'i – Mānoa Library, Hawaiian / Pacific Collection.

It has to be remembered that up until 1993 I had only heard the old stories of *he'ehōlua* or *hōlua* sled riding told to me by my *tūtūkane* (grandfather). Thus, I had no experience except through my experience with *tī* leaf or banana stump sliding (which is something similar to *he'ehōlua*, but without the *papahōlua*) that I did as a young boy for the fun and thrill of it all. After learning to construct and



* Figure 22. Preparing to *he'e'hōlua* for the first time (first *papahōlua*), 'Upolu Point 1994 (Stone).



* Figure 23. *E ola mau ka he'ehōlua, 'Upolu Point, 1994 (Stone).*

ride the *papahōlua* in 1994, I began to take a deeper interest in the construction of the slide. What intrigued me about the slides was their physical relationship to *heiau* structures. These ancient places that I considered to be areas for religious or ritualistic worship by my ancestors of old drew my attention and interest, as I knew that there had to be more information about the practice of *hōlua* and the structures that were there. I wondered how the location of each slide that I visited was chosen, and why. I asked myself: When were they constructed? How many people did it take to make a slide, large or small? Or, why are most of the slides are in isolated and barren locations? As I visited each slide, I realized from historical, geological, and archaeological evidence that the landscape I was looking at today was not the landscape that was present in the time a particular slide might have been constructed.

Most slides are constructed on steep slopes, rugged terrain, or off of somewhat moderate cliff faces, and they all had similar physical attributes of lesser enhanced elevated slopes, length, height, and degree and here along the coastline of all the islands. The few exceptions to this were the larger slides that were constructed in a fashion: that only said one thing “extreme commitment”. There are *Ka’ena Point*, *Keauhou*, *Keawa’ula*, *Kahikinui*, *Pu’uhōluaokamanu*, etc., found on four of the eight major Hawaiian Islands today (*See -Figure 1.). It is

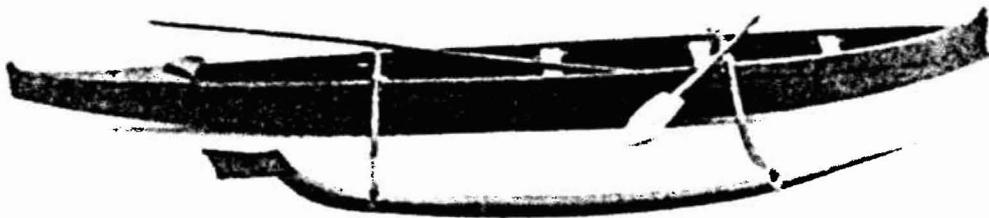
easy to explain in words, often difficult to illustrate, and almost impossible to envision what it is like to ride down one of these extreme slides on a *papahōlua* in the time of old, or even today. Only seeing it actually done will bring realization as to the high possibility of self – inflicted bodily injury or death by a means that has been labeled as “just a game” for these many years, and would continue to carry that label if a person is never made aware of what it looks like, especially if you are not native to these islands (*Figure 24.).

To refer to the *papahōlua*, as “a sled” does not suffice because the image invoked would more than likely be that of a toboggan, luge, or something of that sort that is a Western concept. During the years that I have dedicated myself to learning what *hōlua* represents, I have found that the *papahōlua* is not readily conceivable by the Western world, especially when it is pointed out by modern observers that the *papahōlua* is used primarily on a rock surface covered lightly in ancient times by various native materials. It is a description that is incomprehensible to most individuals, and I guess the best way to describe what a *papahōlua* is would be to use a descriptive image, such as the single or double-hull canoes found throughout Hawai‘i and the other Pacific islands. Canoes (*wa‘a*) in Hawai‘i have a basic design similar to the *papahōlua*, so you could say



* Figure 24. Near the top of *Pu'u Pueo*, Ka'ena Point. Prior to making a leap of faith on rock in traditional dress (Stone, 1995).

that the *papahōlua* was perhaps modeled after the *wa'a* for practical reasons that I will not go into in great detail at this time (*Figure 25). I suspect this to be true because every facet of the *papahōlua* is identical to the Hawaiian or Polynesian canoe, so this is the structural medium that I will use to explain how I went about learning to construct a *papahōlua*.



*Figure 25. Traditional Hawaiian single – hull canoe (Bishop Museum Collections).

