

Socio-Economic Change in Historic Halawa Valley, Hawaii

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At the end of the eighteenth century and during the first half of the nineteenth, the complex and highly stratified Polynesian chiefdom society of the Hawaiian Islands was transformed through an engagement with the expanding World System. This was not the mere imposition of a capitalist mode on a chiefdom structure, however, for the interaction was mediated in ways distinctively Hawaiian. This critical period of cultural change can be addressed through an integrated approach incorporating both historical ethnography and archaeology. This case study will focus on the Halawa Valley, located on the eastern end of the island of Moloka'i.

A collaboration of anthropological approaches is vital to the understanding of what Sahlins has called the "structure of the conjuncture" in the historic Hawaiian kingdom. A precedent for this approach has recently been set by Kirch (1992) and Sahlins (1992) in their study of the Anahulu valley on O'ahu. Similar efforts at combining social anthropology with archaeology in order to construct an integrated history of the historic Hawaiian period are few, however. In 1985 Kirch noted that historical archaeology in Hawaii was still in a nascent stage (Kirch 1985); this statement still holds true today, with only a few historic studies added to the Hawaiian repertoire. The sparse related research includes that of Earle (1978), who conducted a study of indigenous taro irrigation in the Halele'a District of Kauai. Earle combined archaeological survey work with a detailed historical analysis in order to examine historic irrigation patterns and claims on water rights. More recently, Linnekin (1990) examined ethnohistoric material such as Hawaiian land records and produced an important examination of the changing role of Hawaiian women following Hawaiian-Western contact.

Historical archaeology has been defined by James Deetz as "the archaeology of the spread of European culture throughout the world since the fifteenth century and its impact on indigenous peoples" (Deetz 1977:5). As mentioned above, Kirch and Sahlins (1992) have provided an example of this by synthesizing the archival ethnography and the archaeology of a particular area. In doing so they have produced not just a documentation of the spread of European culture to Hawaii and its impact on the local peoples, but have examined the further dimension of how traditional Hawaiian culture was transformed by its mediation of the impinging World System.

The Kirch-Sahlins model can be profitably applied and tested in other areas, such as the Halawa valley on the windward coast of Moloka'i Island in Hawaii. This valley was more directly involved in the larger World System than the Anahulu valley during the historic Hawaiian Kingdom period. During this period, the Halawa valley was famed for its production of irrigated taro and much of the valley was used for its intensive production. This crop was used to supply the annual whaling fleet at Lahaina on Maui. Whaling ships had been arriving in

Hawaii on their annual forays from the early part of the nineteenth century, but flourished in this area circa 1830–1860, with the main whaling port on Lahaina.

Geographically the Halawa valley provides an excellent arena in which to apply an integrated approach to the examination of this historic conjuncture and subsequent indigenous change. The valley is rich in natural resources, with a large permanent stream, a deep bay, broad alluvial flood plains, fertile colluvial slopes, and adequate rainfall for both dry and wet cultivation. Partly because of these resources, Halawa was a primary locus for the establishment of early permanent settlements, and was settled by at least AD 650. This makes Halawa one of the earliest occupation sites in Hawaii. The valley was continuously occupied, and by the late prehistoric period supported one of the densest population concentrations seen anywhere in the Hawaiian islands (Kirch and Kelley 1975). At the time of the early Hawaiian Kingdom, Halawa still maintained a comparatively dense population. By 1836 much of Hawaii had become depopulated due to the effects of disease, malnutrition, and overwork, as well as commoner emigration to town areas from the provinces. This was compounded by the fact that commoners, especially males, were often away from Hawaii when they worked as indentured laborers on foreign ships. The Halawa valley, however, was reported to have maintained a population of 500 individuals (Hitchcock, 1836). This number can be compared to other large and previously productive valleys also on East Moloka'i. The valley of Wailau—larger than Halawa and in prehistoric times supporting a denser population—was recorded as having a population of 100 at this time. Similarly, Pelekunu, a valley smaller than Wailau but still larger than Halawa, had a population of 150 (Hitchcock 1836). The population of Halawa was noted as beginning to decrease slightly at this time, however.

