CULTURAL-HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ʻEWA

According to Hawaiian traditions, the moku, or district, of ʻEwa—encompassing most of southwestern Oʻahu and all of the ahupuaʻa that include some shoreline of Puʻuloa (Pearl Harbor)—was once ruled by chiefs of the Maweke-Kumuhonua lineage (Beckwick 1970; Fornander 1996).[1] Several centuries ago, ʻEwa Moku was the political center of Oʻahu, and both Līhuʻe in the uplands of Honouliuli as well as the Waipiʻo peninsula were once royal seats of power. Waipiʻo, in particular, was known as an "aliʻi stronghold" (Handy and Handy 1972:470), and home of the famous Hawaiian John Papa ʻĪʻī.

From the 1500s to 1700s, there were several political power shifts on Oʻahu, including the defeat of the ruling ʻEwa chief by Peleioholani, a son of Kualiʻi, around A.D. 1740. In 1778, Kahahana, who was from the ʻEwa line of chiefs but who was raised in Kahekili's Maui court, took control of Oʻahu and ʻEwa, until Kamehameha I unified (conquered) the islands around A.D. 1810. Following Kamehameha's conquering of Oʻahu, at least two of his chiefs lived in Puʻuloa, and later, Liholiho (Kamehameha II) built a house in Puʻuloa (Kamakau 1992:255).

Prior to the late 1880s to early 1900s, following a series of political redistricting actions by the kingdom and then territorial governments, ʻEwa Moku was somewhat larger in size compared with its current boundaries, and included more extensive upland portions of the current-day district of Wahiawā (which was once, in turn, Waiʻanae Uka).

According to Handy and Handy (1972:469), ʻEwa's formal, more traditional, name was once Ke-ʻĀpana-o-ʻEwa. There are several variant interpretations of the name ʻEwa, including "crooked," referring to moʻolelo about Kāne and Kanaloa's marking of the district's boundaries by throwing a stone that was lost and later found at Pili o Kahe (Pukui et al. 1974:28). Another interpretation of the meaning of ʻEwa, based on this same legend, is "strayed" (as recorded by Bishop Museum staff in the 1950s from ʻEwa native, Simeon Nawaa). According to an 1883 newspaper series in the *Saturday Press* (published in Honolulu), another possible meaning of ʻEwa is "unequal."

Loko Iʻa of Puʻuloa

Ke awa lau o Puʻuloa
The many-harbored seas of Puʻuloa[2]

Without a doubt, ʻEwa Moku's greatest resource was its access to Puʻuloa, where many loko iʻa (fishponds) were constructed (Figure 6). In Hawaiian traditions, Puʻuloa consists of three distinct awalau, or lochs, including Kaihuopalaʻai (West Loch), Waiʻawa (Middle Loch) and Komoawa (East Loch). In addition to being known for producing high-quality awa (milkfish or mullet), ʻEwa's fishponds were also famed for deep-sea fish such as akule (scad varieties), as attested to by the name of one its fishponds (Ka-pa-akule, or "the-akule-enclosure") in Honouliuli.

It is often stated that ʻEwa Moku is watered exclusively by the leeward slopes of the Koʻolau Range, but some of its westernmost ahupuaʻa—including Honouliuli (by far the largest ahupuaʻa in the moku), Hōʻaeʻae and parts of Waikele—are actually watered from the southeastern end of the Waiʻanae mountains. Regardless, before the U.S. military's takeover of Pearl Harbor about 100 years ago, Puʻuloa was once famous for its rich abundance of marine resources, in particular, the pearl oyster, or pipi. Handy and Handy (1972:469) elaborate on ʻEwa's physiographic attributes:

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[1] The moku of Waiʻanae and Waialua were also once ruled by these chiefs.
[2] Entry #1686 (Pukui 1983:182)

