HE ALI‘I KA ʻĀINA; HE KAUWĀ KE KANAKA (THE LAND IS CHIEF; MAN IS ITS SERVANT):

TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE KONOHIKI

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Abstract

In traditional Hawaiian society, the konohiki were a specialized class of chiefs appointed by the Ali‘i Nui (high chiefs) to steward their land, water and human resources. Their self-sustaining and holistic methods of land and resource stewardship became known as the Konohiki System. The System’s principles were governed by the ancient Hawaiian Kapu religion and based on cultural values of Mālama ‘Āina – the deep familial ties and reciprocal stewardship between the ‘Āina (land and environment), the Akua (deities) and kanaka (man).

To date, the konohiki’s history remains fragmented, insufficient, and lacking the Hawaiian perspective. This thesis is the first comprehensive, focused study on the konohiki utilizing a wider range of Hawaiian-language primary sources mainly from 19th century Hawaiian-language newspapers, published in 1834-1948, and the 1848 Māhele land records. These sources uncover invaluable Hawaiian cultural, historical and ancestral knowledge, and provide new information that changes the complex and often misunderstood historiography of the konohiki.
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demands on the konohiki for resources and labor, and the gradual replacement of their positions under new Western laws and a Constitutional government. The second section traces the decline of their class due to the burgeoning foreign-controlled government and its increasingly complex laws and taxation system that replaced traditional konohiki with foreigners and government bureaucrats.

Chapter 4 traces the 1848 Māhele land claim processes of five konohiki who served under King Kamehameha III. The Māhele records, written mainly in the Hawaiian language, contain the land history of the king’s konohiki and their overwhelming challenges with the arduous claim process while dying from foreign diseases.

Chapter 5 synthesizes and summarizes my findings of the konohiki’s reconstructed history and transformation from pre-contact chiefly land stewards to powerless, landless commoners after the 1848 Māhele. It re-examines the methodology of my research, its successes and challenges with the sources used in this paper and recommendations for future research on this topic.

**Literature Review**

The fragmented pieces of the konohiki’s history are scattered throughout numerous sources written in Hawaiian and English. The following primary and secondary sources influenced this research on the konohiki and are valuable to their existing scholarship. These sources are organized and reviewed according to the chapters of this thesis.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the origins of the konohiki and define who they were and their functions in traditional Hawaiian society? As an oral culture, ancestral knowledge and cultural understanding of the language has been lost. Therefore, primary sources of pre-contact konohiki information are rare and if located, are cultural and historical gems. The inclusion of ancient texts, like the *Kumulipo* cosmogonic chant, was culturally significant and helped to identify, perhaps, the earliest documented konohiki genealogy of Kuheleimoana and his son Konohiki. The chant traces their chiefly lineage starting with the evolution of the natural world down to illustrious Akua (deities) and Ali‘i Nui.
Primary English sources of early post-contact history include the journals of British explorers Captain James Cook (1778-1779) and Archibald Menzies, a naturalist of Captain Vancouver (1792-1794) who both complimented on the Hawaiians’ highly cultivated and organized landscape of kalo (taro) fields and fishponds. Although many early explorers and visitors make no specific references to the konohiki, there observations indicate evidence of the konohiki’s work and contributions.

Secondary sources include the translated works of 19th century Hawaiian scholars David Malo (1951), Samuel Kamakau (1976, 1986, and 1961) and Kepelino (2007). Their memoirs and eye-witness accounts are informative pieces of cultural and historical knowledge describing the functions of the konohiki and their class in the context of chiefly culture and traditional Hawaiian society. Their writings describe the konohiki as centralized authorities of the ahupua‘a which was the most important socio-economic and political land division in Hawaiian society.

Malo, Kamakau and Kepelino received Western educations and served in influential positions in the new foreign-controlled Hawaiian kingdom government. Their Christian and Western biases, at times, influenced their interpretations of traditional culture practices and historical events in their writings.

Of these scholars, Kamakau’s writings, translated to English from 19th century Hawaiian newspapers, are the most extensive ranging from pre-contact Hawai‘i to the 1850’s. Kamakau was an important participant in the history he passionately authored as a scholar, educator, government legislator, land commissioner and newspaper writer. His writings are insightful, first-hand accounts of the konohiki’s personal experiences and relationships with the Ali‘i, foreigners, and the maka‘āinana (commoner). He details their achievements and challenges adapting to radical foreign changes and weaves culturally and historically rich stories of daily life in 19th century Hawai‘i.

Emma Nakuina’s article, *Ancient Water Rights and Some of the Customs Pertaining to Them* (1893), is the most comprehensive and definitive source of konohiki stewardship regarding fresh water management, conservation and distribution. She explains the cultural significance of freshwater in Hawaiian society and details the strict regulatory system of the konohiki who ensured equitable and sustainable water allocation to wet kalo farmers. Nakuina
was of Aliʻi descent and a respected scholar who was appointed as water commissioner and judge over the Kona district of Oʻahu in 1892 by Hawaiʻi’s last monarch, Queen Liliʻuokalani.

Nakuina’s writings are from a cultural perspective defining each aspect of water management using Hawaiian concepts and terms. Her expertise and authority on this topic is based on her formal training and first-hand knowledge she acquired as a water commissioner adjudicating water rights cases and disputes. Despite her accomplished background, her article is sometimes overlooked by scholars and eclipsed by the writings of Antonio Perry (1912 and 1914) who was an Associate Justice of the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court. Perry’s material is technical and specific to the evolution of modern Hawaiian water laws. Although he references Nakuina’s work in his writings, he fails to fully credit her as a water expert and authority.

E. S. Craighill, E. G. Handy and M. K. Pukui’s Native Planters in Old Hawaii (1972) covers an expansive range of subjects regarding the konohiki’s administration of the land and resources aligned with the hierarchical social structure in pre-contact Hawaiʻi. They also cover a wide range of the konohiki’s ‘oihana in agriculture and aquaculture that were tied to their religious duties. Pukui, a renowned Hawaiian scholar who grew up in the traditional culture and fluent in the language, contributed her ancestral knowledge that enriched the anthropological work of Handy. Together, their scholarship provides cultural understanding of the konohiki’s function in traditional Hawaiian society and the significance of each job they performed.

Pukui’s Hawaiian Dictionary (1986), co-authored with American linguist and educator, Samuel Elbert, is a wealth of rare cultural knowledge that researchers often access for deeper understanding of the language, literature and historical materials written in Hawaiian. In addition, Pukui’s book of 3,000 ʻōlelo noʻeau (proverbial sayings) (1983) teach Hawaiian cultural values of the konohiki pertaining to proper chiefly behavior, land stewardship, and reciprocal relationships between the chiefs and people.

