

## **Land Tenure in He`e`ia Uli, the He`e`ia Wetland**

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### **He`e`ia Uli**

He`e`ia Uli, referred to as the He`e`ia wetland or meadowlands is located in He`e`ia, one of eleven contiguous ahupua`a located in the moku or district of Ko`olaupoko spanning from Waimānalo to Kualoa. Along the southeastern coastline (Kāne`ohe, He`e`ia, Kahalu`u, Ka`alaea and Waiāhole) are some of the most productive `āina which historically produced an abundance of wetland kalo (*taro; Colocasia esculenta*) in lo`i or agricultural terraces which were irrigated by ma uka or upland springs and streams.

There are more than twenty five `ilis which make up the Indigenous and contiguous complex environment in the He`e`ia ahupua`a. This ecosystem is comprised of the wao nāhelehele or forest zone in the ma uka sections, the wao kānaka or agricultural zones in between (including the nenelu or wetland section) and the kahakai or coastal zone which includes the fishpond, Loko I`a o He`e`ia, Moku o Lo`e, and Kapapa Island as well as the near shore fisheries. While the wao nāhelehele is predominantly comprised of introduced species, a few native varieties struggle to survive in the farthest reaches of the ma uka portions of the ahupua`a. The wao kānaka is comprised of `āina kuleana, suburban residents and businesses. The nenelu or wetland, which had been fallow for more than sixty years, is a four hundred acre wetland covered with grasses overlying old taro and rice fields, and a forest of invasive mangrove, java plum, non-native grasses and other trees. The nenelu is the māno wai or source for the muliwai or estuarine waters which are channeled into the kai through the pukana or outlet at the He`e`ia Bridge. Wai passes through these habitats from the mauka or upper reaches of the ahupua`a and flows directly into Kāne`ohe Bay onto the coral reefs via Ha`ikū, Kaiwike`e, `Ioleka`a, and Pū`olena streams ultimately becoming He`e`ia Stream which flows through the wetland and the historical Loko I`a o He`e`ia (He`e`ia Fishpond).

### **Chronology of Land Tenure of the He`e`ia Ahupua`a**

1775            Kamehameha unites all the islands with the exception of Kaua`i under his rule and authority.

- 1819 Kamehameha I dies. Liholiho or Kamehameha II becomes the king and Ka`ahumanu becomes Kuhina Nui or co-regent. Boki Kama`ule`ule becomes Governor of O`ahu.
- 1824 Kamehameha II and his wife die from measles on a visit to Great Britain.
- 1825 Boki appoints Kaniani/Keanini as district chief of Ko`olaupoko.
- 1825 Kamehameha III becomes king with Ka`ahumanu serving as regent. Boki is kahu to KIII.
- 1829 Boki leaves for New Hebrides and disappears; his wife, Liliha becomes Governess of O`ahu and appoints Kaiakoili as the konohiki for the Ko`olaupoko district.
- 1831 Liliha is deposed after planning a rebellion against Queen Regent Ka`ahumanu.
- 1848 Mahele land division. Paki receives the ahupua`a of He`e`ia with the exception of the Ili of Ioleka`a. Abner Paki receives 3,737 acres of land, Victoria Kamamalu receives 140 acres, the Catholic Mission receives 216.50 acres and Makekehau receives 14.65 acres.
- 1850 Pākī lease 2000 acres of He`e`ia to George Lathrop for 50 years.
- 1854 Kamehameha III dies.
- 1855 Kamehameha IV becomes King and Abenera Paki dies and his widow dowager Konia, receives 3,737 acres of He`e`ia among other lands.
- 1856 Pauahi signs an agreement to lease portions of the ahupua`a to 97 individuals.
- 1857 Konia dies and Bernice Pauahi (daughter of Pākī and Konia) inherits He`e`ia which totaled 4712 acres, including the loko i`a (fishpond).
- 1863 Kamehameha IV dies and Kamehameha V succeeds him.
- 1864 Pauahi sells 772 acres “from the top of Ma`eli`eli peak” to Catholic Bishop Maigret for \$970.00.
- 1866 Pauahi leases 2,500 acres in He`e`ia for 15 years to John McKeague for growing sugar who formed the He`e`ia Sugar Company and extended the lease in 1869 for an additional 13 years.
- 1866 McKeague mortgages his lease to Hackfield and Co. and deeds half-interest in his lease to Alexander Kennedy, his partner in the ne He`e`ia Sugar Plantation Co.
- 1871 Bernice Pauahi Bishop leases land to Chinese rice farmers in He`e`ia.  
Wing Wo Tai Company
- 1872 Kamehameha V dies.
- 1875 Reciprocity Treaty is signed allowing the export of raw sugar cane duty free.
- 1878-1903 He`e`ia Sugar Company (He`e`ia Agricultural Company, Ltd.)