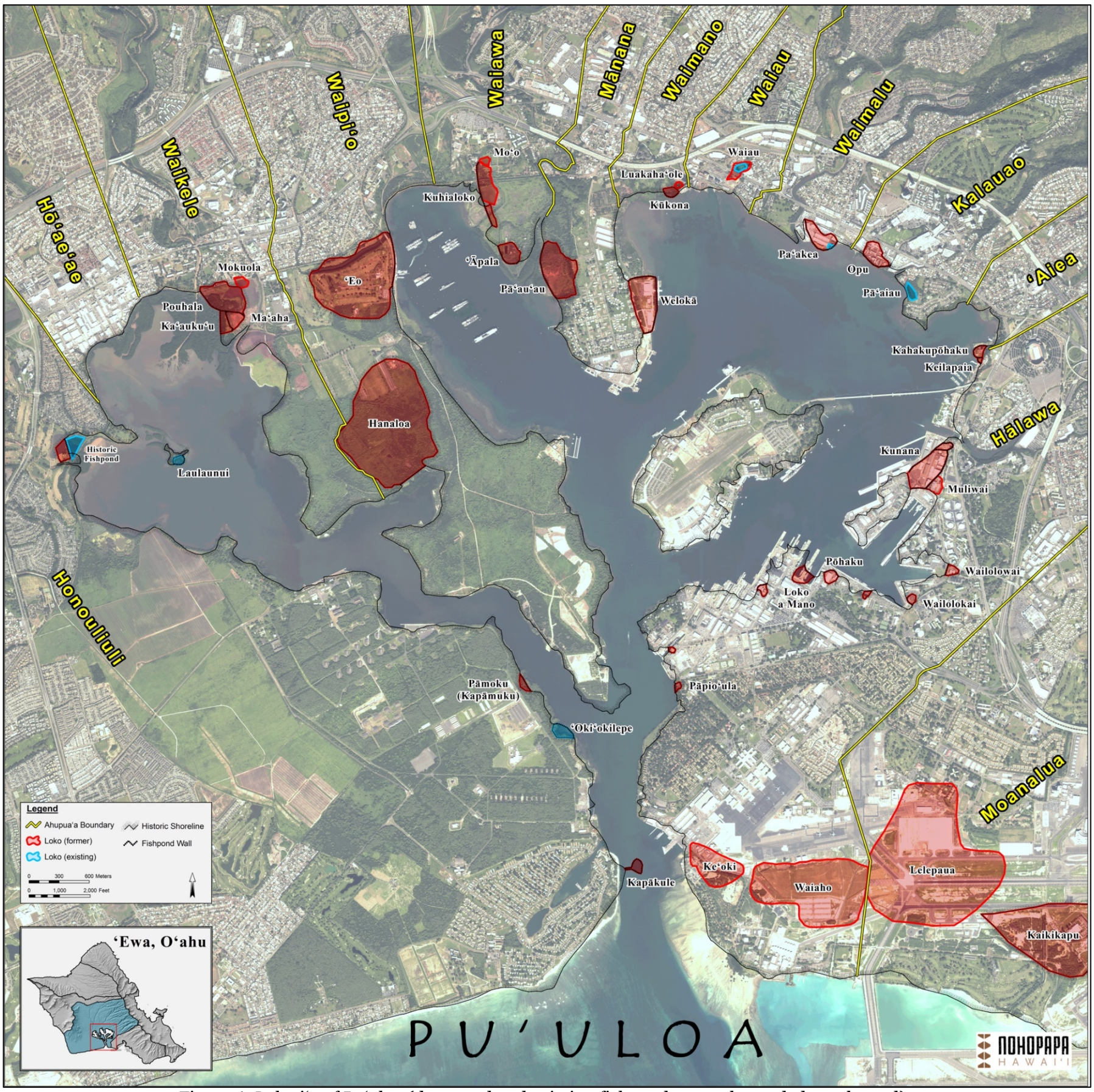

Figure 6. Loko i'a of Pu'uloa (destroyed and existing fishponds are color-coded; see legend)