In her book, Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Iā e Pono Ai? (1992), Hawaiian scholar and historian, Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa, defines the traditional concept of mālama ʻāina or land stewardship based on the interdependent and familial relationships between the ʻāina (land), Hawaiians and their akua (deities). These were the principles of the Konohiki System which the konohiki implemented to ensure the lands and resources of their Aliʻi were highly
productive and self-sustaining from mountains to ocean. The Ali‘i Nui’s chiefly mana (divine power) and waiwai (wealth, resources) were tied to the harmonious balance between their land, people and the gods. As earthly akua and intermediaries for the spiritual, divine akua, the Ali‘i Nui were ultimately responsible for the care and welfare of the people. The konohiki assisted them in achieving this harmony that was pono (balanced/righteous).

Kameʻeleihiwa’s book also includes her exhaustive and detailed research on the 1848 Māhele which remains a formative classic that rigorous scholars rely on. Her comprehensive and detailed synthesis of historical events before, during and after the Māhele shows the complexity of this land tenure revolution from a Hawaiian perspective. The Ali‘i were forced to make difficult decisions and sacrifices while adopting foreign social, economic and political changes to save their dying people. She explains how Hawaiians were dispossessed of lands at the hands of foreigners which is further validated in my study of Kamehameha III’s five konohiki and their Māhele land claims in Chapter 4.

Kameʻeleihiwa’s identification of Kamehameha III’s 218 konohiki by name and categorization by genealogy, rank and land information provides quantifiable data and a clearer picture of the lands the konohiki sacrificed and lost resulting in the end of their class after the Māhele. The identification of a konohiki is important in rebuilding their history as it leads to higher accuracy in confirming their information in other sources. A database of konohiki names was created to collect and organize their information for quicker and more efficient reference.

Hawaiian anthropologist, Carolyn Kehau Cachola-Abad’s PhD dissertation, The Evolution of Hawaiian Socio-Political Complexity: An Analysis of Hawaiian Oral Traditions (2000) examines the Ali‘i Nui class using ancient oral histories. She creates a socio-political framework that helps define the rank and status of the konohiki within the highly stratified Ali‘i hierarchy and culture. Her research provides insight into the complexities of chiefly society and the konohiki’s duties serving the Ali‘i through the administration of their lands and the people.

Hawaiian historian and scholar, Kanalu Young, examines the kaukau aliʻi class in his book, Rethinking the Native Hawaiian Past (1986). The kaukau aliʻi were personal family attendants and high-ranking land stewards of the Ali‘i. He provides invaluable cultural insight into the complex world of chiefly service and their important role in Hawaiian society. As chiefly
land stewards, the konohiki are included in his study and Young examines genealogical ranking and intermarrying between Aliʻi Nui and kaukau aliʻi relatives. The descendants of these unions were the konohiki who were appointed by their Aliʻi relatives to oversee the daily management of their lands and resources. His work also confirms the sub-hierarchical levels within the servant classes of the kaukau aliʻi and konohiki to accommodate the increasing intensification of food production and a rapidly expanding population.

Archaeological studies of Earle (1977, 1978, 1997), Dixon, Gosser, and Williams (2008) and Kirch (1997, 2010, 2012) examine the physical evidence and remnants above and below ground left by the konohiki in the form of ‘auwai systems, loʻi kalo (wet taro fields), kalo maloʻo (dry-land kalo fields), heiau (religious temples), and kauhale (house sites). Modern anthropological and archaeological research of Hawaiʻi explain complex Hawaiian social structures that determined land usage, settlement patterns and the construction of important cultural sites such as heiau that were connected with the konohiki’s function and responsibilities.

Chapter 3 analyzes the transformation of the konohiki in the 19th century using the HLN and other primary and secondary sources to supplement and contextualize the newspaper articles. Researching and “mining” the HLN for information was an incredible “time travel.” Extracted from the Hoʻolaupaʻi Nūpepa Collection website, the 500 plus digitized articles that were found are a fraction of the 125,000 pages of the original HLN collection. According to Hawaiian language scholar, Puakea Nogelmeier (2010), only 20% of these original pages are digitized and word searchable. These 500 konohiki articles are part of the 20% of the digitized HLN pages. There is an incredible amount of information in the remaining 80% of the undigitized HLN pages.

Puakea Nogelmeier’s book Mai Paʻa I ka Leo: Historical Voice in Hawaiian Primary Materials, Looking Forward and Listening Back (2010), Noenoe Silva and Iokepa Badis’ article, “Early Hawaiian Newspapers and Kanaka Maoli Intellectual History 1843-1855” (2008), and Esther Moʻokini’s manuscript “The Hawaiian Newspapers” (1974) are required reading for HLN researchers to help them read, navigate, organize, translate, and understand this collection.
The first two decades of the HLN (1834-1855) that are examined in this thesis were controlled by the Protestant mission and missionaries who dictated the content, titles, authors and use of the HLN. These early papers publicly criticized and denigrated the konohiki for resisting religious conversion and their perceived “heathen” lifestyles.

Despite the negativity in the early HLN, these articles provide interesting details of konohiki names, their different functions, connections to their lands, obituaries, disputes with foreigners and makaʻāinana, and challenges during foreign changes. Obituaries reveal intimate details of the konohiki’s personal life and highlight their achievements and how they were beloved by their people.

The following primary and secondary resources were used to supplement and contextualize the HLN articles. Hawaiian-language primary sources include the Hawaiian Chiefs’ Letters (1834-1854) in the Private Collections of the Hawai‘i State Archives. These correspondences reveal the increasing foreign pressures on the konohiki directed by their Ali‘i for supplies, food, and labor. Letters between konohiki discuss interisland shipping logistics of various supplies for foreign ship provisioning and building materials for church and school construction. However, shipping of food, livestock and personal items requested by the Ali‘i and the organizing of labor for food production was a necessity, not an option, for their people’s daily living. Foreigners often criticized the Ali‘i for exploiting and oppressing their own Native people, ignoring that the chiefs’ pressures on labor were due to increasing foreign demands on the chiefs for resources and food.

Secondary sources for Chapter 3 include *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (2002) by Hawaiian historian and scholar, Jon K. Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio. His book covers the political history of the Hawaiian kingdom and how the adoption of Western laws and a Constitutional government disempowered a dying Native population and “dismembered” the lāhui Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian nation). He discusses the effects of Christianity, education and Western laws which transformed the konohiki’s role as traditional land and resource stewards for the Aliʻi to Western scholars, law makers and civil servants of the new constitutional government. The function of the traditional konohiki diminished with a shift in power to the “new” konohiki of foreigners and Christianized, educated Hawaiians, including konohiki who transitioned from their traditional role. Like Kameʻeleihiwa, Osorio identifies konohiki by name such as S. P. Kalama, Paul Kanoa and lists members of the House of Nobles and House of Representatives which include many konohiki. The identification of each konohiki is extremely valuable since it verifies them in other sources to reconstruct the konohiki’s personal histories.