To build an understanding of acculturation processes in Halawa, one must first understand the prehistoric situation before European contact. This can be examined through the archaeological remains. An intensive settlement pattern analysis has been carried out in Halawa, in which Kirch and Kelley (1975) document the local prehistoric developmental sequence and the historic adaptation sequences in this area. This study, which documents the extensive taro irrigation systems that were used from the prehistoric precontact period to historic times, covers more than 22 hectares of the valley. They included *lo'i* (taro pondfields), and 'auwai (irrigation ditches). This pattern of intensive occupation and taro production continued unabated until the late nineteenth century, when production began to decline. Population remained relatively high however, especially in comparison to other Hawaiian valleys occupied predominantly by native Hawaiians. In 1946, however, a tsunami flooded the lower valley, salinating the taro fields and causing most of the inhabitants to leave. Though disastrous for the local inhabitants, this exodus proved profitable for the preservation of archaeological remains, because, due to the limited habitation of the valley, relatively few archaeological sites have been disturbed since then.

Archaeologically, several changes can be seen from the prehistoric to the historic Hawaiian kingdom period. To accurately judge these changes, the ability to differentiate between prehistoric and historic structures is essential. Rosendahl (1975) has based this difference upon the presence or absence of historic artifactual and midden remains. While I am applying this approach in my own work I am also exploring the use of other markers. The general pattern during this period seems to be that house platforms increase in size, both in the amount of area they cover, and in the actual building stones. Various explanations can be posited for this, including new technology, the presence of metal tools, and perhaps the

availability of horse power. Changes occurring in artifactual remains reflect the influx of European goods during the historic period. These include a profusion of historic ceramics found in both commoner and chiefly households, metal items such as nails, doorknobs of stone and metal, both bottle and window glass, and the occasional leather good. Rosendahl found prehistoric occupation features from various ages to be substantially more numerous than historic ones. This is presumably because the prehistoric period incorporated a much longer time period. Additionally, boundary walls between house properties become more apparent during the historic period. This might seem to indicate a shift from the prehistoric communal residential patterns to more divided single-family residences. Historic occupation patterns also differ from prehistoric ones in that residences are situated closer to the stream and to roads, and are generally less spatially associated with dry land cultivation features (Rosendahl 1975). Additionally, roads are widened from the traditional trails to allow access for carriages. These changes may be caused by an increased desire for accessibility to trade routes. Ecological imperialism is seen in a subsistence shift from domestically-consumed products to a market dominated subsistence economy. New crops, such as potatoes and squash, become popular, as does new domesticated stock, particularly goats and cattle. A further shift from a mixed home-garden subsistence to more of a mono-crop system also indicates the dependence on trade.

Religious and social changes are reflected in the situation of historic houses upon the traditional temple sites, or *heiau*. This shift can be seen in both house remains and artifacts found on these previously-sacred structures, and is further documented in historic pictures portraying house structures and horse-drawn carriages on the *heiau*. Further religious shifts can be seen in the construction of churches at this time. A change in burial practices can also be detected. Although burial evidence is still sketchy, there seems to be a shift from the late prehistoric communal graves to historic burials behind residences.

The wealth of archival records helps fill in the picture presented by the archaeological record. Sources include explorers' accounts, published and unpublished ethnohistoric accounts, missionary texts, journals, old maps, pictures, early newspapers in both Hawaiian and English, and oral accounts taken during the historic period and at present. One of the principal sources of information on the changing socio-economic life of individuals in the valley comes from the land claims made during the Great Mahele land divisions of 1846–55. These created private ownership of the public lands once held by King Kamehameha III and around 252 of his high ranking chiefs (or *konoiki*). Mahele records are numerous for this valley, and give, among other things, information on the land claims made by both chiefs and commoners.