> The salient feature of ʻEwa, and perhaps its most notable point of difference [compared with other districts], is its spacious coastal plain, surrounding the deep bays ("lochs") of Pearl Harbor, which are actually the drowned seaward valleys of ʻEwa's main streams, Waikele and Waipiʻo. The Hawaiian name for Pearl Harbor was Ke-awa-lau-o-Puʻuloa, The-many (*lau*)-harbors (*awa*)-of-Puʻuloa. Puʻuloa was the rounded area projecting into the sea at the long narrow entrance of the harbor [referring to Waipiʻo peninsula]. Another and more poetic name was Awawa-lei, Garland (*lei*)-of-harbors. The English name "Pearl" was given to it because of the prevalence of pearl oysters (*pipi*) in the deep harbor waters.
>
> These bays offered the most favorable locality in all of the Hawaiian Islands for the building of fishponds and fish traps into which deep-sea fish came on the inflow of tidal waters. (brackets added)

There is a moʻolelo that says some of the fishponds around Puʻuloa were built by the gods themselves, including the brothers Kāne and Kanaloa. The following description is from an 1899 newspaper entry ("Na Wahi Pana o Ewa") in *Ka Loea* Kalaiaina. It describes the fishponds Kāne and Kanaloa are directly credited with constructing following their meeting with a man named Hanakahi in Puʻuloa:

> After Kane had finished speaking, they drank their awa and then he said again, "Because you have asked to prosper in your fishing, for you are weary in going out to the ocean, therefore we will bless you and there will not be any more weariness. We are going now and shall return in the early morning." They went as far as Keana-puaa and began to build an enclosure for fish. The walls are there to this day. They looked at the wall that they built and found it unsatisfactory therefore they moved on to ke-poʻo-kala and made another. Finding that, that too, was unsatisfactory they moved to the opposite and built another one which satisfied them. Then they placed fish of every kind the enclosure that they had built and made a fixed law that all fish that entered it were never to go out through the entrance in which they came; nor go over the wall. The laws which they imposed on the fish remain fixed to this day. This enclosure is the one called Kapakule to this day, and is at Puuloa. (Note. It was destroyed many years ago. M. P.) In the early morning they returned to Hanakahi's house and told him of the enclosure they built for fish for him, that he and his descendants might be benefited. (Sterling and Summers 1978:43)

Maly (2003:48) provides more details on this fishpond known as Kapakule:

> At Puʻuloa on Oʻahu were two unusual ponds . . . Kapakule and Kepoʻokala. Kapakule was the better one. The rocks of its walls, kuapa, could be seen protruding at high tide, but the interlocking stone walls (pae niho pohaku) of the other pond were still under water at high tide. Kapakule was a pond famous from ancient days; many fish came into it, and very uncommon ones - only the whale did not enter it. It was said to have been built by the ʻeʻepa people at the command of Kane ma. It enclosed about four acres, more or less. The wall (pae pohaku) on its makai side was a little higher, and at high tide could be seen jutting eastward as far as the edge of the channel, kali awa. Then it stretched in a curve along the edge of the channel and made an arc toward the upland (i uka). From it a short stone wall made another curve toward the upland and the edge of the channel, and a row of tree trunks continued on from it i uka of the kali awa. On the mauka side of the pond was the opening where the fish went in and out.

Kamakau, in *Ka Poʻe Kahiko (The People of Old)*, a compilation of his writings in the Hawaiian newspaper, *Ke Au ʻOkoʻa* (translated by Pukui), extolls the bounty of Puʻuloa's pipi, which have legendary associations with having been brought to Hawaiʻi from Kahiki. According to Kamakau, these

pipi were once so abundant around Puʻuloa, they were more than sufficient to feed the entire moku of ʻEwa (Kamakau 1991:83):

> The *pipi* (pearl oyster)—strung along from Namakaohalawa [Hālawa] to the cliffs of Honouliuli, from the *kuapa* fishponds of inland ʻEwa clear out to Kapakule [Honouliuli]. That was the oyster that came in from deep water to the mussel beds near shore, from the channel entrance of Puʻuloa to the rocks along the edges of the fishponds. They grew right on the *nahawele* mussels, and thus was this *iʻa* [food] obtained. Not six months after the *hau* branches . . . that placed a kapu on these waters until the *pipi* should come in . . . were set up, the *pipi* were found in abundance—enough for all of ʻEwa—and fat with flesh. (brackets added)