The reprint of *Hawaiian Laws 1841-1842* (1994) by Ted Adameck is an informative source for referencing early constitutional laws that diminished the traditional function of the konohiki. Written in Hawaiian with an English translation, this work helps interpret 19th century legal language and concepts.

John Kalei Laimana’s M. A. Thesis, *The Phenomenal Rise to Literacy in Hawaiʻi: Hawaiian Society in the Early Nineteenth Century* (2011) is a seminal study that credits Hawaiians, instead of missionaries, for the successful rise of education and literacy in Hawaiʻi. Based on primary sources of missionaries and other foreign residents, Laimana provides a detailed accounting of the schools, teachers, students, books, resources, and labor to show the extensive education system that was largely built and sustained by the konohiki and Aliʻi Nui, and not the small minority of missionaries. The Hawaiian kingdom mainly financed the infrastructure of over a thousand schools which does not include the multitude of churches that is examined in Chapter 3. Laimana’s thesis proves the spread of education and literacy in Hawaiʻi would not have been achievable without Hawaiians.
Chapter 4 examines the Māhele land records of 5 of King Kamehameha’s 218 konohiki to understand how foreign changes in land tenure negatively impacted their lives, their lands and their heirs. The Māhele records are a cultural and historical treasure trove that contains the most detailed, personal information on the konohiki of any primary source that was researched for this thesis. They specifically identify numerous konohiki by name and are filled with their testimonies, historical land information, traditional place names and terms, their Aliʻi Nui relationships, konohiki class dynamics, chiefly inheritance patterns, traditional land usage and tenure, cultural land knowledge, and the konohiki’s land claim information. A substantial percentage of the Māhele records are now accessible through the following websites:


Dorothy Barrère’s typed manuscript, *The King’s Mahele* (1994), is a compilation of meticulously inventoried lists of land claim information for each of Kamehameha III’s konohiki and Aliʻi during the 1848 Māhele. The Māhele was a momentous transition from traditional Hawaiian subsistence land tenure to Western privatization of land. Each parcel of claimed land required the burdensome process of filing a Land Commission Award (LCA), surveying the land, claimant and witness testimonies to confirm the claim, and the issue of a Royal Patent by the kingdom to gain the title and rights to the land. Barrère includes her personal biographical notes on the konohiki and their genealogies. She was a renowned researcher at the Bishop Museum and the editor of many 19th century Hawaiian classics.

Barrère’s inventoried lists are incredibly useful in managing and cross-checking an overwhelming number of complicated documents and information for each of the konohiki’s multiple land claims.

Edith McKinzie’s *Hawaiian Genealogies Vol. 1 and 2* (2002 and 2003) traces and charts the profiled konohiki’s genealogies. Hawaiians were genealogically tied to their lands and konohiki families descended from high-ranking Aliʻi lineages through intermarriage. Understanding their genealogy provides greater clarity of their land history and records.
Jon Chinen’s book, *The Great Māhele: Hawai‘i’s Land Division of 1848* (1958), details the process of the 1848 land division between Kamehameha III and his Ali‘i and konohiki. It outlines the tedious and laborious land claim process the konohiki were required to complete to acquire ownership of their lands. Chinen was the Attorney General (1953-1959) during Hawai‘i’s years as U. S. Territory and his book is from a legal perspective. Although this short, but informative book remains a popular source that is often cited, numerous studies on the Māhele have been conducted since its publication in 1958 that are more comprehensive and updated.

Jon Van Dyke’s book, *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawai‘i?* (2008), is a comprehensive re-examination of the complexities of the 1848 Māhele and the kingdom’s Crown Lands that were illegally taken in the 1893 Overthrow. His work is valuable to Native Hawaiians in gaining new understanding of their land history to reclaim their sovereignty and indigenous rights to these lands. Van Dyke was a law professor at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa and explains difficult legal concepts that are understandable to the layman. More importantly for this thesis, it is informative in understanding the challenges and losses of the konohiki adopting foreign land tenure.

In their recent journal article, “Toward an Inventory of Ahu’pua’a in the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Survey of Nineteenth- and early Twentieth-Century Cartographic and Archival Records of the Island of Hawai‘i” (2014), Lorenz Gonschor (Political Scientist) and Kamanamaikalani Beamer (Geographer) provide new analysis and calculations of the number of ahupua’a which they estimate to have been 1,825. This new data leads to higher population estimates of the konohiki that are conducted in this thesis that have not been previously explored.

Collectively these aforementioned sources provided cultural and historical pieces in forming a more comprehensive and authoritative history of the konohiki. They offer a deeper and more accurate understanding of these important chiefly stewards which is the goal of this thesis.
Mālama ʻĀina and Konohiki Resource Stewardship

The Hawaiian word *mālama* means “[t]o take care of, tend, attend, care for, preserve, protect, beware, save, maintain; to keep or observe, as a taboo; to conduct, as a service; to serve, honor, as God; care, preservation, support, fidelity, loyalty; custodian, caretaker, keeper” (Pukui and Elbert 1986: 232). Collectively, these meanings accurately define the konohiki’s principle values and practices in their stewardship of the ʻĀina or land known as *Mālama ʻĀina*. As an oral culture, the konohiki had to learn, retain, apply and impart ancestral wisdom and traditions using these numerous bodies of knowledge from nature and experiences.

The Hawaiian concept of ʻĀina, which means “that which feeds,” holistically included all the natural elements as ancestral akua who reciprocally fed and nourished each other. Animals and plants of the kai (sea) took care of their siblings of the ʻĀina and vice versa expressing the universal dualism and harmonious balance in the Hawaiian worldview. The cultural values of *Mālama ʻĀina* was the foundation of Hawaiian society. It was especially important to the konohiki, as chiefly resource stewards, who maintained the delicate balance and interdependence between nature, man and Akua.

In the *Kumulipo* or Hawaiian cosmogonic chant, the ʻĀina was a divine, powerful and dynamic life source. More importantly, it was the sacred maternal ancestor, Papahānaumokuākea or Papa (earth mother) of Hawaiians. Papa, with her primogenitor counterpart, Wākea (sky father), gave birth to the islands of Hawaiʻi, Māui, Kauaʻi, Niʻihau, Lehua and Kaʻula in the pae ʻāina Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian archipelago). They were “the first ancestors of Hawaii’s race and the chiefs” (McKinzie 2003:1). Wākea taught Hawaiians the important cultural lesson of *Mālama ʻĀina*, that is, the care and stewardship of Papa mother earth. In doing so, she would reciprocally care for, protect and feed Hawaiians (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992: 24, 33).

