

Ahupua`a o Kualoa

The *ahupua`a* of *Kualoa* (long back) is located at the northern end of Kane`ohe Bay, east of the *ahupua`a* of Haki pu`u. Like Haki pu`u, its valley depth is not as much as the rest of the *ahupua`a* of Ko`olaupoko, due to *Mo`okapu o Hāloa* (Sacred section of Hāloa), a mountainous ridge which branches off the Ko`olau mountain range and juts out to the east. Known to the ancient Hawaiians as *Palikū* (erect cliff), *Kualoa* is perfectly flat between the ocean and *Lae o ka `oi`o*, the mountainous formation that looks like a “forehead” and is the eastern-most tip of *Mo`okapu o Hāloa*. (The name *Palikū* was changed to *Kualoa* by Mrs. Julie Judd Swanzy sometime around 1880.)

There are several reasons why *Kualoa* has great cultural significance. It is said that O`ahu’s most famous burial cave (*Pohukaina*) was located in this sacred mountain, and its entrance was on the northern cliffs facing the *ahupua`a* of Ka`a`awa. (Another known entrance to the cave was at *Ka`ahu`ula* Spring, also in Ka`a`awa.) It was believed that *Pohukaina* cave went completely through the Ko`olau range, with numerous exits toward central O`ahu. Many said there were openings in Moanalua, Kalihi, Pu`iwa, and even as far away as Waipahu and Kahuku. *Mo`olelo* about this great cavern spoke of travelers venturing with kukui nut candles from leeward O`ahu to Kahuku. They spoke of being “in the mountain *Konahuanui*, sloping down toward Kahuku.” These travelers even named the roof of the cavern “*Kauhuhu*,” and gave counts of “many creeks, rivers, and streams” throughout the cavern.

Another reason for *Kualoa*’s significance is that it was a place of refuge for ancient Hawaiians who were condemned to die. The land was under a special *kapu*, and anyone who was able to find their way to *Kualoa* could not be harmed. In addition, *Kualoa* was also the training grounds for young *ali`i* (chief) who needed to learn the traditions of the *ali`i*.

Because of its history and its sacredness, *Kualoa* was coveted by many *ali`i*. [A *mo`olelo* was told of a battle that broke out over this land in the 1770’s because of its significance: “When the O`ahu *ali`i* (chiefs) and their *kahuna* (high priest) *Ka`ōpulupulu* became dissatisfied with the rule of *Kūmahana*, they asked *Kahahana* to come to O`ahu and rule the island.” (*Kahahana* was living on Maui at the time with his foster father, *Kahekili*. *Kahekili* was the reigning chief of Maui.) *Kahekili* permitted *Kahahana* to rule on O`ahu, but in return, asked for the land of *Kualoa* and the rights to the highly valued “whale teeth” (*palaoa pae*) that washed ashore in *Kualoa*. (Whale teeth were highly prized possessions of the *ali`i*, and were worn as part of a necklace (*lei niho palaoa*) made with human hair, symbolizing royalty.) The *kahuna* (high priest) *Ka`ōpulupulu* advised *Kahahana* that relinquishing the rights to *Kualoa* would mean a “virtual surrender of the emblems of sovereignty and independence for O`ahu,” so *Kahahana* sent a reply denying *Kahekili*’s request. This angered *Kahekili*. When he eventually came to “claim” *Kualoa*, he met opposition from *Kahahana*; a battle ensued and *Kahekili* eventually won and conquered all of O`ahu.]

The mystery to *Kualoa* is that even after *Kahekili* conquered all of O`ahu, he never pursued the *ahupua`a* of *Kualoa*. It remained a sacred place for *ali`i* to train, as well as a place of refuge for condemned Hawaiians. Sometime after 1795 when *Kamehameha I* became the overall ruler of all the Hawaiian islands, he gave the lands of *Kualoa* to his favorite wife, *Ka`ahumanu*, after which they became part of the royal lands.

In 1850, *Kamehameha III* sold approximately 622 acres of land in Kualoa and all its fishing rites offshore (which included *Mokoli'i* or Chinaman's Hat) to Dr. Gerritt P. Judd for \$1300. (Dr. Judd was a missionary doctor who arrived in Hawaii in 1837 and was a personal advisor to Kamehameha III.) Then, additional acreage in Hakipu'u and Ka'a'awa were purchased by Dr. Judd from the Wilder family for \$15,000 when the Wilder Plantation failed. This purchase increased the size of the estate to what it is today and is now under the Morgan Family name, who are Dr. Judd's descendants. This estate, Kualoa Ranch, Ltd., was so named in 1927 and has been used for various purposes over the last eight decades. During World War II, some of the lands of this estate was used as an auxiliary airstrip with many of the large monkeypod trees providing natural hangars for small planes. Much of the beach of Kualoa was condemned by the City and County of Honolulu and is now used as a park. Today, the Ranch is now being used as an activity center for both visitors and *kama'aina* (residents). Activities include jet skis, wind sailing, canoeing, boat rides, horseback riding, dune buggies, tennis, and helicopter rides.