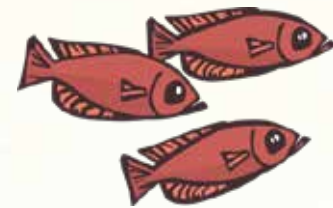


LAWAI'A PONO

Enduring Fishing Traditions From
Around Hawai'i: A Brief Look

Illustrated by Kelsey Ige



**Illustrations of fish are not to scale and show examples of commonly fished Hawaiian species – some of these fish would not necessarily normally be found together as pictured.*

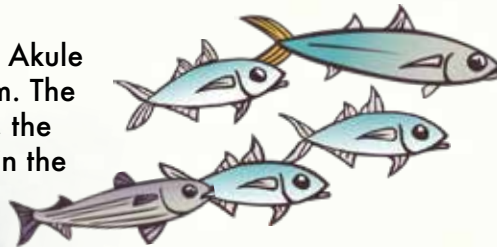
Kumulipo: Hawaiian chant of the creation of the world. The Kumulipo traces the origins of life from a coral polyp to the story of the first man.

"The song is a gift which encourages the warrior within us to awake to the contests and challenges which constantly confront us by using intelligence and ancestral experiences. It is our genealogy connecting mankind to earth and sky."

(Kanahele, 1997)

"...The Opelu... was born, the Akule was born in the sea and swam. The Amaama (mullet) was born, the Anae (large kind) was born in the sea and swam..."

- The Kumulipo¹



PŌ

The wā, or time, of pō is the night of creation, a creative darkness from which creation springs.

*Then began the slime which
established the earth,
The source of deepest darkness.
Of the depth of darkness,
of the depth of darkness,
Of the darkness of the sun,
in the depth of night,
It is night,
So was night born."*

- The Kumulipo

KŪ'ulakai and 'Ai'ai:

Father and son, Kū'ulakai and 'Ai'ai watch over fishermen and are legendary fishers, credited in story for creating the first fishpond (loko i'a), teaching fishing arts and establishing fishing grounds around the islands. Kū stones in their honor are found still today.

"Kū'ula had a human body, but was possessed with mana kupua, or supernatural powers, in directing and controlling the fish of the sea." (Nakuina)

Ahupua'a System:

The islands are divided into districts, or ahupua'a (communities), with distinct palena, or boundaries, which include fisheries. One purpose of this system is the wise management of land and ocean resources, promoting abundance.

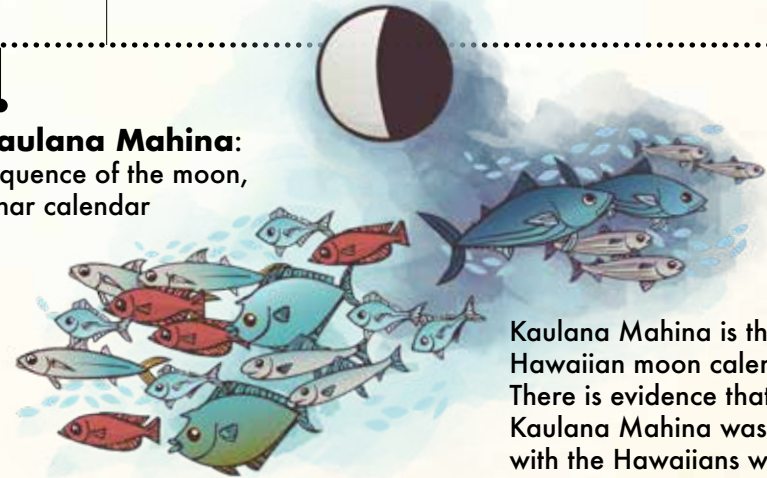


Practices, knowledge, rituals and kapu (restrictions) for choice fish are specific to each ahupua'a, and can vary widely from one place to another.