In the 15th wā or verse of the *Kumulipo*, descending eighteen generations from Papa and Wākea, a konohiki named Kuheleimoana is born (Fornander 1920 V6 (III): 431). Kuheleimoana (k) and Mapunaiaaala (w) had a son, Konohiki, who was likely a konohiki by his name and inherited his father’s position. This genealogy is, perhaps, the earliest documented konohiki
lineage to date. Kuheleimoana was also referred as Kalanikuheleimoana, the “kalani” signifying his high status or rank as a konohiki (Kalākaua 2001: 80).

*Mālama ʻĀina* was governed by the strict laws under the ancient *Kapu System* (Hawaiian religion). Kapu laws regulated appropriate and religious periods for planting, harvesting, fishing, and gathering resources from ma uka to ma kai (mountain to the sea). Under the *Kapu System*, the konohiki were granted specific rights and authority by the Aliʻi Nui to kapu (prohibit) access or use of the land, ocean, and resources. It also included managing and supervising the makaʻāinana or labor force to make their Aliʻi Nui’s lands productive, fertile and sustainable. The authority of the konohiki to regulate and access resources was known as *Konohiki Rights* and the sustainable stewardship of resources from ma uka to ma kai by the konohiki was known as the *Konohiki System*.

The konohiki’s authority to kapu and manage a wide array of key resources signified possession of important chiefly mana (power) bestowed by their Aliʻi Nui. However, unlike the divine mana of their Aliʻi, this mana was based on specialization, expertise and rank. It was a vital socio-religious aspect of their kūlana and ʻoihana that is often overlooked or minimized. Moreover, in English sources, konohiki have been historically referred as land agents, landlords, or headmen which marginalizes their chiefly mana, kūlana and kuleana.

In addition to the religious aspects of *Mālama ʻĀina*, there are the deep emotional and familial feelings of *Aloha ʻĀina* or love and affection for the land. The konohiki expressed this aloha (love) in their mālama of a beloved ancestor, the ʻĀina. In the personal will of Kamehameha III’s konohiki, Puhalahua, he referred to his lands as “kuʻu ʻāina,” (my land), “kuʻu kuleana (my kuleana), and “kuʻu mau apana aina” (my pieces of land)) (Puhalahua 1855: 1). The Hawaiian word “kuʻu” means “my, mine... frequently used before... kinship terms and expresses affection” (Pukui and Elbert 1986: 187). Therefore, Puhalahua’s use of “kuʻu” expressed his familial ties and deep affection of *Aloha ʻĀina* for his lands.

*Mālama ʻĀina* and *Aloha ʻĀina* are forms of tophilia, a familial love and connectedness to the land and environment that could not exist without the other. In the Hawaiian worldview, the lack of aloha for the ʻĀina and humankind makes it impossible to mālama them in a pono way and vice versa. Therefore, the konohiki’s mindset and ʻoihana was
to mālama the ʻĀina based on *Aloha ʻĀina*. For generations, the konohiki successfully balanced these values in the judicious and prudent stewardship of the ʻĀina and all the kumu waiwai (resources) that was sustainable for generations.

**Traditional Hawaiian Land Tenure and Social Organization**

Pre-contact Hawaiian society developed into a complex chiefdom with centralized hierarchical polities of hereditary Aliʻi Nui who were revered as earthly Akua. The stratified social hierarchy developed in parallel with a highly organized and tiered land system contributed to intensified food production and distribution by Hawaiians (Cachola-Abad 2000). Remarkably, despite Hawaiʻi’s geographical isolation, it evolved as “the most complex of any Polynesian chiefdoms and probably any chiefdoms known elsewhere in the world” (Earle 1997: 34).

The Aliʻi Nui held ultimate jurisdiction and stewardship over the ʻĀina on behalf of the Akua while “enforcing all kapu and kānāwai [laws]...training and monitoring aliʻi managers...[and] defending the nation’s lands and populace from aggression of other chiefs” (Cachola-Abad 2000: 153). The konohiki chiefs below carried out the kapu and kānāwai as their service for the Aliʻi Nui. Following territorial conquests,

> Each principal chief divided his lands anew and gave them out to an inferior order of chiefs or persons, by whom they were subdivided again and again (often) passing through the hands of four, five or six persons from the King down to the lowest class of tenants (Van Dyke 2008: 427).

The Aliʻi Nui allocated jurisdiction over land divisions of ahupuaʻa and ʻili ʻāina (land subdivision) to the konohiki “in recognition of loyal and outstanding services” (McGregor 2007: 26). They further allocated their lands to other konohiki relatives and granted usage rights of smaller land divisions to the makaʻāinana. “Often the choicest ʻili lands went to relatives of the konohiki” (Kirch 2010: 49). Therefore, the ahupuaʻa was most closely associated with the konohiki as the central authority of this land division.

> The konohiki’s “tenure on the land was dependent upon their benefactor, the chief...[and] the konohiki represented the collective interest of the aliʻi class over the makaʻāinana as well as the individual interest of his patron chief over the ahupuaʻa” (McGregor 2007: 26). They could easily be replaced by the Aliʻi Nui or through conquest by an outside Aliʻi.
In most instances when there was a change of Ali‘i Nui, the maka‘āinana would not be dispossessed of the ‘Āina upon which they lived and worked, regardless of the Mō‘ī. Only the konohiki would change because the new Ali‘i Nui would bring in his own people. In this light, loyalty to a deposed Ali‘i Nui was unwise, if not nonsensical (Kame‘elehiwa 1992: 45).

Understandably, bringing in one’s own konohiki to replace existing ones reduced risks of counter-rebellions or usurpation by the conquered. But, in some instances it seemed socially and economically rational for the incoming Ali‘i to retain the existing konohiki and incorporate them into the new regime. The local konohiki were valuable assets who possessed knowledge and experience in the management of the ahupua‘a. They also held ties with the maka‘āinana and established loyalties in the district.

For the konohiki who remained in their ahupua‘a, they risked losing their konohiki position if the new Ali‘i Nui did not retain them. Still, some chose “the option of staying on as a kama‘āina [native born] on his “own land,” that which he had worked domestically, on the condition that he...became a maka‘āinana or common farmer holding “under” the konohiki who superseded him” (Sahlins 1992: 190). In some instances, remaining with their ahupua‘a was worth the sacrifice to stay with their families in hopes of regaining their former konohiki position.

At the eve of foreign contact in 1778, the konohiki were part of an expanding and rising Ali‘i class who were competing for prime territories of fertile lands and rich resources. The increasing stratification of the social hierarchy was attributed to the rise of the Ali‘i, an expanding population, accessibility to the rich diversity of island resources, and the intensification of food production through new and innovative agricultural and aquacultural technologies (Earle 1978: 172; McCoy and Graves 2010).

To economically and politically sustain this highly organized and growing society, the konohiki class increased and branched into different ranks and specializations serving in every level of land division as “nā konohiki ‘ai moku, ‘ai kalana, ‘ai ‘okana, ‘ai ahupua’a, ‘ai o loko, ‘ai ‘ili kūpono, ‘ai ‘ili ‘āina” (Kamakau 1996: 154; 1961: 177; Malo 2006: 4).

