

~History of Kaeleku and Honomā`ele ~

The earliest Polynesian voyagers settled first in areas such as Hāna where there was abundant rainfall and fertile soil for reliable farming. These early farmers gradually formed communities with relatively simple social structures. Around the 13th century, with the arrival of a later wave of Polynesian voyagers, a more stratified social hierarchy began to emerge. By the early 15th century kingdoms had formed throughout the Hawaiian Islands accompanied by an increased social stratification that included a ruler, high chiefs, and low chiefs holding power over the commoners. It is likely the construction of larger *heiau*, (ancient religious structures), occurred at that time.

For many generations the *ahupua`a* (land division) of Honomā`ele, was an important agricultural area, a thriving community that prospered under the guidance of their *ali`i* (chiefs). Oral legends and chants recall that by the latter part of the 16th century the renowned ali`i Pi`ilani united the entire island of Maui under one rule with Hāna Bay as one of the royal centers of the kingdom.

Hāna continued to be a center of royal power until 1794, when Kamehameha, ruler of the Kingdom of Hawai`i, defeated the Maui army and Maui became part of that kingdom; thereafter Hāna gradually faded in importance. In 1848, the Hawaiian Monarchy was created and private land ownership was established. As a direct result of this new land ownership system, one-half of the *ahupua`a* of Honomā`ele, roughly 990 acres, was granted to Chief Kahanu by Kauikeaouli (King Kamehameha III).

Since then Honomā`ele had gone through several major land-use changes. In the early 1860s Hāna Plantation was formed and the area became a thriving sugar plantation community. After many years of bustling agricultural activity under successive owners, the plantation closed in 1946 and Hāna Ranch transformed the old sugar fields into pastures for grazing cattle.

In 2000 the present owner of this property purchased this 125 acres parcel that was part of the neighboring property owned by entertainer, Jim Nabors. Jim Nabors property was named "Aina Hoaloha Ranch, Hawaiian, for "Land of Friends", the two parcels are separated by Honomaele Gulch. Jim Nabors other parcels were purchased by the National Tropical Botanical Gardens.

The National Botanical Gardens below the property is home of Kahanu Garden and the Heiau Pi`ilanihale (literally "House of Pi`ilani"). This massive Heiau standing almost 50 feet high is a stepped lava rock platform the size of two football fields. Archaeologists believe the *heiau*, or temple, was constructed in four stages, beginning as early as the 12th century. The platform served as a ceremonial site for the Pi`ilani noble family, who ruled Maui until the 19th century. Restored in 1999, the temple is thought to be the biggest in Polynesia. The *heiau* is on the grounds of the nearly 300-acre Kahanu Gardens, which are overseen by the nonprofit National Tropical Botanical Garden. The "Canoe Garden" next to the temple features crops, such as taro, sweet potato, and banana that were introduced to Hawaii by Polynesians settlers. A mile-long trail meanders through the largest collection of breadfruit-tree varieties in the world.

Filled with history of Hana, there are still remnants of the sugar cane plantation transportation infrastructure on this 125 acre parcel called "Hana Plantation".