"Fishery boundaries were defined; places named describing the kinds of fishery resources an area was noted for... and choice fish held under kapu (restrictions)." (Boundary Commission, 1848)

Kaulana Mahina:

sequence of the moon, lunar calendar



Kaulana Mahina is the Hawaiian moon calendar. There is evidence that the Kaulana Mahina was brought with the Hawaiians when they arrived to Hawai'i. Based on a 30 moon phase cycle, they adapt the Kaulana Mahina to the natural phenomena and growth processes of Hawai'i's flora and fauna. Fishers today continue to use moon phase observations to predict the best times for harvest and rest.

"Kamali 'i 'ike 'ole, i ka helu pō..." is a children's chant for learning the moon phase names.

Hear and learn at:

<https://youtu.be/Qn6TsQE9GY>

¹Common diacritical markings and translations for fish names listed: 'ōpelu (mackerel scad), akule (big eye scad), 'ama'ama (mullet), 'anae (full-sized 'ama'ama mullet)

- From 1400 to 1800, using innovative methods of catch and caretaking, by one estimate, Hawaiians sustainably land 5 times more fish annually than modern fleets catch today. (McClenachan, 2014)



Fishing methods of these times included: “Ō (spearing); ‘Upena and Ku ‘una (setting nets); makau and pā (hooks and lures); hāhā (trapping in one’s hand); and in loko (ponds), both natural and manmade.”

(Ka Hana Lawai‘a, 2003)

Lawai‘a: fisher, fishing. Lawa means “enough” i‘a is “fish.” One interpretation is that a fisher is one who can bring “enough fish.”

Over generations, Hawaiians developed sophisticated techniques of catch and caretaking to maintain abundant fisheries, often highly specific to the place being fished. Today, in communities around the islands, master fishers, or loea lawai‘a, continue to practice traditional fishing and caretaking of abundance, and pass this knowledge on to the next generation.

Māhele: Traditions of sharing abundance begun in wā kahiko (ancient times) continue to be an important part of fishing today, as we share fish with family, friends and neighbors.

“When the canoe fleet reached shore, fish would be given to the divers and the helpers: to those who had gotten the nets ready on land; to those who had set the net for the fish to enter the papa [middle portion of a bag net], and to those on the canoe which had carried the nets.”
(Kamakau, 1976).

In the 19th and 20th centuries, advancements in refrigeration and transportation transform fishing globally, and in Hawai‘i, rapid socio-political change drives dramatic change to every aspect of Hawaiian life, including fishing.



Islands United:
Kamehameha I
unites the Hawaiian
archipelago, 1810

Western Contact:
Cook arrives in the
Hawaiian Islands,
1778

Population Collapse:
Introduced diseases bring
the Hawaiian population
from an estimated
800,000 in 1778 to
71,000 in 1853

Overthrow:
Monarchy is
overthrown in 1893,
Queen Lili‘uokalani
is imprisoned.

The Great Māhele ‘Āina:

In 1848, Kamehameha III brings private property ownership to Hawai‘i, divides lands and fisheries between the government, royalty and common people. There are at least 1,233 known claims for fishery resources recorded during this time.

“...rights to fish and other aquatic resources were claimed. The named fish included—āhole, āholehole, akule, ‘anae, awa, he ‘e, honu, kāhala, kala, kumu, limu, limu kala, manō, ‘ōhua, ‘ō‘io, ‘o‘opu, ‘ōpae, ‘ōpelu, ‘opihi, pa‘akai, pua, uhu, ula, ulua, and weke. It is perhaps most interesting that ‘o‘opu from fresh water sources, were the most frequently named fish taken on the islands of Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, Maui, and O‘ahu.” (Ka Hana Lawai‘a, 2003)

"...No more any more..."