Each level of konohiki contributed in administering the Konohiki System to mālama the Ali‘i Nui’s lands, fisheries, freshwater sources, and labor force. This complex, integrated resource management system consisted of holistic approaches to sustainable resource
stewardship. It was based on cultural, religious and economic controls that respected the land as ancestors and prevented overexploitation of the environment (Jokiel, Rodgers, Walsh, Polhemus, Wilhelm 2011).

**Ahupuaʻa Land Division and the Konohiki**

The ahupuaʻa was the most important land division due to its important socio-economic, political and religious role in Hawaiian society. They typically were pie-shaped divisions running from ma uka to ma kai containing most of the resources for a sustainable, subsistence lifestyle. The konohiki, who managed the daily operations of the ahupuaʻa, had considerable responsibility and accountability to ensure their ahupuaʻa was well organized, efficiently managed and productive. They were accountable to the higher ranking Aliʻi ʻai ahupuaʻa or Aliʻi ʻai moku.

The ahupuaʻa is often inaccurately described in Western capitalist terms as a taxable economic unit that supplied its inhabitants with all the resources to subsist. First, not every ahupuaʻa had all the resources for total subsistence living. Each division varied in types of resources, size, shape, and its population living in the ahupuaʻa. Therefore, the konohiki’s livelihood also varied depending on these varying factors. Second, Hawaiians held a deep, familial love and attachment to the ʻĀina of their ahupuaʻa. The people, from chief to commoner, had to work harmoniously and collaboratively in a society and culture based on social interdependence and reciprocal duty.

The ahupuaʻa was not an inanimate, economic entity based solely on production of input and output. Instead, the ahupuaʻa provided the social, political, economic and religious structure of Hawaiian society and holistically interconnected the ʻĀina, the people and their Akua. It “formed the basis of community life, work, taxation and ceremonial activity” (Ralston 1984: 22).

The konohiki are most commonly associated with the ahupuaʻa than any other class of Aliʻi for the following reasons:

The administration of the ahupuaʻa rested with the konohiki. The konohiki enjoyed certain rights to the land and resources of the ahupuaʻa, and to the labor and surplus products of its occupants. The necessity of providing adequately for both himself and the aliʻi nui generally compelled the konohiki
to manage the economy of the ahupua’a in such a way as to both conserve and enrich its human and natural resources (Lam 1989: 243).

Higher ranking Ali‘i Nui, above the konohiki, were responsible for the administration of higher levels of state politics, religion and warfare. Therefore, the konohiki were entrusted by their Ali‘i to administer the daily management of the ahupua’a or sub-divisions of ‘ili ‘āina often situated away from the Ali‘i’s royal center or seat of governance. The konohiki held much autonomy granted by their Ali‘i and served as centralized authorities of their ahupua’a.

It was the konohiki’s kuleana to ensure their ahupua’a produced sufficient levels of food, material resources and labor to sustain the people. In return, the maka‘āinana received usage rights and privileges to the land and resources from the konohiki for their contributions of produce and labor. The ahupua’a boundaries “were adopted and instituted by the ali‘i and konohiki to delineate units for collection of tribute” (McGregor 2007: 27).

The higher Ali‘i ‘ai ahupua’a ruled the ahupua’a but, the “[e]ntire ahupua’a, or portions of the land were generally under the jurisdiction of appointed Konohiki or subordinate chief-landlords who answered to an ali‘i-‘ai-ahupua’a (chief who controlled the ahupua’a resources)” (Maly 2001: 7-8). It is important to note, “[t]he title to an ahupuaa was not hereditary; these subdivisions were allocated and reallocated to loyal supporters by the chief of the moku at the time of his accession” (Handy, Handy, Pukui 1972: 48).

Like the Ali‘i, the konohiki were supported from the produce and labors of the maka‘āinana in their ahupua’a. Special designated sub-divisions called haku one were specifically reserved and cultivated by the maka‘āinana solely for the konohiki’s support and benefit.

Religion was a vital part of daily life in the ahupua’a and directly tied to the people’s collaborative efforts to keep the land, resources and people healthy, productive, and harmonious. The konohiki helped build and maintain heiau, worshipped specific Akua during appropriate times of the day or seasons to ensure abundant crops and marine life to feed the people.

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1“[T]he term ali‘i ‘ai ahupua’a is not widely used and in fact is not noted by Pūku‘i and Elbert (1986), it is occasionally encountered in texts. An example of this is in the mo‘olelo of Kūali‘i when Hāloalena, the ali‘i nui of Lāna‘i, issues a proclamation to all of his district chiefs. In doing so he refers to both ali‘i ‘ai moku and ali‘i ‘ai ahupua’a” (Cachola-Abad 2000:91).
One of the most important religious ceremonies pertaining to the ahupuaʻa was the annual Makahiki harvest festival honoring the Akua Lono, god of agriculture, peace, fertility and rain. This was a period when war was forbidden and Hawaiians offered Lono the “first fruits” of their harvest with celebratory feasting, peace-making activities and recreation. The konohiki performed the religious protocols of organizing and collecting the ho‘okupu or offerings of food and craft items from the people of their ahupuaʻa and presented them to the Ali‘i as offerings to Lono. “Each konohiki also brought tribute for his own landlord, which was called waiwai maloko” (Malo 1951: 142).

The word ahupuaʻa means “pig altar” on which the ho‘okupu was presented by the konohiki. The ahu or altar marked the ma kai boundaries of each ahupuaʻa division and comprised of a heap stones with “a wooden block\(^2\) roughly resembling the head of a hog (pua’a). The pua’a was a symbol of Lono, being one of the forms (kino lau) of Lono” (Handy and Pukui 1972: 354).

**Ahupuaʻa and Resources**

The ahupuaʻa varied greatly in geographic size and shape (Lyons 1903: 23-7; Alexander 1890a: 106) that ranged “from a hundred acres up to thousands, in several instances containing more than one hundred thousand and more than two hundred thousand acres” (Supreme Court *re boundaries of Pulehunui: 1879*). Sizable ahupuaʻa, with more diverse resources and fertile lands required a larger population with levels of specialized konohiki to manage more labor intensive cultivation zones. Some ahupuaʻa were completely landlocked, or had more ocean shoreline and fisheries, while others had expansive interior kula (pastoral lands).

Ahupuaʻa with fertile river valleys, abundant fresh water sources and extensive ocean shorelines had intensified levels of agriculture and aquaculture requiring a larger network of konohiki specialized to sustain higher levels of food production. These “differences in the local resource base (agricultural land, water resources, stone for tools, and so on) resulted in differences in the production patterns of individual land sections” (Kirch 1985: 2).