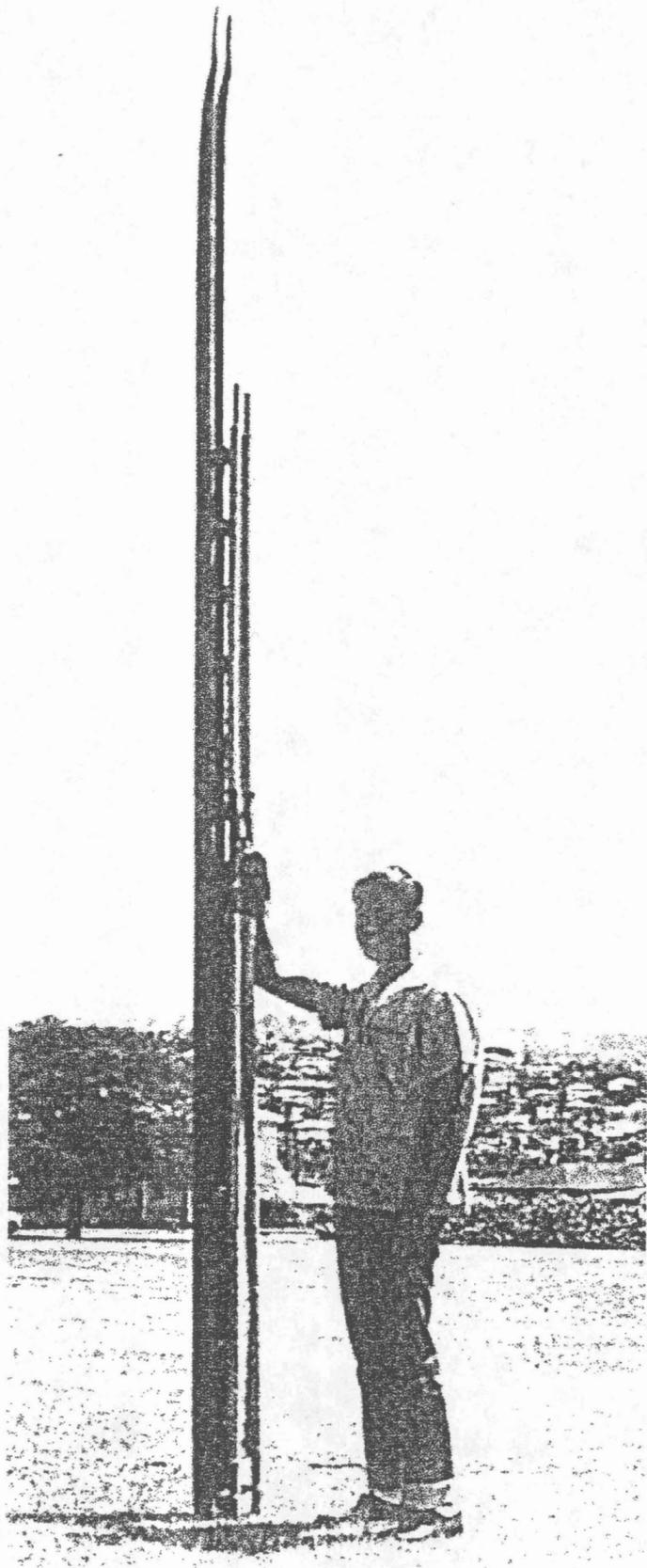
To begin, if an individual knows anything about Pacific canoes, all we need to do is imagine if we were to remove the panels or skin of the canoe we would be left with nothing more than the framework, which includes the seats and gunwale. With these two parts left to our imagination perhaps, we can almost begin to visualize the *papahōlua*. Split the fore and aft sections open so that the frame (gunwale) becomes two separate pieces, with the seats holding them together. Place this section on to two *'ama* or outriggers and you have something resembling the *papahōlua*, but without the third section (the handrails). Lost in that brief description? Well, that's the best description that

can be given in order that a person may have some sort of visualization of what the *papahōlua* is (See - Figures 26 & 29.).