The following are examples of the many poetic names and traditional practices associated with gathering pipi and other marine resources in Puʻuloa (Pukui 1983, with entry numbers given in parentheses):

Anu o ʻEwa i ka iʻa hāmau leo e. E hāmau!
ʻEwa is made cold by the fish that silences the voice. Hush!
A warning to keep still. First uttered by Hiʻiaka to her friend wahineʻomaʻo to warn her not to speak to Lohiʻau while they were in a canoe near ʻEwa. (#123)

Ka iʻa kuhi lima o ʻEwa
The gesturing fish of ʻEwa.
The pipi, or pearl oyster. Fishermen did not speak when fishing for them but gestured to each other like deaf-mutes. (#1357)

Ka iʻa hāmau leo o ʻEwa.
The fish of ʻEwa that silences the voice.
The pearl oyster, which has to be gathered in silence. (#1331)

E hāmau o makani mai auaneʻi.
Hush, lest the wind arise.
Hold your silence or trouble will come to us. When the people went to gather pearl oysters at Puʻuloa, they did so in silence, for they believed that if they spoke, a gust of wind would ripple the water and the oysters would vanish. (#274)

Haunāele ʻEwa i ka Moaʻe.
ʻEwa is disturbed by the Moaʻe wind.
Used about something disturbing, like a violent argument. When the people of ʻEwa went to gather the pipi (pearl oyster), they did so in silence, for if they spoke, a Moaʻe breeze would suddenly blow across the water, rippling it, and the oysters would disappear. (#493)

Kamakau, in *Ka Poʻe Kahiko*, lists and describes other kinds of marine resources for which Puʻuloa was once famous:

> The transparent shrimp, *ʻopae huna*, and the spiked shrimp, *ʻopae kakala*, such as came from the sea into the *kuapa* and *puʻuone fishponds*. *Nehu pala* and *nehu maoli* fishes filled the lochs (*nuku awalau*) from the entrance of Puʻuloa to the inland ʻEwas.
>
> Other famous *iʻa* [food] of ʻEwa, celebrated land of the ancestors, were the *mahamoe* and *ʻokupe* bivalves and many others that have now disappeared. (Kamakau 1991:84) (bracket added)

According to a native of ʻEwa, Lahilahi Webb (who shared many stories with Mary Pukui), bivalves once eaten at Puʻuloa include pipi, pāpaua, ʻowaʻowaka, nahawele, kupekala, and mahamoe. Still yet

other varieties were once seen at Puʻuloa, including (by Wilkes in 1845) ʻōkupe and ʻōlepe (Handy and Handy 1972:471).

One story of how pipi came to be in Hawaiʻi can be found in the tale of *Keaomelemele*, written by Moses Manu and translated by Mary Kawena Pukui. This story explains that when Moʻoinanea left Kuaihelani and Kealohilani, which were godly places, she forgot to bring two things. So she sent two of her moʻo, or supernatural water spirits, to go back and fetch them for her. The following is an excerpt from the story that details these events:

> Mooinanea forgot something that she wanted, therefore, she sent two lizards to go back to Kuaihelani and Kealohilani to fetch some "fish" and a yellow object. They consented to go for the things their great chiefess, Mooinanea, wanted. After the orders were given, they departed with great speed, greater than the blowing of the wind or the flying of a bird through the air. When they arrived in Kuaihelani, the lizard who guarded the islands asked the reason for their return and so they replied, "We have been sent by our chiefess, Mooinanea, to have you give us some 'fish' and the thing you are guarding. She sent us for them, therefore, give them to us at once." After they had spoken these words, the lizard guardian scooped out his right eye and gave it to them with a warning to take the very best care of it and keep their homeward way a secret until they arrived before Mooinanea. They agreed. After that, they flew quickly down from Kealohilani to Kuaihelani. While they were there, they were given two "fish," pearl oysters. As soon as they received them, they returned with great haste to the presence of Mooinanea in Waolani and told her of the command that was given to them. (Manu 2002:158–159)

