

Out to Dry at 'Ewa Marina

*Ancient sites are
being bulldozed
to make way
for a
Hawai'i Kai-like
development.*

JAN BECKET

Along one of the few remaining undeveloped stretches of O'ahu shoreline, cadences of an ancient chant reverberated one morning at sunrise. Several dozen Hawaiians gathered at One'ula Beach Park March 4 and again on April 4 for what organizers described as a celebration of shrines at One'ula. But the gathering was also a memorial service for those that were recently bulldozed.

Participants immersed themselves in the ocean in a hi'u wai (purification ceremony), and then chanted to the rising sun. After a short break, they gathered for a ceremonial procession to present ho'okupu (offerings), at coral structures they regard as ahu, or shrines, in a nearby kiawe forest.

Preservationists gathered again at the site on Memorial Day for a rally at sunset. Not far from the shrines, dozens of fishing poles sprout each weekend from the coral ledge, where at low tide, people gather he'e (octopus), or special varieties of limu for which the area is famous. A reef submerged a few feet below the water stretches out 50 yards in spots. Farther out, a second reef keeps large swells at bay and helps create ideal surf breaks.

Along the shore, growing out of an exposed ancient reef, are strands of hau, kou, milo and naio. At one spot a few yards inland from the ocean is an ancient puna wai — a spring, its sides lined with coral slabs cemented in place earlier this century. It offers testimony to generations of fishermen and gatherers stretching back to antiquity.

A quarter-mile inland, however, bulldozers push each day into the fringe of kiawe forest between the shore and abandoned cane fields, destroying the shrines, pushing the rocks aside and leveling the land.

Haseko, a large Japan-owned multinational development firm, plans to transform this quiet spot into a place strikingly similar to Hawai'i Kai, complete with a marina dredged a quarter-mile inland, fringed by a golf course and upscale homes.

Grading permits are in place, allowing the bulldozing that topples the once-revered coral structures. Still to be resolved is a court case over a permit that would allow Haseko to dredge through the reef, into caprock that protects the 'Ewa fresh water aquifer. Recently, the state Supreme Court halted the permitting process over a technicality — Hawaiian gathering rights — but Haseko is reapplying for the permit. And the leveling continues.

The 1995 City & County of Honolulu 'Ewa Development Plan Report describes the project in glowing terms: "The master-planned 'Ewa Marina project includes a mix of uses taking advantage of the open space vistas and recreational opportunities offered by an extensive small boat marina and a golf course ... In its entirety, the 'Ewa Marina will occupy approximately 1,100 acres located between 'Ewa Beach and Barbers Point Naval Air Station. The project will be centered around a 100-acre marina, which will serve as a major recreational resource and visual amenity."

The 'Ewa Development Plan Report acknowledges this area's rich concentration of Hawaiian sites by identifying the Haseko Marina project area as the "One'ula Archaeological District." Fifty-three sites, containing 334 identified features, cover the project area. But the report does not comment on the sites there, or explain the transition from archaeological district to Marina.

Concerns raised by some native Hawaiian groups temporarily halted bulldozing this spring around one small complex of 44 features right in the middle of the proposed waterway, designated as section "3215" in the project's archaeological report. Here, a forest of grass and kiawe sheltered a group of sites that included platforms, mounds, "C"-shaped structures, cleared areas and some upright unique stones, all classified in the archaeological report as a "temporary habitation — agricultural complex."

Haseko ended the moratorium on bulldozing during the week of May 11-15. Most of these structures are now gone, although some Hawaiians continue to visit and honor the handful of stones that remain, just yards from the vast areas now stripped of vegetation and of any evidence that ancient Hawaiians lived there.

"Among those sites were shrines of tremendous cultural value to all Hawaiians," commented the Rev. Kaleo Patterson, director of the Hawai'i Ecumenical Coalition.

Differences between archaeologists and native Hawaiians have given rise to the controversy, causing some to recall Kukui o Kane Heiau, and numerous sites in Hālawā Valley, all destroyed by the H-3 freeway.

Having gone through a lengthy process of soliciting community input and holding numerous hearings, however, Haseko expresses alarm at the work stoppage.

Haseko Spokesperson Perry White commented, "No one could have chosen an area to become concerned about more sure to



Rock of ages: Standing stones like this one at One'ula are believed to have been placed centuries ago, and are among the last of their kind anywhere.

derail the Marina project. There is no way to work around this area."