This extremely ritualized sport of *hōlua*—a temporally antecedent, tropical version of the luge—utilized a long, thin sled with two wooden runners only six inches apart, which varied in length from 8 feet to 18 feet, and a maximum height of just 4 inches off the ground (*Figure 26 & 28.). The size of a *papahōlua* to be ridden was determined by the degree of difficulty of the slide and ability of the rider. The materials were: *Uhiuhi* – a hard, dense wood with a dark blackish colored core (an endemic legume – *Mezoneuron kauaiense*); *māmane* – is a hard dense wood with a yellowish core (a native leguminous tree – *Sophora chrysophylla*); or *kauila* – which has a hard reddish interior (2 varieties, with the first being the buckthorn – *Alphitonia ponderosa* and the other *Colubrina oppositifolia*); *‘ohe* or bamboo; *‘olana* or *niu* for cordage; *kukui* nut oil as a lubricant for the runners and as a preservative for the wood and cordage; and the use of *‘awa* as an offering and for medicinal purposes.⁵³

There are three *nā ‘apana* (segments) that make up a *papahōlua*, with all segments usually constructed with either the *‘uhi’uhi*, *māmane*, or *kauila*. The only

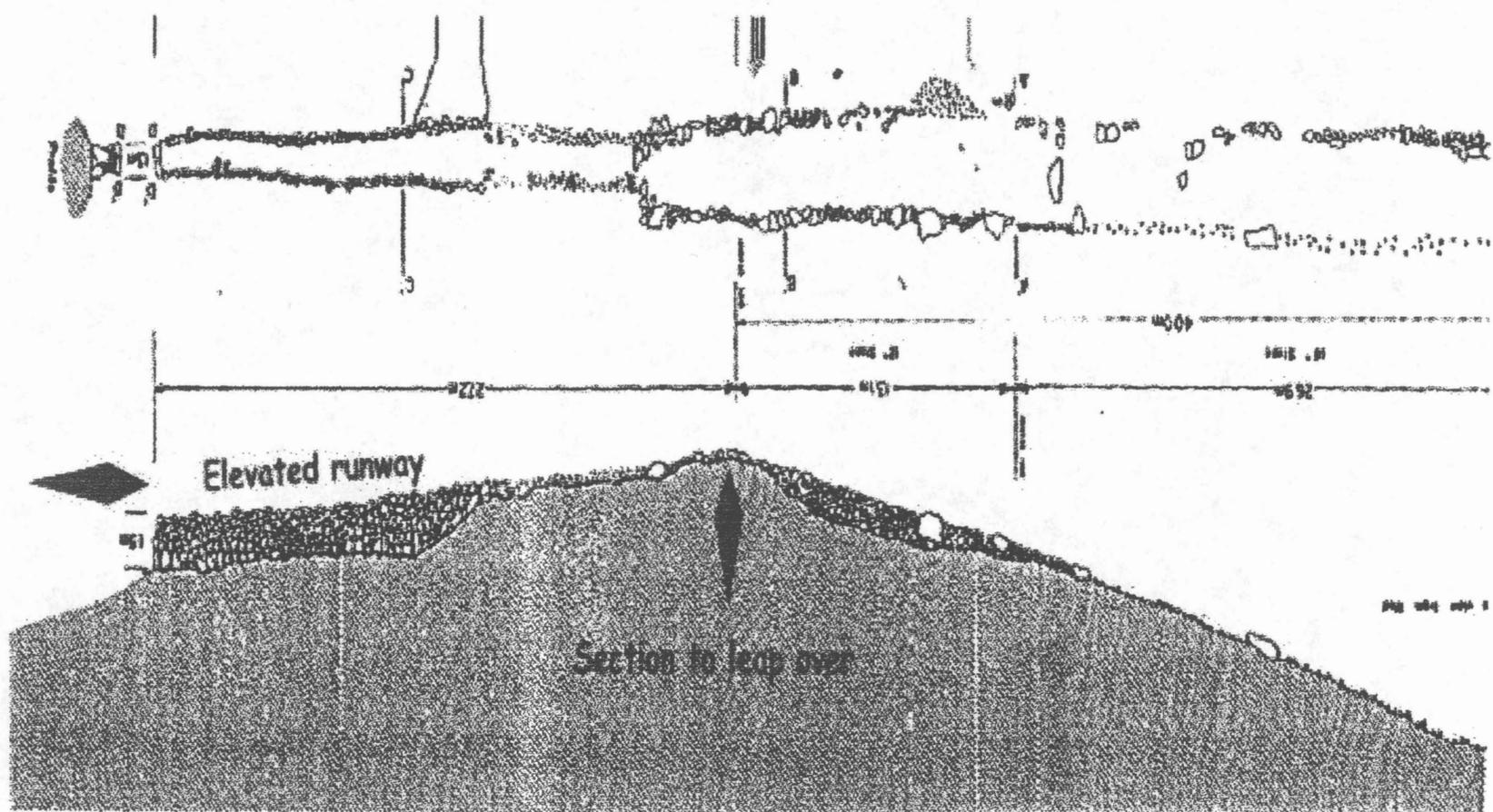
⁵³ Abbott, Isabella, Aiona, *La’au Hawai’i: Traditional Hawaiian Uses of Plants*, p. 163.