The tale goes on to explain who the caretaker of the pearl oysters was in ʻEwa. Today it is known that this moʻo is Kānekuaʻana. The story of *Keaomelemele* describes this moʻo as follows:

> Kanekuaana was a royal lizard whose home was the lochs of Ewa. This was the lizard who was said to have brought the pearl oysters to the sea of Ewa and this was the oyster that was referred to as "the silent 'fish' of Ewa; do not speak lest a wind arise." Many chants have been made with reference to the pearl oyster. In residing there, this lizard was cared for and worshipped by the people for bringing the pearl oyster… From that time it was much found in Ewa up to recent years, about 1850-1853, the time when this race of people (Hawaiians) were being destroyed by smallpox. The oysters began to vanish from that time to the present. The people of the place believe that the lizard was angry because the konohikis imposed kapus, were cross with the women and seized their catch of oysters. So this "fish" was removed to Tahiti and other lands. (Manu 2002:161)

Pukui and Curtis explain in their book, *The Water of Kāne and Other Legends of the Hawaiian Islands,* about the event that caused this moʻo to take the oysters away from ʻEwa. According to Pukui, the people of that time realized the importance of this resource and placed a kapu (taboo) on the pipi for certain seasons. One day a woman picked pipi during a kapu season and was discovered by the konohiki of her area. She was to return the pipi to where she got it and go home. However, later that day, the konohiki returned and demanded payment for violating the kapu. The lady was very poor and she only held one coin. Even so, the konohiki demanded and ultimately took her money. Seeing this, the moʻo who brought these pipi to Hawaiʻi was very upset, and in her anger took the pipi away (Pukui and Curtis 1994:154–155).

Kamakau discusses ʻEwa's most powerful kiaʻi (guardian or protector), Kanekuaʻana (or Kānekuaʻana, which translates as "Kāne the elder"); and says that ". . . the *kamaʻaina* from Halawa to Honouliuli relied upon her. Not all of the people of ʻEwa were her descendants, but the blessings that came to her

descendants were shared by all." When ʻEwa experienced food shortages or drought, it was said that believers in Kanekuaʻana erected "waihau" heiau in her honor (Kamakau 1991:83).[3]

Manō of Puʻuloa

He manō holo ʻāina ke aliʻi
The chief is a shark that travels on land[4]

Kanaka maoli revere the manō (shark) in the same respect as their chiefs. If we look at the ocean as its own society, with its own social hierarchy, this analogy makes sense. Just as the chief is the highest rank and mana (power) on the land, the shark is the highest rank in the sea. There exists various akua manō (shark gods/goddesses) that were once prevalent in Hawaiʻi (and still are for many people). In ʻEwa the akua manō named Kaʻahupāhau is the most important. She is credited with the protection of the people in ʻEwa from all man-eating sharks who sought to harm them. There are ʻōlelo noʻeau (poetical sayings), stories, and songs that have forever immortalized her in the history of this place.

Alahula Puʻuloa, he alahele na Kaʻahupāhau.
Everywhere in Puʻuloa is the trail of Kaʻahupāhau.
Said of a person who goes everywhere, looking, peering, seeing all, or of a person familiar with every nook and corner of a place. Kaʻahupāhau is the shark goddess of Puʻuloa (Pearl Harbor) who guarded the people from being molested by sharks. She moved about, constantly watching. (#105)

Hoʻahewa na niuhi ia Kaʻahupāhau.
The mandating sharks blamed Kaʻahupāhau.
Evil-doers blame the person who safeguards the rights of others.
Kaʻahupāhau was the guardian shark goddess of Puʻuloa (Pearl Harbor) who drove out or destroyed all the man-eating sharks. (#1014)

Mehameha wale no o Puʻuloa, i ka hele a Kaʻahupāhau.
Puʻuloa became lonely when Kaʻahupāhau went away.
The home is lonely when a loved one has gone. Kaʻahupāhau, guardian shark of Puʻuloa (Pearl Harbor), was dearly loved by the people. (#2152)

There are different versions of how this akua manō (Kaʻahupāhau) came to be, and how she began to protect the people of this area; one version is provided by Pukui and Curtis:

