

# Kaiholena

In 1848, during the Great Mahele two chiefs of kahuna lineage, Chief Kamakahonu and Chief Kaopua, traded their ancestral lands, some of the most kapu lands in the Kingdom, for the ahupua'a of Kaiholena, one and two. These Chiefs and their families had been advisors to and close guardians of King Kamehameha the Great.



## What was the kuleana of these Chiefs to Kamehameha the Great?

Chief Kamakahonu was the grandson of Chief Nae'ole, confidant of Kamehameha the Great's mother. Nae'ole protected Kamehameha at birth from Alapa'i and raised him for the first five years of his life at Awini. Later, it was Kamakahonu's uncle with whom Kamehameha entrusted Oahu when the King returned to Kona after conquering and uniting all the Islands.



Chief Kaopua was a close confidant of Kamehameha the Great and was the personal guardian of his favorite wife, Queen Kahumanu. It was Kaopua's family that cleaned the bones of Queen Ka'ahumanu's brother, Kuakini. The Bishop Museum holds an anklet made of cowry shells given to Queen Ka'ahumanu by her Mother when she left Hana, Maui to live with her father on Moku O Kiawe (Hawaii Island). A note with the anklet states that Queen Ka'ahumanu instructed Queen Kalama to give this anklet to Kaopua, a sign of affection.



The line of the descendents of Kaopua was tasked with caring for Kamehameha the Great's malu and weapons. A very important, personal, and significant charge. It is believed that Kaopua's grandfather, a kahuna, was with Kamehameha the Great and Queen Ka'ahumanu at the pivotal battle of Malilua when Kawaiola was killed with a sling stone.

## Why did these Chiefs trade the most sacred lands in the Kingdom for Kaiholena?

The lands on Oahu for which Kamakahonu traded Kaiholena are at Kualoa, the sacred training grounds where young ali'i Chiefs completed the last stages of their training. When canoes passed this area they were required to drop sail in deference and paddle. Not doing so was kapu and the penalty was death. The importance of Kualoa is still honored today: last year when the Polynesian Voyaging Society's Hokulia sailed to Kualoa for a gathering to honor Mau Piailug (the sailing kahu from Satawal) it dropped sails honoring the traditional sacredness of Kualoa.



Kualoa and the birthing stones for ali'i at Kukanilo were considered the most sacred lands on Oahu.

Chief Kaopua's family held the most sacred ahupua'a on Hawaii Island including Kahaluu and Lanihau in Kona, which include a number of heiau and was considered the ali'i intellectual center for Hawaii Island. Kaopua was granted Lanihau, which encompassed Ahu'ena Heiau, which served as Kamehameha's seat of government as he ruled the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Ahu'ena was deemed among the most powerful heiau and included Lana Nu'u Mamao (Oracle Tower) a feature not a part of every heiau of that period. King Kamehameha lived out the last days of his life at Lanihau. It is the present site of the King Kamehameha Hotel.

Chief Kaopua was a very old man by the Great Mahele. Kaopua and Chief Kamakahonu's family were close and trusted guardians of Kamehameha the Great and were of kahuna lineage. These chiefs owned the most kapu lands in the Kingdom before the Great Mahele. But they traded these lands for Kaiholena one and two. In fact, Kaiholena is the fifth and thirty-fifth registered properties in the Mehele documents. They were secured early in the registration process.



We know Kaiholena with its number of heiau, massive halau, burials, and village complexes was an important and thriving center. Kaiholena is also one of the few ahupua'a whose boundaries extend to the horizon. We don't know what criteria these Chiefs used for selecting Kaiholena. We don't know what their kuleana was to this land or what is there. But...

Whatever happened at Kaiholena or may be at Kaiholena was of such great importance that these close guardian Chiefs of Kamehameha the Great were compelled to trade the most sacred lands in the Kingdom to secure Kaiholena's protection and secure it quickly. And so can we.