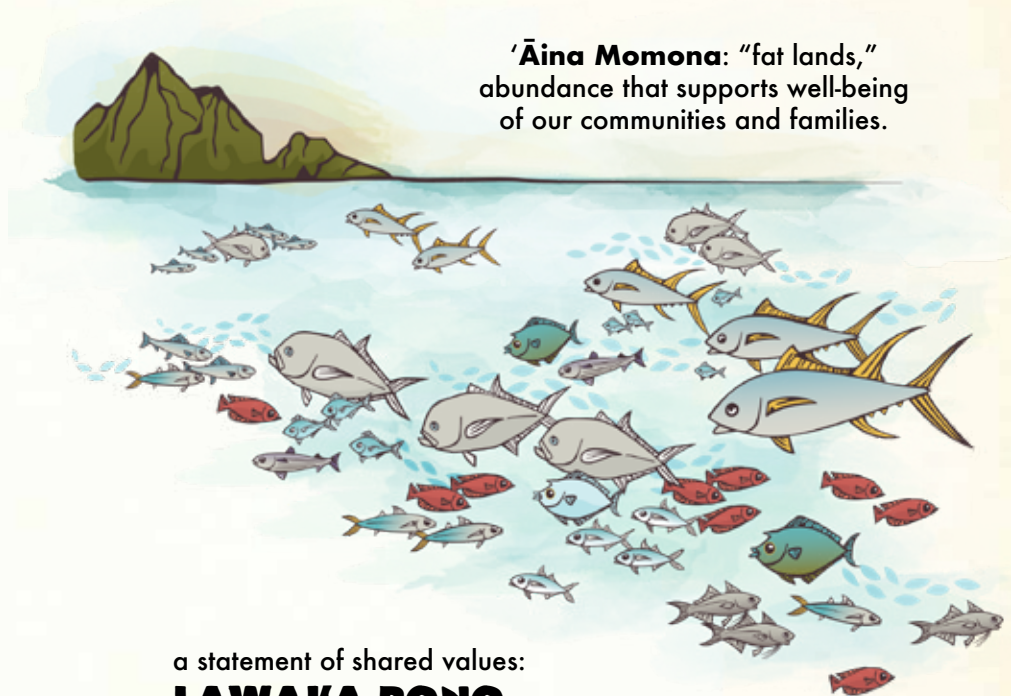
"Over the last 30 years, [Kepā] Maly has interviewed hundreds of kūpuna and elder kama 'āina across the Hawaiian Islands... nearly all... particularly those participating in interviews after 1990, commented on changes they had observed in the quality of the fisheries, and the declining abundance of fish—noting that there were significant declines in almost all areas of the fisheries, from streams, to near-shore, and the deep sea..." (Ka Hana Lawai'a, 2003)

A Konohiki Renaissance

Traditionally, the konohiki of an ahupua'a was the person entrusted by the ali'i (royalty) to ensure the abundance of fisheries, farms and forests for the benefit of all the maka'āinana (common people, farmers and fishers) of that place. Konohiki fisheries remained into the 20th century, some into the 1960s.

Today, konohiki fishing traditions are taken up by entire communities, who are coming together to restore abundance by reviving place-based traditions and skills such as fishpond caretaking, moon phase observation, limu growing, net sewing, hānai ko'a (caring for family fishing grounds), and more...

Konohiki Mindset: One interpretation of the word konohiki is "to invite willingness and ability," and in modern times this term has come to describe traditions of caring for Hawai'i – and each other – together.



'Āina Momona: "fat lands," abundance that supports well-being of our communities and families.

a statement of shared values:

LAWAI'A PONO

Lawai'a Pono is to "fish virtuously"; to fish in a Hawaiian way; to fish sensibly and responsibly with respect to each other's needs and reverence and obligation to the ocean's power and life-giving nature to sustain us all now and into the future.