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\(^2\) “Kukui [candlenut tree] log carved to resemble a pig’s head indicated where the people of each district were to pile their produce, tapa, mats, and feathers” (Handy, Handy and Pukui 1972:489).
Konohiki had an intimate knowledge of their ahupua’a by living in the area, studying, naming, and memorizing its unique features and boundaries.

In the old days each division of land, large or small, had its own individual name, and it was a matter...for the chiefs to learn and memorize the names of the ahupua’a and ‘iliiaina on each island. Because of this memorization, the ancient names of the lands have come down to this day (Kamakau 1976: 8).

Ahupua’a sometimes lacked certain resources for complete subsistence such as koa trees for wa’a (canoes), wauke (bark cloth trees) for kapa (bark cloth) fabric, or birds for their highly prized feathers. Therefore, ahupua’a boundaries “did not restrict access by the ‘ohana [maka‘āinana family] to those natural resources needed for survival that were unavailable within their own ahupua’a” (McGregor 2007: 27). If the ahupua’a lacked certain resources the konohiki arranged access with the konohiki of neighboring ahupua’a for those resources.

One ingenious way Hawaiians solved the lack of resources was with land parcels of ‘ililele or “jump strips” in another ahupua’a that had certain resources their ahupua’a needed. However, gathering resources from other ahupua’a was strictly regulated by the konohiki who enforced kapu on boundaries and access rights. “Residents of other ahupua’a could not enter an ahupua’a without permission of its konohiki and/or residents” (Cordy 2000: 42). According to Native testimonies in the Boundary Commission Reports to settle land disputes after the 1848 Māhele, “[i]f someone from another land was caught taking resources from a land other than their own, the items were taken from them....[i]nfrations of ahupua’a rights led to fights and death of intruders” (Maly 2004: 7). These reports also revealed “the boundaries were known by native tenants, and the rights to take or hunt resources in traditional times were fiercely protected – individuals without chiefly, genealogical claims, or residency ties to given lands were not allowed to trespass and take resources from the ahupua’a” (Maly 2005: 214).

**Ahupua’a and Food Production**

Within the chiefly class, the konohiki worked closest with the maka‘āinana who provided the labor force of the ahupua’a in food production. The konohiki were accountable to the Ali‘i for achieving efficient levels of food production and labor. They meticulously tracked the “taxes” or tributary payments collected from each ahupua’a as in the Makahiki festival. In the 1820’s, two visiting English missionaries Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett wrote,
...the king’s tax collectors, though they can neither read nor write, keep very exact accounts of all the articles, of all kinds, collected from the inhabitants throughout the island. This is done by one man, and the register is nothing more than a cordage from four to five hundred fathoms [approximately ½ mile] in length. Distinct portions of this are allotted to the various districts, which are known one from another by knots, loops, and tufts, of different shapes, sizes, and colors. Each tax-payer in the district has his part in this string, and the number of dollars, hogs, dogs, pieces of sandal-wood, quantity of taro, &c., at which he is rated, is well defined by means of marks, of the above kinds most ingeniously diversified. It is probable that the famous quippos, or system of knots, whereby the records of the ancient Peruvian empire are said to have been kept, were a similar, and perhaps not much more comprehensive, mode of reckoning dates and associating names with historical events (Tyerman and Bennett 1832: 71).

By this account, Hawai‘i was engaged in foreign international trade and a market economy evident by the collections of Sandalwood and monetary currency.

Food production through cultivation and fishing was the main kuleana of the maka‘āinana with the konohiki administering and regulating these activities for the Ali‘i Nui. “Ahupua‘a life was distinguished by shared use of land and resources, regulated jointly by konohiki…and maka‘āinana….The resulting system included kapu, unwritten rules governing the behavior of people” (Andrade 2008: 30).

In each ‘ohana (family) of the maka‘āinana, the senior male members, or haku, collaborated with the konohiki planning, organizing and executing the required work of the ahupua‘a. Haku were valuable to the konohiki who transmitted important information and requests of the konohiki to the maka‘āinana. The haku were respected and knowledgeable kūpuna (elders) who were long-time kama‘āina (Native resident) of the area. The konohiki commonly shared and exchanged ‘ike, strategies and the workload with the haku and other subordinate managers or luna. Maintaining this collaborative spirit amongst all level of workers is an important Hawaiian value known as lōkahi (unity and harmony) which elevated and benefited society as a whole.

The reciprocal and familial values of Mālama ʻĀina in traditional Hawaiian society created socio-religious “checks and balances” preventing abuse of rights and privileges between the classes. “[T]he responsibility of an ahupuaʻa chief was to make the ahupuaʻa
productive, and a stable workforce was necessary to achieve that end, abuses by ahupuaʻa chiefs were minimized” (MacKenzie 1991: 4).

Although the makaʻāinana were bound to the land, they risked losing their land tenure due to under-productivity and indolence. “[I]f the land lay neglected he [the makaʻāinana] was ordered off by the konohiki. The planter thereby lost his right to plant his holding, a right generally inherited from ancestors through successive generations” (Handy, Handy and Pukui 1972: 59). This protected the survival of the people and konohiki’s livelihood from unproductive makaʻāinana and uncultivated lands. It also upheld the Hawaiians’ religious duty and reverence to the Akua in nurturing and caring for the ‘Āina. Neglecting the land, in the Hawaiian mind, was sacrilegious towards one’s ancestors and the Akua.

On the other hand, the makaʻāinana were also free to relocate to other districts if treated unfairly by their konohiki and Aliʻi. This was known as ‘imi haku or to search for a pono Aliʻi Nui (Pukui 1983: 632; Kameʻeleihiwa 1992: 44-45).

Kamakau further explains,

It was thought a great and worthy object in life to go in search of a chief or for a chief to seek a trustworthy follower, and it was through the faithful care of such servants that chiefs grew strong and multiplied (1961: 207).

This chief and servant interdependence controlled Aliʻi abuse since “the wealth and power of the aliʻi flowed from the labor of the makaʻāinana, who could withhold their services by moving to another division, the aliʻi generally exercised restraint in their demands on the commoners” (Lam 1989: 240). Aliʻi and konohiki were heavily reliant on the makaʻāinana’s labor so “[i]t was wholly to the advantage of the aliʻi landlord and his konohiki (land supervisor) to maintain this permanent bond between planter families and their land” (Handy, Handy and Pukui 1972: 41).

The Aliʻi’s tenure was tenuous and less predictable than the makaʻāinana’s. “The chiefs had the right to the fruits of the land and the property of the people, and when a chief was overthrown in war his followers also moved on…. [I]t was they [Aliʻi and konohiki] who were the wanderers; [but] the people born of the soil remained...” (Kamakau 1961: 376).
The konohiki also risked being dismissed for failing to care for their people and his Ali‘i’s lands or killed with their Ali‘i in war or rebellion for abuse of power. A konohiki could be dispossessed of his lands for having a lazy mate. According to Malo,

...if the konohiki had a wife who only slept with him and did not work, she was called a ponohanaʻole. These women did not beat or print designs on the kapa. They just relaxed....This was a hewa that was sufficient enough to have the husband’s lands released because of her behavior (2006: 60).