The Mahele, or division, was created as a result of the considerable internal pressure from resident foreigners who wanted the right to own, buy, and sell Hawaiian land, and from chiefs who were by this time heavily in debt due to the disastrous sandalwood trade and their ever increasing desire for conspicuous consumption. As Levy writes, "the government's response to these (pressures) was a time honored one: appoint a commission" (Levy 1975: 853). The land commission was charged with investigating and deciding land rights for individuals—whether natives or foreigners. The Great Mahele was intended to replace indigenous tenancy relations with guarantees of secure title. Instead it ultimately resulted in the alienation of the Hawaiian people from the land. The division of land and the process of acquiring land title was set up to take place in three steps. The first being the initial filing of a claim, the second the giving of supporting testimony (which occurred from one to seven years later and was taken by

land commission representatives who traveled through the islands), and finally the award of the land. The initial claims were of two types, that is Native and Foreign Registers. The Native claims were claims made in Hawaiian, the "foreign" were in English and comprised largely of claims made by foreigners. The claims offer invaluable insights into the Hawaiian notion of rights to resources, as well as elements of the subsistence economy. Preliminary analysis of the Halawa valley records show the typical claim to include taro land, a houselot, and unirrigated open land for dryland plantings or pasture land. Among the other items often found listed in the claims are the boundaries of the land parcels as well as when and from whom the right to the land was acquired. The land claims also often list *'auwai*, or irrigation ditches, trees, the right to gather firewood from certain areas, places of semiwild cultigens, and the right to fish in the sea and streams for certain species at certain times of the year (Linnekin 1990). Although parcels of land were awarded, the commoners' claims for these other rights were not sustained.

Therefore, the archival record of the Mahele permits a detailed reconstruction of the local pattern of land use, residence, inheritance patterns, and socio-economic organization. These records further allow the identification of individuals in both chiefly and commoner classes and places these individuals on the landscape. From there the changing pattern of land use and ownership can be traced. Significantly, these documents record the demise of the traditional Hawaiian socio-economic system caused by the Mahele land divisions. Denying commoners access to the necessary components for subsistence, such as water rights, and taxing the commoners in currency led to the final demise of the feudal system which had previously existed on the islands, and set the stage for this final step in Hawaiian alienation from the land. In prehistory, the Hawaiian subsistence economy depended not only on intensive agricultural produce, but also on the hunting, foraging, and scattered cultivation carried out on common lands. Although these common lands were under chiefly control, commoners had rights to them. After the Mahele however, common lands were no longer available, and although commoners owned their land, they may not have had access, for example, to the water so necessary for cultivation. This encouraged commoner mobility, as did the tax burden which had to be paid in currency for commoners to retain their lands. If a land owner could not pay these taxes, the land would be shifted to one who could; and those who could pay were increasingly foreigners. However, in the case of Halawa at this time, the inhabitants intensified their production of goods suitable for the new market economy.

Additional aspects of historic change in Halawa would benefit from future examination, including a shift in social structure as noted by Linnekin in her 1990 study of the changing role of women in Hawaiian society. Linnekin uses historic records, especially Mahele records, to document a shift in Hawaiian land transmission patterns, in which women begin to inherit land at a greater rate. Although this has not yet been documented for Halawa, such issues as this could be productively examined.

In conclusion, the continued intensification of agricultural production from the prehistoric to the historic periods can be observed in the Halawa valley. Some of the basic crops shift, however, from a completely Polynesian agricultural assemblage produced for chiefly tithe and domestic use, to a mixed Polynesian and European crop assemblage produced for exchange in a market economy. Further examination of the Halawa valley using the complimentary sources of archaeology and historical anthropology will elucidate the acculturation process in

this particular valley, and will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the process of change in the Hawaiian Islands due to the culture contact situation.

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