Patterson acknowledges that Haseko has "jumped through all the right legal hoops." But he and others in the Coalition are taking on the uphill battle against the Marina, and in the process questioning a "culturally-insensitive historic review process that seems designed to carefully filter Hawaiian input."

Patterson wants the planning process opened up to the Hawaiian community. In this case, he wants the Marina halted if there is a conflict between saving the shrines and dredging for the Marina.

"Haseko and the state Office of Historic Preservation are using a set of ground rules that treats Hawaiian sites and Hawaiian culture as expendable," Patterson said. "We see a much bigger picture."

In support of his position, Patterson refers to Public Law 101-275, a federal statute known as the "Hate Crimes Statistics Act." The Act applies to prejudice based on race or religion that manifests itself in the "destruction, damage or vandalism of property."

The Hawai'i Ecumenical Coalition sent a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno on April 17, noting that her office used the Act to investigate the burning of African-American churches in the South and the vandalism of Punchbowl Cemetery. "Yet for generations many religious shrines and the burial places of our ancestors have not only been vandalized but have been destroyed by developers with little or no attention given by the U.S. Department of Justice," the letter states. "The destruction of religious shrines at One'ula for the commercial development of the 'Ewa Marina Community Project ... is but the latest manifestation of these ongoing crimes."

At the center of the controversy were a half dozen stones, each two to six feet tall, and until recently, each still standing centuries after it was placed. Each appears to have been selected with some care, perhaps for an unusual shape. These uprights often stand on or near a small area paved with 'ili'ili (small coral stones).

Because no lava stones are available in the region, these stones, the small platforms or paving next to them and all the other stones in the complex are made of coral, the same coral that stretches inland for up to five miles on the 'Ewa plain, which was under 25 feet of water 130,000 years ago. The fact that the sites are made of coral adds to their value: The Kumulipo, the Hawaiian creation chant, identifies coral as the first form of life.

In fact, no extensive emerged seabeds exist on any of the other Hawaiian islands; on O'ahu itself, vast complexes of Hawaiian coral sites have already been destroyed in recent times by the construction of the Barbers Point Deep Draft Harbor, Ko'olina Resort and Campbell Industrial Park.

Scattered complexes remain on Barbers Point itself, but none lie along the seashore as they do at One'ula, and few of them incorporate upright coral stones. The sites at One'ula, with their numerous standing stones, were among the very last Hawaiian coral seashore structures left anywhere, on any island.

This particular place may have even more significance: The name "One'ula," which can mean "red sand" in a literal translation, also means "sacred sands" because of the association of the color red with the chiefs and the gods in traditional Hawaiian culture.

Cultural anthropologist and historian Marion Kelly has had



Caught 'dozing: Last March, Haseko bulldozed six standing stones, raising concerns that they were destroying evidence that could have halted 'Ewa Marina construction.

40 years of field experience, and worked closely at the Bishop Museum with some of the founders of modern Hawaiian archaeology: E.S. Craighill Handy, Mary Kawena Pukui, Catherine Summers and Kenneth Emory. Kelly comments, "I have been to many, many places over the decades, but have never seen such a dense concentration of shrines as exists at One'ula. Each one appears slightly different. Some uprights may have been selected to represent the god of fishermen, Kū'ula, some may have served as pōhaku o Kāne, or family shrines, some may have been to encourage gourd or sweet potato cultivation, and others may have been for experts in the various crafts or professionals who appealed for guidance."

Archaeologist Rowland Reeve, who has worked extensively on Kaho'olawe, agrees: "During my relatively brief visit to the area I saw at least one upright stone set atop a small platform of coral. On Kaho'olawe, we would consider a structure like that to be a ko'a (fishing shrine)."

The archaeological report prepared for Haseko by Paul Rosendahl and Associates asserts that this was merely a temporary habitation site, and suggests that Hawaiians using the area must have come to the seashore only at certain seasons, and then returned to permanent homes in the Ko'olau mountains. Kelly disagrees, pointing to the extensive complex of sites, the availability of water and the abundant marine resources nearby

as evidence of permanent habitation. She also points out that by dismissing the sites as "temporary habitations," the archaeologist's report minimizes their significance and thus aids their ultimate destruction.