The kapu system greatly aided the konohiki’s efforts in keeping order and structure to mālama the people and environment in the most pono (proper/beneficial) manner. Their strict discipline and oversight under the kapu system was highly effective in controlling and regulating the land, ocean and other natural resources from being exploited. These traditional and integrated practices of customary land use and resource management by the konohiki became known as the Konohiki System.

**Ka Papa Konohiki (The Konohiki Class)**

The konohiki were a distinct class of chiefs which branched off with its own hierarchy of ranks, genealogical lineages, and job specializations. Class seniority depended on many factors including genealogy, alliances and intermarrying with the Ali‘i Nui, the amount and location of ‘Āina they stewarded, and their distinct job specializations.

Although the konohiki are typically associated with the ahupua’a, they were involved in every land division with titles corresponding with land divisions. According to Kamakau, in ancient times there were “nā konohiki ‘ai moku, ‘ai kalana, ‘ai ‘okana, ‘ai ahupua’a, ‘ai o loko, ‘ai ‘ili kūpono, ‘ai ‘ili ‘āina” (1996: 154). Malo similarly referenced them as “na konohiki ai moku[,] ai kalana, ai okana, ai pokO, ai ahupua’a...” (2006: 84).

Senior ranking konohiki were referred as “konohiki nui” (Anonymous 1895: 2) who worked at higher administrative levels of the ahupua’a with the Ali‘i ‘ai ahupua’a (high chief of the ahupua’a) and haku ‘āina or haku (land stewards). They had prioritized access to produce and water sources from the ahupua’a and haku one parcels cultivated solely for their benefit. They were also allocated sizable ‘Āina with authority over lower konohiki, luna, haku and maka‘āinana of their ahupua’a.
Konohiki nui of the ahupua’a resided in large kauhale with a personal hale mua (men’s eating house), imu (earth and stone oven), adze workshops, animal pens that were associated with the religious kuleana and lifestyle of male chiefs. Moreover, the kauhale of the konohiki were spatially isolated from the rest of the populace, signifying their kūlana, kapu authority and mana as chiefs and religious leaders of their ahupua’a (Dixon, Gosser, and Williams 2008; see also Kamakau 1961: 238). Their residences were at times situated on higher slopes or ridges overlooking lower agricultural fields with large terraces and enclosures (Kirch 1997:42). The spatial exclusivity of the konohiki’s kauhale with separate houses for men near a heiau indicates their prestige and religious role dictated by the kapu religion.

An archaeological study in Lualualei, O’ahu using Māhele records uncovered a “large residential complex or kauhale, usually consisting of a walled habitation compound interpreted as a possible men’s house or hale mua generally within view of a small temple or heiau” (Dixon, Gosser, and Williams 2008: 267, 272, 277). The heiau was likely one for agriculture called heiau ho’ouluulu ‘ai dedicated to the Akua Lono or Kāne for abundant food growth and rain. These kauhale were, perhaps, the residences of konohiki determined by size and distance from other smaller residences. They included hale mua, hale noa (sleeping house), stone adze workhouse, pig pens and imu.

Pua’a was an important religious food offering of the Akua handled strictly by men and often by the konohiki. Later, it became “a prime medium of exchange with visiting sailing ships after contact in 1778...control over their production was an important responsibility of the konohiki” (Dixon, Gosser, and Williams 2008: 277).

By the 1820’s higher ranking konohiki lived in more Western-styled homes. Laura Fish Judd, a missionary wife, described the house of a konohiki nui named Auwae who was also principal genealogist of Kamehameha I and advisor to Kamehameha III (Green 1835: 463-464). Judd writes, “[t]he house was large, well furnished with mats and kapa. Screens of furniture calico divided off the bed-rooms. Everything was extremely neat...” (2003: 23). Rev. William Ellis also wrote in 1823, “the house of the headman [konohiki] which was large, and contained several families” (2004: 277).
According to Kamakau, the konohiki's personal house furnishings were fancy. “For a headman, a firstborn, or a favorite child the sleeping mats were piled high. The women also made the tapa coverings for the sleepers, usually of five layers, the outside sheet called kilohana beautiful in color and design” (1961: 238).

Lower ranking konohiki were referred as “hope konohiki” or “hope luna konohiki.” The Hawaiian newspaper, *Ka Hae Hawaii*, mentions a “hope konohiki” named Kaaiaweoweo of Kaeleuli, Kailua, Koʻolaupoko, Oʻahu and a “hope luna konohiki” named S. Keawe of Keoneula, Honolulu, Oahu (Kaaiaweoweo 1858: 4; Keawe 1857: 4). Both men had the kuleana of protecting the konohiki nui’s kula lands from livestock trespassing on and damaging his property. In the same newspaper, a “luna konohiki” named Poomanu of Kaʻelepulu, Kailua, Oʻahu was also a “luna pa Aupuni” or supervisor of a government livestock yard that held trespassing animals (Kuna 1857: 3). After the Māhele, Poomanu was one of the few fortunate konohiki to secure a government position in the kingdom. As a luna konohiki, he was likely below a konohiki nui but higher than a “hope konohiki” or “hope luna konohiki.”

The konohiki were trained and skilled in a wide range of occupations with titles for these specializations. A *konohiki pālauhulu* was one who “would gather all the various kinds of fish caught for the aliʻi” from ocean and fresh water sources” (Desha 2000: 492). Kamehameha I appointed Kepaʻalani as his *konohiki pālauhulu* to “catch fish at Haleʻōhiʻu at Kekaha, North Kona, Hawaiʻi while Kamehameha was staying at North Kohala fishing for flying fish (mālolo)” (Desha 2000: 492). There were konohiki experts in ocean fishing called *konohiki iʻa* (Mokumaia 1920: 8) and *kai lawaiʻa* konohiki.

A *konohiki ʻauhau* was responsible for the collecting surplus of produce as tributary payments from the makaʻāinana for their usage rights of the ʻĀina, its resources and support the Aliʻi Nui (Kalama 1838: 53).

Other services under the Aliʻi Nui were tied to recreation. “[I]n ancient Hawaii it was the chief or headman [konohiki] of the district who took the initiative in the promotion of the people’s communistic sports and of the hula” (Emerson 1997: 26).

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3 Pālauhulu – To take all of a fish catch for a chief instead of dividing it. Ua pālauhulu ‘ia ka iʻa na ke aliʻi, all of the fish were taken for the chief alone (Pukui and Elbert 1986: 310).
Kūlana o nā Konohiki (Ranks of the Konohiki)

In pre-contact Hawaiian society, the rank, mana and kapu of an Aliʻi varied depending on genealogy, accomplishments, specializations, leadership, birth order, and birth place.