*Figure 26. *Papahōlua* (Bishop Museum Collection).

exception was the *'ohe* that was used to secure the two handrails (*kaola*) together, which makes up the upper top-most portion of the *papahōlua*. The first segment would be the two sections of runners, or *kama'aloa* (meaning "long shoes"). The runners (*kama'aloa*) as mentioned above, are known to have ranged in length from 8 to 18 feet. The standard width of the *kama'aloa* is approximately 1 inch and at a height of 2 inches no matter what the length may be. Next would be the *'amana* (crosspiece), which is used to support the two *kama'aloa* (runners). The *'amana* were approximately 1 inch in length, width, thickness, and height. The *kaola* (handrails) have a width of 1 inch in diameter and a length that would be approximately 2 ½ feet shorter than the runners be. Then, the handrails would then be rounded out, combined with bamboo (*'ohe*) crosspieces, lashed crosswise to the handrail in consistent intervals, and thereby form an upper section corresponding to the same width as the lashed runners. These three segments would then be lashed together to form the completed *papahōlua*.

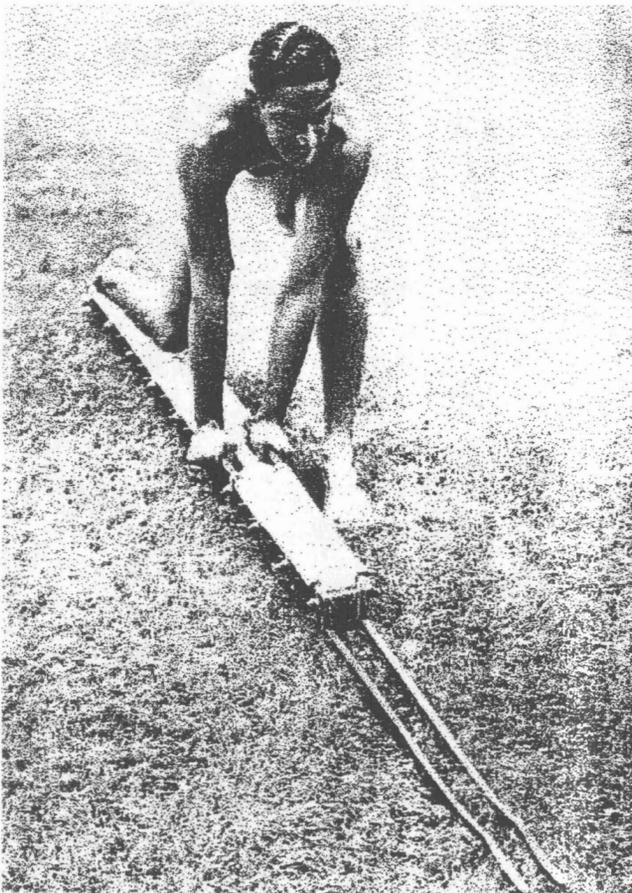
The design, length, and the incline of the slide (*Figure 27.) determined the length of the *papahōlua*, with a rider of the *papahōlua* having a choice of riding prone, kneeling, or standing (in a surfing position) toward the back 1/3 of the sled. In the prone position, the rider was required to run down a paved runway



* Figure 27. Cross section of *Wainanāli'i hōlua* slide at *Kīholo Bay*, Hawai'i (Francis Ching).