"This is not a neutral, objective piece of culturally-sensitive research," Kelly comments. "It is a classic example of 'don't ask, don't tell' archaeology."

A strongly-worded letter sent in late February to the state Office of Historic Preservation resulted in a temporary agreement with Haseko to halt the bulldozing of sites in area 3215. "We ... decry this desecration of Hawaiian history, culture and religion and call for the protection of religious and historical sites at One'ula, so that future generations may rekindle their connections to this land and learn from the works of their ancestors," wrote the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches, representing 18 Hawaiian churches, and Hawai'i Ecumenical Coalition.

Marion Kelly asked that all new clearing be halted until the sites could be assessed. In a March 3 letter sent to the state Historic Preservation Division, Kelly and four others asserted that the area contained significant cultural features not acknowledged in the initial report.

The state Historic Preservation Office revisited the same features, however, and came to different conclusions. Preservation Office employees Muffet Jordaine and Sara Collins stated, "These sites contain no archaeological traits of religious activity that we could determine."

Days after this letter was sent, Haseko bulldozers destroyed six standing stones in areas near 3215, prompting some to accuse the developer of practicing damage control. "Nobody specifically asked for a moratorium limited to area 3215," commented Kelly. "We wanted all bulldozing halted until the entire project area could be re-examined for religious structures. Some of the structures Haseko destroyed were certainly shrines, just as some of the few remaining structures are shrines."

The archaeological report lists 53 complexes in the project area. Out of the 53, just six are recommended for preservation. These include a mound of coral which the report acknowledges may be a heiau or large shrine. The other 47 complexes are judged as "significant solely for information content," a phrase that means they can be excavated and then destroyed, as most have been already.

Aside from the one possible heiau, no other features among the hundreds located throughout the 1,100 acres affected are identified in the report as religious, and none, including the heiau itself, are placed in the category "having cultural significance." However, Haseko spokesperson Perry White said "cultural context was a principal consideration in assigning the site functions."

Federal guidelines acknowledge that cultural sites "are often hard to recognize ... [and that they] may not necessarily come to light through the conduct of archaeological ... surveys." The National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 38, which directs compliance with federal guidelines, mentions that it is not uncommon for culturally-sensitive properties to come to light late in the development process, especially because sacred places are often kept secret.

The Bulletin goes on to caution that "individuals who have economic interests in the potential development of an area may be strongly motivated to deny its cultural significance ... Where one individual or group asserts that a property has traditional cultural significance, and another asserts that it does not, or where there is disagreement about the nature or extent of a property's significance, the motives and values ... of the parties must be carefully analyzed."

Bulletin 38 states that cultural experts must be brought into the property to help identify significant features. In this instance, the report prepared by Paul Rosendahl and Associates relied, for its cultural background, on the recollections of two elderly community members who did not claim to have particular knowledge of ancient life in the area.

Rosendahl and Associates did conduct community tours of the project area about five years ago, but only took people to one of the six areas slated for preservation and to another small group of structures near the ocean.

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'Ewa Marina

Patterson, however, located a man who remembers visiting One'ula as a child of eight or nine with his grandfather and uncles, to fish with nets for kala, 'aweoweo, manini and 'u'u. "My grandpa knew the right time of year and of the month to go," says Raymond Kauhola, who now lives in 'Aina Haina. "While we were getting ready to lay the net, he used to go into the shrines in the bushes to pule (pray) and give ho'okupu. After that we would go and lay the net. Of course, we would catch fish, and then my grandpa would take a fish, wrap it in ti and take it into the bushes to pule again. It is really too bad that they have to go and develop that place, and destroy everything that I remember."

Kauhola's grandfather lived in Nānākuli. Haseko only asked those living in 'Ewa about family connections to the area.

The Rev. Patterson asks, "Why was it so easy for us to locate someone who knows of the shrines, and so hard for them to locate anyone?"

If Haseko suspects Hawaiians of "manufacturing" sacred sites in order to stop excavation of the land to create the Marina, those who are objecting to the destruction of the sites note the absence of acknowledged sacred sites among the hundreds of features identified, and the convenient placement of areas recommended for preservation along the edges of the planned Marina project where they will not interfere with construction. They also note the lack of acknowledgment of the cultural significance of single upright stones with platforms. "Some ahu have low platforms for receiving ho'okupu and a unique, upright coral slab to represent the god being propitiated," Kelly points out. "These are indeed rare!"