> Kaʻahu was once a lovely girl. She and her family lived beside a little stream which flowed into Puʻuloa. Often Kaʻahu and her brother went down to the harbor to swim. For hours they swam and played about, happy as fish. A shark god liked to watch those children jump and swim. They should be sharks, he thought, and live in Puʻuloa. So he changed their form… Years went by. Kaʻahu became the chiefess and her brother, Striking Tail, was also honored by the older sharks. The parents of those children did but brothers, and sisters and other relatives still loved and fed the sharks. (Pukui and Curtis:149–150)

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[3] According to Pukui and Elbert (1986:378) waihau, in this context, means "A heiau where hogs, bananas, and coconuts were sacrificed, but not human beings; a heiau for *moʻo* spirits."
[4] Pukui (1983:87)

The story continues to explain how and why these sharks became the protectors of men from man-eating sharks. A young chiefess named Pāpio had taken an ʻilima lei that a relative of Kaʻahupāhau had made for her. The following is a description of Kaʻahupāhau's actions following this and the outcome:

> Kaʻahu was very angry. "Come!" she shouted to a young shark who was passing. "Pāpio is a wicked girl and ought to die! You'll find her on a flat rock, sunning. Her hair floats on the water and on her breast shines an ʻilima lei. She ought to die!" The young shark swam away and soon returned. "The girl is dead, O heavenly one," he said. Kaʻahu was very glad. Pāpio was a wicked girl, the chiefess thought, to take my *lei.* But her anger cooled when she thought of Pāpio's mother… I did wrong! Kaʻahu told herself. I had her killed but cannot make her come back to life. She called the sharks of Puʻuloa. "O my sharks," she said, "I, your chiefess have done great wrong. In anger I ordered a young girl killed. We sharks can kill but not make alive. Now that girl is dead and her mother weeps. O my sharks remember my wrongdoing! Hereafter man, woman and small child shall swim safely in Puʻuloa. We shall be their friends and their protectors. Remember, never harm them!" "Your works are good, O heavenly one," the sharks replied. (Pukui and Curtis 1994:150–151)

Another version of Kaʻahupāhau's upbringing can be found in Martha Beckwith's, *Hawaiian Mythology*. The following is an excerpt that discusses Beckwith's opinion of Kamakau's description of Kaʻahupāhau:

> Kaahupahau is called by Kamakau the sister of the sharks Kane-huna-moku and Ka-moho-aliʻi and wife of Ku-hai-moana, father of Ku-piʻopiʻo. The story that she is herself killed in the shark war against man-eaters is repudiated by Oahu Hawaiians, as also the accusation made by Kamakau that it was she herself who devoured the chiefess Papio because she was saucy to the keeper who reproached her for going swimming at the lagoon wearing the ilima wreaths which were sacred to the shark goddess. Kaahupahau was no man-eater. (Beckwith 1970:139)

No matter the origin, Kaʻahupāhau and the manō of Puʻuloa made sure to protect the people from man-eaters. One such story is the story of Mikololou, who was a manō from the island of Maui that came to visit with the sharks of Puʻuloa. However, he became upset that they would not allow him his favorite food, humans. So, because of this, Mikololou decided to take matters in his own hands and get himself some humans to eat. The following is a description provided by J.S. Emerson in his piece titled, *The Lesser Hawaiian Gods,* that describes the confrontation between Mikololou and the manō of Puʻuloa:

> After a time the man-eating shark, Mikololou, from the coast of the island of Maui, paid them a visit and enjoyed their hospitality until he reproached them for not providing him with his favorite human flesh. This they indignantly refused to give, whereupon, in spite of their protest, he made a raid on his own account upon the natives, and secured one or more of their number to satisfy his appetite. Kaahupahau and her brother promptly gave warning to their friends on shore of the character of this monster that had invaded their waters. To ensure his destruction they invited their unsuspecting guest to a feast made in his honor at their favorite resort up the Waipahu river. Here they fed him sumptuously, and at length stupefied him with the unusual amount of awa with which they supplied him. While he was in this condition, their friends, who had come in great numbers from the surrounding country, were directed to close up the Waipahu river, which empties into the Ewa Lagoon, with their fish nets, brought for the purpose, while they attacked him in the rear. In his attempt to escape to the open sea he broke through one net after another, but was finally entangled and secured. His body was then dragged by the victorious people on shore and burned to ashes, but a certain dog got hold of his tongue, and, after eating a portion, dropped the