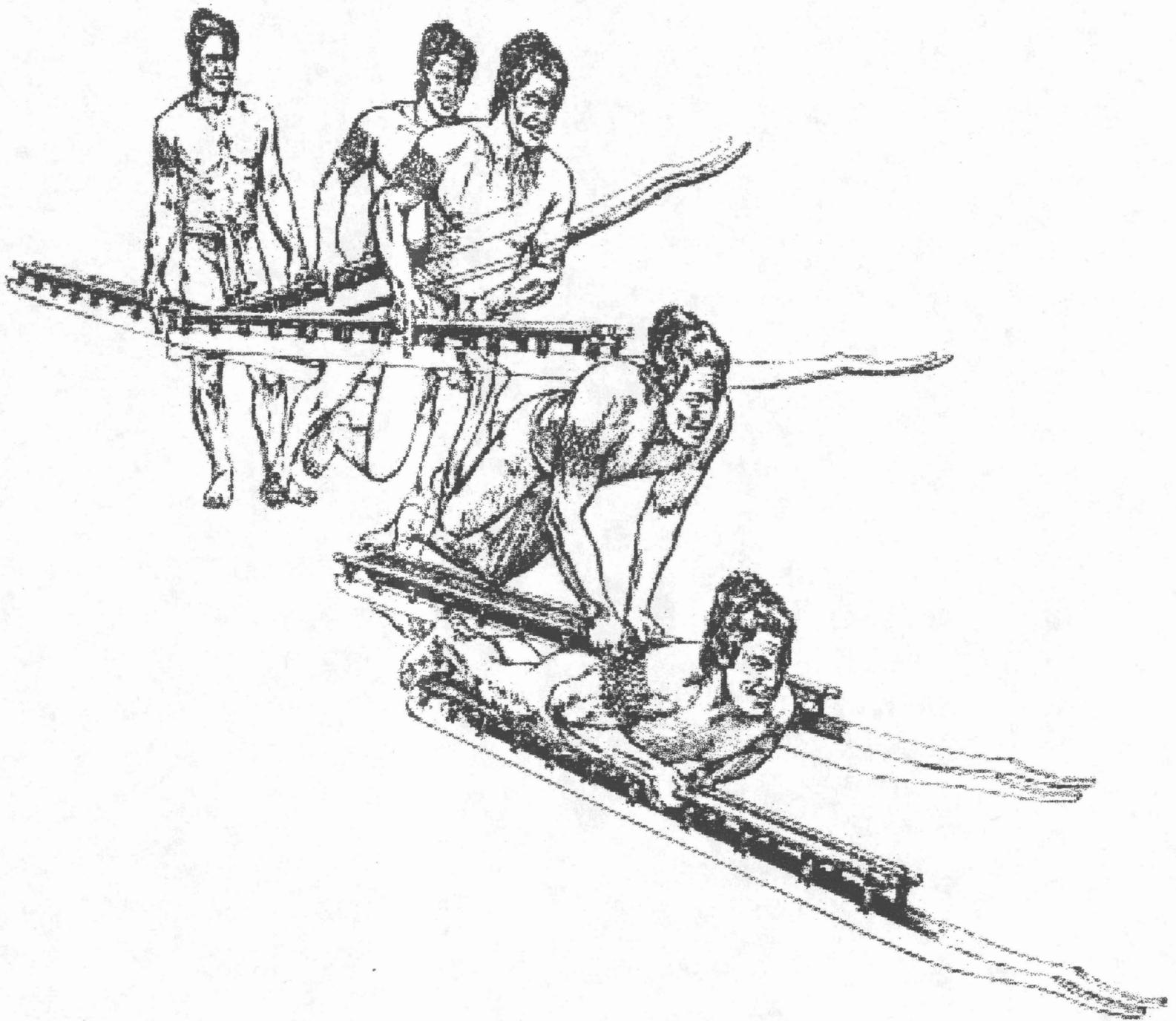
measuring 80 to 85 feet in length, then leap up over a small wall (approximately 1½ - 2 feet in height) on to the slide while pulling his/her sled under their body so that they might land squarely upon it (*Figure 29.). This was a feat in itself because the rider had to trust that the weight of the sled would pull him over the wall in mid-air. The average weight of a 12-foot *papahōlua* is approximately 55 – 60 pounds, with weight being a major factor.

In the kneeling position (*Figure 28.), the rider first placed the sled on to



* Figure 28. Preparing to mount in a kneeling position (Bishop Museum).

the slide at the precipice or top of the incline, then placed one knee on to the sled while holding the handrails, and with a push hurled oneself down the slope. While in motion and as quickly as possible, they would place their other knee and calf on to their first knee, and as if balancing on all fours they sped down the course as their speed increased. This is the most difficult position to maintain one's balance for the duration of a ride. When in the kneeling position the awkwardness of the position on the sled causes an improper balancing of the sled that the rider must compensate for, or find



*Figure 29. *Hōlua* Rider Mounting a *Papahōlua* . (Artwork by Herb Kane)

themselves either flying off the track or sliding face first, with their thus body becoming the sled.

