

**HE MO'OLELO 'ĀINA:
A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE
PU'U O 'UMI NATURAL AREA RESERVE
AND KOHALA-HĀMĀKUA MOUNTAIN LANDS,
DISTRICTS OF KOHALA AND HĀMĀKUA,
ISLAND OF HAWAI'I**



Lanalana (Araneida therididae)
(William Mull, 1974; Photo
Courtesy of DLNR-NARS)



*Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve,
above the Waimanu Valley
Headlands (Photo Courtesy of
DLNR-NARS)*



*Pu'u and Forest Lands
of the Pu'u o 'Umi NAR
viewed from Waimea
(Photo KPA-N 1237)*



*'Ōhāwai (Clermontia drepanomorpha)
of Pu'u o 'Umi (Photo Courtesy of DLNR-
NARS)*



*Nā Lā'au 'Ohi Wai of Pu'u o 'Umi
(Photo Courtesy of DLNR-NARS)*

Kumu Pono Associates LLC

Historical & Archival Documentary Research · Oral History Interview Studies ·
Researching and Preparing Studies from Hawaiian Language Documents ·
Māhele 'Āina, Boundary Commission, & Land History Records ·
Integrated Cultural Resources Management Planning ·
Preservation & Interpretive Program Development



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the request of Ms. Lisa Hadway, Natural Area Specialist for the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources—Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DLNR-DOFAW), *Kumu Pono Associates LLC*, conducted a series of four detailed studies of historical and archival literature, documenting facets of the cultural landscape of the Natural Area Reserves. This study focuses on the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve, situated within lands of the Kohala and Hāmākua Districts. The documentation also includes detailed oral testimonies—describing the lands, traditional and customary practices, and historical land use—from native residents who relied upon the resources of the Kohala-Hāmākua mountains—that were collected from the 1860s to the early 1900s. The documentation cited herein is the product of years of research, and includes specific research conducted for the study between October 2003 to April 2004. The research was conducted in private and public collections, and that documentation, cited herein, includes written narratives that cover the period from antiquity to the 1980s.

The historical-archival resources were located in the collections of the Hawai'i State Archives, Land Management Division, Survey Division, Bureau of Conveyances and the Natural Areas Reserve offices; the Hawaiian Historical Society; the University of Hawai'i-Hilo Mo'okini Library; private family collections; and in the collection of *Kumu Pono Associates LLC*. The documentation includes rich narratives translated from native Hawaiian accounts; descriptions of lands that make up the Kohala mountains recorded in historic surveys; a history of land tenure from 1848 to the present; records documenting the establishment of the Kohala Forest Reserve, and the subsequent designation of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve.

The Natural Area Reserve takes its name from Pu'u o 'Umi, literally, the Hill-of-'Umi, the summit of which is situated 5,260 feet above sea level. It is likely that the naming of Pu'u o 'Umi is associated with the reign of the King, 'Umi-a-Liloa, who ruled the island of Hawai'i in the 1500s, and for whom many sites—from mountain to shore—in the Kohala-Hāmākua region are named.

The native traditions and historical accounts associated with the Kohala-Hāmākua mountain lands span many centuries, from Hawaiian antiquity to the later period following western contact. The narratives describe customs and practices of the native people who resided on these lands, walked the trails, and who were sustained by the wealth of the mountain lands, the *kula* (plain and plateau lands), and the adjacent marine fisheries.

The most detailed descriptions of the Kohala-Hāmākua mountain lands, including documentation of traditional and customary rights, are those found in the Kingdom collections, documenting the history of land tenure, and defining the boundaries of *ahupua'a* in the Kohala-Hāmākua Districts. Detailed oral testimonies from elder native tenants were taken in court proceedings of the mid to late 1800s, and document the occurrence of traditional and customary practices, and nature of the resources within given *ahupua'a*. In those records, we learn of the traditional knowledge and occurrence of native practices in the lands which today are a part of, and adjoin the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve.

We find in native traditions and beliefs, that Hawaiians shared spiritual and familial relationships with the natural resources around them. Each aspect of nature from the stars in the heavens, to the winds, clouds, rains, growth of the forests and life therein, and everything on the land and in the ocean, was believed to be alive. Indeed, every form of nature was a body-form of some god or lesser deity. As an example, in this context, and in association with lands which are now included in a part of the landscape of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve, we find the goddess *Hina-ulu-'ōhi'a* (Hina, goddess whose form is in the groves of 'ōhi'a); and *Pō-kāhi* (The darkened place), a god of the mountain mists (see the tradition of *Lau-ka-'ie'ie* in this study), are deified parts of the landscape of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve.

In the Hawaiian mind, care for each aspect of nature, the *kino lau* (myriad body-forms) of the elder life forms, was a way of life. This concept is still expressed by Hawaiian *kūpuna* (elders) through the present day, and passed on in many native families. Also, in this cultural context, anything which damages the native nature of the land, forests, ocean, and *kino lau* therein, damages the integrity of the whole. Thus caring for, and protecting the land and ocean resources, is a way of life.

In the traditional context above referenced, we find that the mountain landscape, its' native species, and the intangible components therein, are a part of a sacred Hawaiian landscape. Thus, the landscape itself is a highly valued cultural property. It's protection, and the continued exercise of traditional and customary practices, in a traditional and customary manner, are mandated by native custom, and State and Federal Laws (as those establishing the Kohala-Hāmākua Forest Reserves and Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve; and the Endangered Species Act).

In this discussion, protection does not mean the exclusion, or extinguishing of traditional and customary practices, it simply means that such practices are done in a manner consistent with cultural subsistence, where each form of native life is treasured and protected. *Kūpuna* express this thought in the words, "*Ho'ohana aku, a ho'ōla aku!*" (Use it, and let it live!).

In the early 1900s, the Kohala-Hāmākua forest and watershed lands were determined to be one of the most significant in the Hawaiian Islands, and worthy of protection. In 1913, the mountain lands were dedicated as the Kohala Forest Reserve. In the late 1970s, the Kohala Forest Reserve was again signaled out as being a unique and fragile system, and efforts led to the development of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve in 1987. Since that time, agencies and community members have been working together to try and ensure the health and integrity of the natural and cultural resources of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve.

As a part of on-going ranching operations, and the mission of the newly formed forestry programs, hunting for pigs, and in earlier times, for wild cattle, has been practiced on lands of the Pu'u o 'Umi NAR. Such hunting interests remain of importance to community members and long-term management goals of the Natural Area Reserve System program.

māua nō me ka ha'aha'a — Kepā a me Onaona Maly

“A'ohe hana nui, ke alu 'ia!
(It is no great task when done together by all!)

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