> remainder into the river. The spirit of the man-eater revived again, and, as a tongue, now restored and alive, made its way to the coast of Maui and Hawaii,, pleading with the sharks of those waters for vengeance upon the sharks of the Ewa Lagoon. (Emerson 1892:11)

Emerson goes on to say that Mikololou was successful in gaining support for his vendetta and they return again to Puʻuloa to do battle with the manō there. His description is as follows (continuing on from the excerpt above):

> They meantime secured the aid of Kuhaimoana and other notable sharks from the islands of Kaula, Niihau, Kauai, and Oahu. A grand sight it was to the numerous spectators on shore when these mighty hosts joined combat and began the great shark-war. It was a contest of gods and heroes whose exploits and deeds of valor have long been the theme of the bards of the Hawaiian Islands. We cannot enter into the details of this story, which, wrought out, would be worthy of being called an epic. We will only say that in the first great battle the friends and allies of the cruel man-eater were routed by the superior force of their opponents, while the good Kaahupahau and her brother long continued to enjoy the affectionate worship of their grateful people. (Emerson 1892:11)

Another version of this battle is found in the story of Keliʻikauokaʻū. This moʻolelo is found in the Hawaiian newspaper *Home Rula Repubalika*. The following excerpt of "He Moʻolelo Kaʻao Hawaiʻi no Keliʻikauokaʻū" was translated by Maly (2003:117):

> Kaliʻikau-o-Kaʻū fought with and killed Kaʻahupāhau, and it is because of this event, that the famous saying, "Mehameha Puʻuloa, ua make o Kaʻahupāhau (Puʻuloa is alone, for Kaʻahupāhau is dead)," came about. Keliʻikau-o-Kaʻū assumed various body forms he possessed and attacked Kaʻahupāhau from within, and outside her body. Kaʻahupāhau went in spirit form to her attendant, Koihala, calling to her, saying that she was dying. Upon her death, Keliʻikau-o-Kaʻū called out to Kamoana and Kahiʻukā, taunting them. He then proceeded to swim through Puʻuloa, biting and tearing at the native sharks of the region, throwing their bodies up onto the dry land from Kalaekao, Kapuaʻikāula, Keanapuaʻa, Kamokuʻumeʻume, ʻAiea, Kalauao, Waimalu, Waiau, Waimano, the two lands of Mānana, Waiawa, Hanapōuli, Waipiʻo, Waikele, Hōʻaeʻae, Honouliuli, Kalaeokahuka, Kanahunaopapio, Kepoʻokala and Puʻuloa. Keliʻikau-o-Kaʻū destroyed all the sharks of ʻEwa and the stench rose upon the land… Following the death of Kaʻahupāhau in this war between sharks, the shark chiefs of both sides met in council and agreed to no further wars should be fought between them…
> It should be noted here, the elder kamaʻāina of the ʻEwa District still claim that Kaʻahupāhau was seen and cared for during their lifetime. (Maly 2003:117)

It is important here to pay attention to the last part of Maly's description. While there are those that believe these manō have passed, there are many people who believe that they are still around today and contine to honor the cheifly and familial legacy of the shark.

Loʻi Kalo of Puʻuloa

Ua ʻai i ke kāī-koi o ʻEwa

He has eaten the kāī-koi taro of ʻEwa[5]

Kalo (taro) in Hawaiʻi nei is an extremely significant resource. Not only was kalo prized for eating, but also for being the elder sibling of the Hawaiian people. The cultural and spiritual significance of kalo is expressed in the moʻolelo of Papa and Wākea. There are many versions of the story of how the first kalo (Hāloa) was born. David Malo provides a description of Hāloa in his well-known book, *Moʻolelo Hawaiʻi* (translated by Nathaniel Emerson in 1898):