When standing, one assumes the position that is similar to surfing, snowboarding, or skateboarding. Standing erect, the rider attempts to navigate the slide in the most direct way down slope, but most of the slides are not always straight and true. To the contrary, the slides are constructed usually with the flow of the natural terrain, creating slight turns and dips. With this in mind, the construction of the slide then incorporates into this basic design the slide's overall width, length, and shape with the inclusion of various obstacles built strategically along the length of the slide(s), varying anywhere from 50 to 4,000 feet long. Talk about a challenge! This is it if you want to gain the *mana* of the gods. To remain standing the entire length of a slide is a feat that remains basically (except for one brief opportunity) elusive today while we work to restore these ancient slides of my ancestors. Only by continuous practical application do we know for a fact that the *papahōlua* is capable of attaining speeds of approximately 15–45 miles per hour on grass slopes, 30–60 miles per hour or more on the constructed lava slides which were covered lightly with *pili* grass (native to Hawai'i), or *nā pua o ke kō* (the flowers of the sugarcane) and speeds of 50–70+ miles per hour on the snow-covered slopes of *Mauna Kea*.

Through the years, we have settled for practicing these positions on rugged grass slopes that are constantly being eroded by cattle that graze upon these open lands, or when possible there are nicely groomed parks and golf courses that will suffice for the time, but the type of grass growing and the sponginess of the ground at these groomed places does not make for good sledding. As of December 2000, I have finally broken a barrier in the practice of *hōlua* that could not have come about without the help from a dedicated and diverse group of younger and older individuals that committed themselves to learning what *hōlua* is all about and assisted in the partial restoration of the *Kapu'a* slide. The slide was sufficiently restored, allowing our group to be the first to ride one of the *kahuahōlua* in modern times. We did so with some risk and injury, apparent on the video that is complimentary to this research work. In time, and with patience, the practice of *hōlua* will once again gain a foothold in our native culture, and eventually many of the ancient slides will be in use again, but until that time it is important that we continue to perform this ritualistic practice in order to revitalize this long-dormant cultural practice. *Hōlua* sledding was more than just a popular sport of our *kūpuna kahiko* (ancestors); it was a way of life. As in all things Hawaiian, it took great skill and courage to perform, but the cultural preservation and reinstatement of this ritual practice is a necessity

today, or we may find *hōlua* (and ourselves as natives) vanishing into oblivion for all time.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

What we do know today from practical experience and research is that the early scholars erred in their studies and representation of *hōlua*. What I do speculate on, based my research, is that *hōlua* was practiced continuously throughout the year and not just during the time of *Makahiki*, as previously thought to have occurred. Early scholars erred in their thinking that only the *Ali'i* practiced *hōlua*; but we now know that all people practiced it--the commoner and chief alike--contradictory to early reports by Western observers. Therefore, today, we as native people who practice this little-known part of our culture have come to realize that there is more to its performance than what has been recorded.

At times, *hōlua* would be more than just a game enjoyed by all, because the social structure and the construction of a *heiau* or religious site that accompanied certain slides transformed the concept of fun and games into a practice usually reserved for the chiefly and warrior classes. Consequently, the difference is that, because the *Ali'i* or paramount chief was considered to be a god who walked upon the land, the interaction or practice of the *hōlua* at this time may have been restricted to *Ali'i*, *kahuna*, and *nā koa* (warriors) that were held in high esteem. It

is important to remember that, during the time of early contact, interaction by foreigners was mainly with the chiefly class. The gathering of information was primarily only of and from the chiefly order and not of the commoners, so the Western scholars' assumptions that only one social class was privy to such a ritualistic practice (and their presumption that *hōlua* was just a game) we know now to be incorrect. With the inconclusive information available, over time a form of cultural exclusion or myth about *hōlua* was created. This path occurred unintentionally, but nevertheless it had a far-reaching impact on the Hawaiian culture and its history.

The early scholars missed the involvement of the many other physical and spiritual aspects of the culture and gods relative to such cultural practices. There have been so many assumptions by foreign scholars that the primary god related to the practice of *hōlua* was *Lono*, but obviously we know this was maybe not the case, since new information has become available. This is not to say that there is an exclusion of a particular god or gods, but rather that it is an inclusion. When studying the Polynesian cultures, it is important to keep in mind that the native does not view their cultural world as linear, but reciprocal or circular in nature, where one is dependent on the other existing simultaneously in a dualistic form. Hence, when we study *hōlua* we must also account for the physical landscape as

well as the spiritual one, in which such a ritualistic practice takes place to determine the most prominent deity reflective of the practice at the time. For *hōlua* it is apparent that the primary god or goddess honored in the practice of *hōlua* was more likely to have been *Pele*, though many would not agree unless they had worshipped her and experienced this form of self – sacrifice by hurling themselves down a mountainside on a slide (made of stone) lightly covered with *pili grass* or *pua kō* (the flower of sugarcane) on a *papahōlua* (sled) only 5 ½ inches wide.