Paul Rosendahl defends his company's archaeological interpretation of the upright stones by maintaining that they are "architectural features." He contends that the stones set upright were

What is a Shrine?

To further complicate a politically-charged issue, the archaeological community does not agree on the definition of a Hawaiian traditional shrine. The best way for a shrine or heiau to be preserved, Kukui o Kāne Heiau aside, is for it to have been included in a survey of O'ahu done in 1930-1932 by the Bishop Museum archaeologist J. Gilbert McAllister. Without that recognition, however, identification becomes more subjective, and much more open to political and economic pressure.

Marion Kelly points out that a shrine can consist of no more than a single stone, but in most cases consists of a small structure built to emphasize a prominent stone. In traditional Hawaiian cosmology, the upright

stone is regarded as a home which a god can be induced to enter if worshippers conduct the proper ceremonies.

The Rosendahl report on the 'Ewa Marina site, however, uses different criteria to define a religious feature: It may have taken a "great deal of time and effort to construct," may contain ceremonial artifacts and may not have dense concentrations of food remains. The first definition underscores the importance of upright stones, and allows for family shrines, while the second appears to recognize only larger structures used by an entire community or by the ali'i.

Kelly comments that the Rosendahl definition is not culturally accurate, or culturally sensitive. "How about the pōhaku o Kāne?" she asks, pointing to the 19th century Hawaiian historian Samuel Kamakau. His book, *Ka Po'e Kahiko*, relates that there were "very many" stones of Kāne in every

ahupua'a (district), and that these were stones indicated by a god "perhaps in a dream, or in a vision, or by leading someone to the spot." Interestingly, his description of the ceremony at a stone of Kāne includes the fact that a feast was eaten near the stone and that "the remains of the feast were buried in front of the stone."

Kelly also disputes Rosendahl's taking the presence of food remains as evidence that a structure is not a shrine. "How about the hale mua?" she asks. The hale mua was the men's eating house, but was also a place where religious ceremonies were conducted, and it was considered a kind of heiau. "It is a very economically advantageous definition for a developer," comments Kelly. "I can certainly see how Rosendahl and the state Historic Preservation Division employees saw no shrines at One'ula when they applied such a limited definition."

parts of larger structures, which were dismantled by his workers when they originally worked on the sites. However, Rosendahl has not yet produced photographs of these earlier structures.

"The problem is a much greater one than the interpretation of a dozen upright stones. The problem involves the deliberate marginalization of Hawaiians in the interpretation of their own sacred places, as though Hawaiian culture is a dead culture, only to be interpreted by Western archaeologists," comments Patterson. "We want to see cultural oversight committees set up, similar to the burial councils, that involve the Hawaiian community in every step of the process, beginning right now."

Patterson emphasizes that this cultural oversight needs to be built into every stage of every project involving Hawaiian sites, including the critical point when a purpose or function is assigned to each feature.

Rowland Reeve, who has worked with the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana to preserve the cultural sites on that island, expresses similar concerns. "It is not simply a question of whether there are shrines at One'ula. It is a question of whether the entire process that exists to protect these and other cultural sites is adequate."

In the politically-charged atmosphere since the H-3 construction, some Hawaiian activists complain that contract archae-

ologists avoid mentioning the "H" word (heiau) at all costs, and that they assign anything but religious significance to features they uncover, especially those that might prove inconvenient to the developers that have hired them to write the reports. Comments Reeve, "The primary question is whether we are willing to continue to let economic forces determine what parts of the past are worth preserving and which are to be destroyed."

Patterson promises that the issue will not disappear, even if Haseko bulldozes all the shrines. "The 'Ewa coast should be an eco-cultural reserve, a protected coastal ecosystem for the perpetuation of traditions and customs such as limu gathering, fishing, surfing and canoe paddling. We want to plant the seeds of a united campaign that will extend further than the shrines at One'ula. ... We've already contacted fishermen and limu gatherers in Wai'anae and Waimānalo. ... This is an issue that will come up again and again on this island."

Jan Becket, a writer and photographer who has participated in events at the 'Ewa Marina site, is working with several others on a book of photographs documenting Hawaiian religious sites remaining on O'ahu.

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