> We have a fragment of tradition regarding Haloa. The first-born son of Wakea was of premature birth (*keiki alualu*) and was given the name of Haloa-naka. The little thing died, however, and its body was buried in the ground at one end of the house. After a while, from the child's body, shot up a taro plant, the leaf of which was named *lau-kapa-lili*, quivering leaf; but the stem was given the name Haloa.
>
> After that, another child was born to them whom they called Haloa, from the stalk of the taro. He is the progenitor of all the people of the earth. (Malo 2005:244)

Kalo—and, in particular, the irrigated and prepared fields in which it was planted—was also a valuable source of wealth (waiwai). Handy and Handy explain:

> To the Hawaiian planter taro was not only the staff of life, it was wealth. The primary item of barter and exchange between relatives, it was also the most prized item when provender was placed on the altars of Lono at the border of each district during the *Makahiki* festival. Abundance meant plenty of taro, and plenty of taro implied ample water supply. (Handy and Handy 1972:313–14)

Referring to ʻEwa's terrestrial resources and its productivity for subsistence gardeners and cultivators of old, Handy and Handy (1972:469) write:

> The lowlands, bisected by ample streams, were ideal terrain for the cultivation of irrigated taro. The hinterland consisted of deep valleys running far back into the Koʻolau range. Between the valleys were ridges, with steep sides, but a very gradual increase of altitude. The lower parts of the valley sides were excellent for the culture of yams and bananas. Farther inland grew the *ʻawa* for which the area was famous. The length or depth of the valleys and the gradual slope of the ridges made the inhabited lowlands much more distant from the *wao*, or upland jungle, than was the case on the windward coast. Yet the *wao* here was more extensive, giving greater opportunity to forage for wild foods in famine time.

The famous kāī-koi taro of ʻEwa, said to be Oʻahu's best tasting, is explained by Handy and Handy (1972:471):

> This area also was famous for its rare and delicious taro, the *kai* variety. The *kai* was native to ʻEwa and was often referred to as *kai o ʻEwa*. One kind of *kai* sends off long

[5] "Kāī is Oʻahu's best eating taro; one who has eaten it will always like it. Said of a youth or a maiden of ʻEwa, who, like the kāī taro, is not easily forgotten." Entry #2770 in Mary Kawena Pukui's *ʻŌlelo Noʻeau* (Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings) (1983:305)

> rhizomes, hence was sometimes called *kai koi, kia*-that pierces . . . An ʻEwa *kamaʻaina* described this in 1899: "When planted, it sends up shoots, more shoots and still more shoots. Again and again it will send up new shoots, filling the mounds until they mixed with the taro of other mounds." This description . . . indicates that in the flat, wet lowlands of ʻEwa this famous taro was grown in mounds (*puʻepuʻe*) as in marshy localities.

In addition to its streams that fed many of its loʻi kalo, ʻEwa also had numerous pūnāwai (fresh water springs), marshes and even a famous pond at Waiau that also was used to irrigate taro.

According to Handy and Handy (ibid.:470), the forested uplands of ʻEwa were unusually blessed with birds, whose feathers were taken for high-status items such as feather capes, helmets and lei making, as well as flora such as wauke, olonā, and mamaki ("In fact, ʻEwa was famous for its *mamaki*.").

Between the lowlands—with its loʻi kalo, main settlement areas and fishponds—and its upland forests, ʻEwa also had an extensive (and relatively dry) plateau or plains area that was famous as locations of many battles, many of which are described in the ahupuaʻa chapters of this report. Foreigners who first came to this area mistakenly assumed ʻEwa was a barren land because of these extensive plains. In 1793, for example, Captain George Vancouver described ʻEwa as a "barren rocky waste, nearly destitute of verdure, cultivation or inhabitants" (cited in Sterling and Summers 1978:36). Later, in 1839, the missionary E.O. Hall described the area as a "barren desolate plain" (ibid.). These early western perspectives clearly did not capture ʻEwa's traditional Hawaiian cultural landscape or sense of place, which, as shown above and illustrated throughout this report, was fertile, rich and varied.