Pele, the goddess of the volcanoes as we know her, is not the destroyer of islands, but rather the builder or creator of the new lands. Her massive lava flows claim many fertile areas and the people that may have resided upon them, but at the same time these eruptive phases create more lands that eventually become fertile. It was perhaps during these times that the ancient stories were created and passed on through the ages to those who metaphorically rode upon her lava flows to pay homage to *Pele*, or in defiance of her. Defiance may have been costly, the end result being the forfeiture of their lives, and if it was a chief that died it might also have meant the lives of his people. The story of *Kahawali and Pele* was told to William Ellis as he traveled through the *Puna* district on the

island of Hawai'i in 1828, and was the first oral story of *hōlua* told to a foreigner (See Chapter IV.). Then there are other stories where *Pele* perhaps honored certain chiefs for their worshipping of her, just as she did for *Kamehameha I*, by killing off many of the warriors of *Ka'u* led by the ruling chief *Keoua*, who was cousin to *Kamehameha I*. This occurred during an eruption phase at *Kilauea* volcano as *Keoua* and his warrior's crossed through this area that is flanked by *Mauna Loa* on their way home from a battle with *Kamehameha I*. This incident of perhaps godly favoritism significantly altered the struggle for political power on the island of Hawai'i in *Kamehameha's* favor and brought to a close a chapter in Hawaiian history.⁵⁴

The long-held belief by anthropologists, archaeologists, and ethnohistorians that *hōlua* is simply a game describes an inaccurate account of the physical, spiritual, and social landscape of the indigenous people, culture, and their relationship to the geographical landscape. Unwittingly, there has been an exclusion of cultural facts about *hōlua*, relevant to its practice, that has produced what I refer to as "cultural myths". Such exclusion was applied to the practice of *hōlua*, a particular aspect of the native landscape in time and space that has continued to perpetuate a mythical construct that has had a lasting impact on the

⁵⁴ Kamakau, Samuel, M., *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i – Revised Edition*, p.152.

reality of this ritualized practice. This certainly impacts other traditional practices of the Hawaiian people.

A cultural theory can only be presented based on an assumed knowledge of a cultural practice. There are native ways that are applicable to understanding these practices, but these are usually brushed aside by the modern world to promote a romanticized ideal of a culture and its people. By doing so, there is a tendency to inadvertently annihilate the cosmological order of native cultures, their indigenous practices, their language, and the natives', comprehensive relationship to their physical and spiritual environment, and themselves.

This survey of *hōlua* contributes in both substance and theory to the understanding of the institutional means by which cultural themes are created and expressed through such ritualized athletic performances. *Hōlua* remains as a true remnant of a cultural practice that is a reminder of the physical and cultural connection the indigenous people have with these islands, in the past and today. The many chants and songs contain complex accounts of exploits and feats of the *kūpuna* endlessly expressing and recreating this dynamic culture in an evolutionary dance that reaches into a time long ago, singing the songs of ocean travels and settlement in this archipelago.

Today, the revitalized practice of *hōlua* challenges the many sources of interpretation regarding the indigenous culture of these islands, and presents a coherent cosmological relationship of their cultural landscape. Evidently -- after 180 years of anthropological and archaeological reconnaissance attempts to accurately read, comprehend, and present the native landscape -- we are now aware of and faced with the growing inaccuracies that have had a profound and lasting effect on the native culture of these islands. This is not to say that these early archaeological surveys were a failure. To the contrary, I think we can be thankful for their interest and interpretative attempts, even though they were somewhat out of step with the actual cultural landscape. These written accounts, complimentary to our oral accounts, could be considered receptacles of the bits and pieces of ancient history that are reaffirmations of who we are and of our traditional cultural practices. From the ancient practice of *hōlua*, the outside world is now furnished with a visual perspective of the Hawaiian then and now, as it provides clues and perhaps answers to questions that have remained elusive for many years.