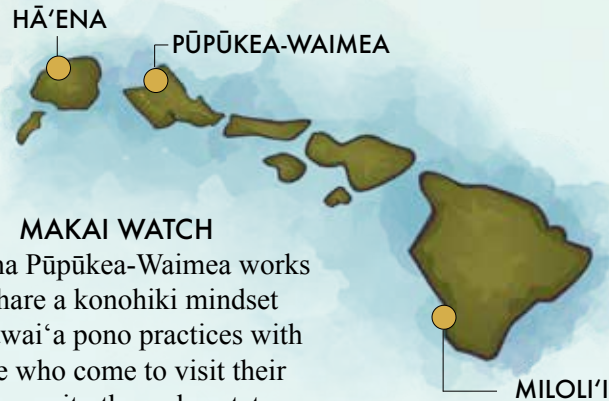
Lawai'a Pono also expresses our faith in our fishing community and culture, our resources, our shared multi-ethnic experience and celebrated values of humility, reciprocity, and trust in one another as a source of knowledge and wisdom to carry us forward. This faith is a belief in ourselves, something necessary to reclaim a diminished sense of control over our ocean's abundance for generations to come.

"Lawai'a pono is knowing how something will be replaced before you take it." - Kelson "Mac" Poepoe

A Few Examples: KONOHIKI MINDSET IN ACTION

FISHING AREAS WITH A KONOHIKI MINDSET

The Hui Maka‘āinana o Makana—a group of lineal families of the Hā‘ena area—successfully worked with the state to establish a Community-based Subsistence Fishing Area (CBSFA) for their traditional fishing grounds. The CBSFA rules invite all who fish in Hā‘ena to learn and follow Hā‘ena fishing practices, ensuring abundant fish for future generations. Other rural fishing communities around the islands are also enacting community-based “konohiki mindset” areas to ensure the future abundance of their fishing grounds and traditions.



MAKAI WATCH

Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea works to share a konohiki mindset and lawai‘a pono practices with those who come to visit their community through a state partnership called Makai Watch. Through Makai Watch, the state and communities work together to promote compliance to rules, education and monitoring.

These are just a few of the many, many examples of konohiki mindset in action, across the islands.

LAWAI‘A CAMPS

Pa‘a Pono Miloli‘i brings together youth, parents and elders for fishing camps that pass on traditional fishing knowledge and values of lawai‘a pono. Likewise, throughout each year, other communities around the islands gather at camps and other events to teach and pass down their fishing traditions.

One way loea lawai‘a (master fishers) around the islands express lawai‘a pono and konohiki mindset is by giving of their time to document, share and pass on their knowledge. Here is some sharing from Mo‘omomi, on the island of Moloka‘i:

Uhu (parrotfish)

During the spawning season, uhu form harems of one male (blue-green) with several female (red). Removing the only male disrupts the harem so there is no reproduction for a year.

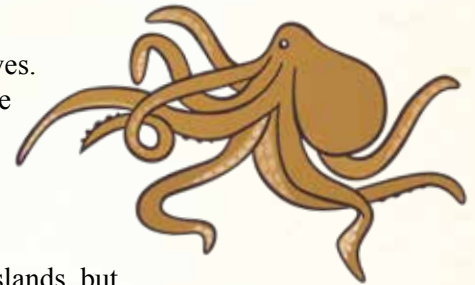


Limu (native seaweeds)

Young shoots are the most nutritious for limu-eating fish. Larger growths shelter small animals that are eaten by carnivorous fish. When gathering limu, you “ako” the limu, meaning you “pinch” the stems, leaving at least an inch of root stock growing on the pōhaku (rock) or coral. You never “huki” which pulls the limu roots out. In this way, your limu regrows for next time.

He‘e (octopus)

He‘e grow quickly and have short lives. The population is maintained because he‘e begin reproducing at a young age and lay large quantities of eggs.



‘Opihi (native limpets)

Black-foot ‘opihī spawn across the islands, but yellow-foot ‘opihī and kō‘ele spawning may be more localized. It is important to rotate areas when collecting ‘opihī. Most lawai‘a do not “pound” one place and never harvest deeper-dwelling kō‘ele. Selling ‘opihī off island can lead to too much being taken, and not enough left for our own families.