- 1880 Rice mill built on leased Bishop land.
- 1880 The He`e`ia Rice Plantation was under the operation of Ma Ah Kau.
- 1882 McKeague sells all of his interest in the He`e`ia lease to He`e`ia Sugar Plantation Co. [HSPC] for \$1.00 and a new lease is written between HSPC, Ltd. And Charles Reed Bishop for much of the land in He`e`ia.
- 1883 The lease is augmented for the lands already had and grants the company all traditional konohiki rights to fisheries and seas appertaining to He`e`ia, including the loko, Moku o Lo`e (Coconut Island) and Ha`ikū Valley.
- 1890 Cultivation of pineapple begins.
- 1903 He`e`ia Sugar Plantation ceases operations.
- 1910 Libby, McNeill, & Libby acquires the Hawaiian Cannery Company on windward O`ahu.<sup>1</sup>
- 1911 Libby builds a model plantation village and small cannery in Kahalu`u.
- 1910-1912 Libby acquires over 1,600 acres of land in He`e`ia, Kaneohe, Kailua, Waiahole and Waikāne mostly under lease.<sup>2</sup>
- 1916 Libby purchases Ko`olau Fruit Company acquiring its 500 acres of leased land in He`e`ia.
- 1920-1940 Taro makes a comeback coinciding with the decline of rice.
- 1923 Libby reduces its plantings and sub-leases large areas to independent growers.
- 1923 Libby withdraws from windward O`ahu and dismantles its cannery.
- 1943 Many Kane`ohe properties belonging to Queen Kalama are sold to H.K.L. Castle.
- 1969 100 year flood occurs on the windward coast, the wetland goes fallow at this time.
- 1980 Bishop Estate considers selling the He`e`ia meadowlands (wetland) for \$25 million dollars to a Japanese investor whose intent was to build a golf course, and is stopped by community outrage.
- 1991 Kamehameha Schools swaps 405 acres of its He`e`ia land for land in Kaka`ako and the Hawai`i Community Development Authority presently oversees its management.

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<sup>1</sup> Signs a five year contract with James B. Castle to purchase all of the pineapples grown on his 1000 acre plantation at Ahuimanu and He`e`ia. (Hawkins, Richard A., *A Pacific Industry: The History of Pineapple Canning in Hawai`i*, 2011, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Libby leases 1000 acres of land in He`e`ia, Kāne`ohe and Kailua for 17 years at \$10,000 per annum from Kāne`ohe Ranch Company and the He`e`ia Sugar Company and obtains an additional 600 acres of land in the ahupua`a of He`e`ia from He`e`ia Sugar Company and 500 acres from Hawaiian Pineapple Company through the Ko`olau Fruit Company.

2010

Kako`o `Oiwī acquires a 38 year lease from HCDA for the He`e`ia wetland and currently heads the restoration project for the wetland.

The engineered success of the irrigated pond system was severely compromised when land tenure changed in 1848 and along with it, land use. In 1871 Bernice Pauahi Bishop leased land in He`e`ia to Chinese planters and rice replaced most of the kalo in the wetland. For the next 100 years the wetland would go through historical changes of land ownership, modification and diversified agriculture, much of it devastating to the cultural landscape. `Āina that was once cultivated in kalo was not planted in rice. As modernity encroached and the commodification of He`e`ia's lands continued, plantations came and went, eventually ceasing operations of both sugar and pineapple by 1923. With the exception of cattle grazing and the raising of pigs, the most severe impact to this once productive kalo land was the 100 year flood in 1969 and resulting fallow condition over the next 60 years. The effect of both non-use and misuse in the meadow lands of He`e`ia has been the extensive proliferation of non-native species of plants, severely impacted waterways, stream health, flow and quality and the expansive population of feral pigs and wild cattle. In 2008 lineal descendants of ancestors who had once labored in the lo`i kalo of He`e`ia Uli began to talk about restoring the wetland to kalo. These ancestors, the kūpuna and mākua of He`e`ia provided, through interviews, mo`olelo and precious memories about the "good old days" of kalo, poi, fish, rice, and the families who made up the community of He`e`ia. The Ko`olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, whose members make up many of the lineal descendant families of He`e`ia, was the organization that began an earnest effort to bring the wetland back into the production of poi. Galvanized by the interest of Nature Conservancy Hawai`i and the land owner, Hawai`i Community Development Authority (a state entity), all three became collaborative partners in a community effort to restore the He`e`ia Uli or the wetland back to kalo and the production of poi.