As indigenous people of these islands, it is important that we safeguard the cultural identity and landscape of our ancestors and not allow them to become negotiable. It is imperative that we preserve and guard these traditional

ways of life against the invented traditions and myths of the Western world. The symbols of cultural identity are signifiers of difference and resistance to the values of a dominant culture; *hōlua* is but one of these symbols that are representative of the indigenous ways.

Our physical landscape was and continues to be associated with the upper levels of Hawaiian society. Reflected in a primary role, defining our traditional Hawaiian cultural values and practices, are the remaining objects and structures that are now devoid of "*mana*" or life due to cultural disparity. Labeled inconsequential culturally, through historical and archaeological interpretation, this now cultivates a misunderstanding of contemporary Hawaiian culture. The concept of what should be preserved (culturally), and what should not, has alienated the contemporary Native Hawaiian. In doing so, the landscape and the personal history of the native people should not be transformed into curious objects, containing no "*mana*" or spiritual force – specimens for the understanding of human culture and change. The *hōlua* slides that remain are a connection that we (as native people) have, which would permit us to continue our way of life from the earlier time. Through the revitalization of these objects and structures the Hawaiian culture and its identity would be renewed and transformed by the process of cultural evolution – culture is not static, but rather

dynamic and in constant flux with its environment. The information necessary for the revitalization of these places would be based on the use and application of traditional practices that has lain dormant (handed down from generation to generation) within repositories of the surviving native community. The definitions of these many places and objects relative to *hōlua* need to be precise. It is the interpretation of these definitions according to the viewpoints of the Native Hawaiian that define these physical entities as having on-going historical, traditional, and cultural importance central to their needs. As such these are not inalienable features separated by time from the native community.

Recontextualized, the native landscape is the metaphoric personification, a link to cultural values, practices, and traditional knowledge of contemporary Hawaiian society to their past. As physical symbols, *hōlua* is a conduit to the gods; it sharpens our minds, our tongues, our bodies, and our spirit as we move into the 21st century. Native Hawaiians are practitioners of their culture -- joining the heavens and earth to bridge the gap to our past lifeways in the context of tradition, where such features had a utilitarian purpose.

There are many places and objects that are considered important to Hawaiian culture, but to discuss all aspects of the physical structures of Hawai'i pre-contact history would be quite tedious and too broad a subject. Thus, in this

research, the practice of *hōlua* is one particular sampling of the whole range of cultural structures that should be reinstitutionalized rather than preserved in a lifeless state. This is only one facet of Hawaiian culture that is the embodiment of our struggle and resistance to the foreign interpretation of who we are, and the modernization of that culture by those same foreigners. It is our means of maintaining the living essence of our ancestral lands and cultural way of life to which we are all bound to spiritually. Our Hawaiian view of the world is not an alternative – it is the primary, while the western views are the alternative relative to our native perspective.

There is a commitment to the liberation of the Indigenous peoples from the oppressive conditions of contemporary thought instituted by Western civilization surrounding the concept of what is important for preservation purposes. The reinstitutionalization of our native sites or “objects” is a primary inspiration that motivates the native towards the de-commodification and revitalization of their indigenous cultural practices. The Hawaiian people were, and continue to be denied their right to access their traditional knowledge that has laid dormant in these “historic sites or landmarks”. Hawaiians, once masters of their knowledge and traditional practices gave way to an imposed concept of “*ho’omalama o ka ‘āina*” (“to care for the land”), and to generations of cultural

discouragement and embarrassment. The Hawaiian ideal of wisdom, their philosophy of knowledge focuses on their identifying with the land, and the objects they worship, which has for millenniums served their way of life, which has now become the tool required for us to engage in the many contemporary discourses regarding who's culture is it.

For Hawaiians the revitalization of our stories and objects is an opportunity to re-assert, to re-claim these images on our lands in a more appropriate and Hawaiian light, strengthening and maintaining our culture – our native identity. From a native perspective, and in Hawaiian terms, this is an opportunity to initiate the effort to understand the "*kauna*", or hidden meaning that is so prevalent within the Hawaiian community, but remains hidden to others outside the culture.

In closing, I offer this final *'ōlelo no'eau* that expresses the essence of my efforts to perpetuate my native culture and the practice of *hōlua* that can only continue if we see the lands for what they are, the identity of a people:

*Inā makemake mākou e 'ike,
nui ka maka o ka 'āina,
e 'ike pono mākou ma ka 'uhiwai.*

If we desire to see,
the multitude of faces on the land,
then we have to see clearly through the mist.

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