Enenue

Those who know enenue can detect the area where a particular enenue was caught based on its taste. Enenue tirelessly clean the ocean floor, keeping a balance of various limu. Enenue are particularly sensitive to erosion and runoff.



MORE TO DISCOVER

1. Place names have important stories and meanings to reveal. What are the Hawaiian place names of places you fish, where you live, where you work? Why was it named that way? What do you and others know about your places that help explain these names? The website www.wehewehe.org and the book “Place Names of Hawai‘i” (by Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini) are both great places to start.

2. Can you identify the phase of the moon without looking at a calendar? How do moon phases match up with spawning for different species? When is good to harvest? When is good to rest? Start a moon journal and see what you discover from your own observations.

3. What are the memories/knowledge you have of fishing, and what are you passing on to the next generation? Sharing memories and taking our kids fishing, recording oral fishing knowledge where can, sharing recipes and preparation techniques, are a few ways we can share.

4. Konohiki organizations and efforts are giving back to the lands and waters that feed us. Who is observing and caretaking, taking up the konohiki action for the places where you fish, live, and work? Across the islands, people are connecting with their konohiki organizations, giving back and participating with youth, fishing camps, workdays, and other programs.

This booklet represents a very, very small taste of the full and rich history, mo'olelo (stories), traditions, and literature around fishing in Hawai'i. We encourage you to continue to dive deeper!

Below, you can find some of the resources and references used in compiling this booklet.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Andrade, Carlos. Hā'ena: through the Eyes of the Ancestors. University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.

Hui Mālama o Mo'omomi, Moon Calendar, 2015.

Kawaharada, Dennis. Introduction: Hawaiian Fishing Traditions, 2006.
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dennisk/texts/introfishing.html>

Kumu Pono Associates, Ka Hana Lawai'a a me nā Ko'a o nā Kai
'Ewalu: A History of Fishing Practices and Marine Fisheries of the
Hawaiian Islands, 2003

McClenachan, Loren, and John N Kittinger. "Multicentury trends and the sustainability of coral reef fisheries in Hawai'i and Florida." Fish and Fisheries, vol. 14, no. 3, 2012, pp. 239-255, doi:10.1111/j.1467-2979.2012.00465.x.

Story of Kū'ulakai, as translated by Moses Nakuina
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dennisk/texts/kuulakai.html>

Nuuhiwa, Kalei. Personal Communication, November 2017.

Poepoe, Joseph M. Ka Nai Aupuni. 1906

Poepoe, Kelson K., et al. "The use of traditional Hawaiian knowledge in the contemporary management of marine resources." Fisheries Center Research Reports, 11 Sept. 2003, pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70039858.

Pukui, Mary Kawena, et al. Place Names of Hawaii. University Press of Hawaii, 1984.

Queen Liliuokalani (1978) [1897]. The Kumulipo. Pueo Press.



This booklet is a project of E Alu Pū, a network of 'āina-based organizations working to care for our places and communities through konohiki mindset action. Together we share in a vision of 'āina momona, abundance of our lands and waters that supports community well-being for our island home and future generations.

The network is facilitated by non-profit KUA.

kuahawaii.org



pupukeawaimea.org

Funds for the printing and production of this booklet were provided by **Mālama Pūpūkea-Waimea** through grants from the following generous funders:

LUSH Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (B-WET)
Patagonia Hale'iwa

Illustrations by Kelsey Ige, kelseyige.com

Text Compilation & Layout by Miwa Enos-Tamanaha, KUA

SPECIAL MAHALO: Jenny Yagodich, Debbie Gowensmith, Charlie Young, Kelson "Mac" Poepoe, Kalei Nuuhiwa, Kepa Maly, Hannah Bernard, Kawika Winter, Alex Connelly, Brenda Asuncion, Wally Ito, Kevin Chang, Kim Moa, Natalie Kurashima, Kamuela Enos