The pedigrees (kuʻauhau) of the chiefs in the line of succession (moʻo kuʻauhau) from ancient times down to those of Kamehameha I are not the same. As their descendants spread out, the ranks ('ano) of the chiefs lessened....One might be an aliʻi kapu, a “sacred” chief of the highest rank, another an aliʻi noanoa, a chief of no particular rank, or an aliʻi hoʻopilipili, a chief who had “grafted himself onto a chiefly genealogy. Or one might be an aliʻi lepo pōpolo, a “lowborn” chief (Kamakau 1991: 4).

The highest ranking Aliʻi Nui were direct descendants of the Akua from whom they received their divine mana. “The close relationship between the gods and the aliʻi made these individuals and the places and things associated with them kapu” (Cachola-Abad 2000: 81).

Kapu was used to protect their mana which was a power that emanates from the spiritual realm and imbues all things animate and inanimate....Those most closely connected to the gods and the spiritual realm possess a greater degree of mana and hence the authoritative position of being aliʻi (Cachola-Abad 2000: 80).

The “Aliʻi who were born of secondary unions were termed the iwi-kua-moʻo (backbone) of the high chief’s entourage, serving as executive officers (ilāmuku), ministers (kuhina), and supervisors (konohiki) of his property” (Handy, Handy, Pukui 1972: 321). As resource managers, the konohiki chiefs were distinctly separate from the Aliʻi Nui due to their lesser genealogies, degrees of mana and kapu that were based more on their specialized function (Cachola-Abad 2000: 92-96). “In the old days it was tabu for the high and low chiefs (aliʻi and kaukaualiʻi) to confer together. In matters of life and death or in difficult questions of policy it was for the high chiefs alone to decide;...” (Kamakau 1961: 396).

The konohiki were “usually of kaukau aliʻi or lesser rank, belonging in some fashion to the lineages of the Aliʻi ‘aimoku, or Aliʻi Nui who ruled the large districts (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992: 29). The kaukau aliʻi were often genealogically higher ranking than the konohiki “as the progeny of Aliʻi Nui who had secondary and tertiary sexual partners of no chiefly rank. Later, the descendants from the secondary and tertiary alliances had children with one another. This gave rise to at least five different levels of the kaukau aliʻi subgroup” (Young 1986: xiv).
In pre-contact times, although kaukau aliʻi and konohiki were chiefly servers they differed in kūlana, ʻoihana and kuleana. The konohiki’s main ʻoihana was the daily administration of their Aliʻi lands, natural resources and labor force. They oversaw the food production by the makaʻāinana that served as their tributary land rents. In wartime they recruited “fighting men when the aliʻi nui was preparing for war” (Handy, Handy, Pukui 1972: 279).

Their “overseership” of the ʻāina was referred as noho konohiki ʻana, a term used in the context of land and water resource stewardship (Fornander 1919-1920, V6(1): 206-207). Also, the konohiki typically resided and worked in the ahupuaʻa located away from the centralized seat of government or royal center. The Aliʻi Nui entrusted them with the authority and semi-autonomy to govern the ahupuaʻa from distant locations.

In contrast, the higher ranking kaukau aliʻi typically served within the inner circles of the royal court and resided in the Aliʻi Nui’s residences as their spouses, trusted confidantes, and personal attendants. They “cared for Aliʻi Nui children, were land stewards, and went into battle as warriors” (Young 1986: xi). Those Aliʻi “who reside at court often seem to have higher status than those who cultivate their lord’s land” (Valeri 1985: 156).

The konohiki’s rank and function were distinct from the kaukau aliʻi’s during pre-contact times when society was more stratified and rigid. Social roles were specialized with higher socio-religious value on genealogical rank and religious duties under the divine Aliʻi Nui. Following foreign contact, as Hawaiʻi modernized and adopted Western socio-economic and political systems, the status, authority and function of these chiefly servers overlapped and slowly diminished.

The replacement of the traditional Hawaiian society with foreign capitalism, Christianity, Western laws, and land tenure dismantled and compressed the Hawaiian social hierarchy of six to eight tiers down to only three, the Mōʻi, the Aliʻi and makaʻāinana. As a result, class lines overlapped and became blurred. “During the Māhele era, the term “Konohiki” was used to generally refer to any rank of chief (Aliʻi) a usage that is at odds with definitions used in prior times” (Preza 2010: 57).
As Mōʻī, even Kamehameha III declared himself a konohiki, which was in the context and function of land stewardship as ruler and not the distinct position of a lesser-ranking konohiki. Class and rank distinction in traditional times clearly differentiated the paramount Aliʻi or Mōʻī from the konohiki in kūlana, mana and kuleana.

**Konohiki Population Estimates**

A highly stratified Hawaiian society paralleled with a complex tiered land system was well established prior to Western contact in 1778. “It is not surprising, therefore, that an equally complex system of konohiki (Land stewards) arose to administer the ‘Āina” and “each level of ‘Āina designation there was a corresponding konohiki responsible for collecting tribute and for directing the day-to-day activities” (Kameʻeleihiwa 1992: 29).

Traditional moʻolelo and modern archaeological studies suggest a large population of resource managers, like the konohiki, evolved to support a rising class of Aliʻi Nui (Kirch and Sahlins 1992; Kirch 2010, 2012; Earle 1977). As the Aliʻi Nui expanded their territories of...dispersed ahupuaʻa, these territories needed individuals who could manage them on a daily basis. Such individuals, typically drawn from junior siblings or collateral relatives of the ahupuaʻa chiefs, were called luna (overseers), derived from the old Polynesian word runga, meaning “above.” In later times they came to be called konohiki, another innovation in the Hawaiian language (Kirch 2012: 141).

A complex system requiring a number of konohiki in each ahupuaʻa and sub-divisions of ‘ili ʻāina raises an important but, unanswered question. What was the population of the konohiki in pre-contact times and after foreign contact? In researching the konohiki, no historical census data of their population seems to exist. Yet, evidence shows there were thousands of konohiki who were managing large agricultural and aquacultural systems. In the 1830’s, the konohiki were census-taking for the missionaries but their population was not tracked.

At a time as late as the reign of Kaumualii, the local konohiki making a careful census of the valley by villages from the sea mauka [inland] returned upwards of 2000 souls. Enumerating in detail all the communities, he gave the exact quota from each – Naue, Pa-ie-ie, Maunaloa, Pali-elele, Manunahina, Pohakuloa, Opakea, Homai-ka-lani and ending with Laau the hamlet farthest mauka, in the depths of the mountains... (Lydgate 1912: 125-126).
Pre-contact Hawaiian population estimates by 18th century European explorers and modern archaeological studies are still being intensely debated (Stannard 1989; Kirch 2007: 52-69). However, since the konohiki were closely associated with the ahupua’a, it is reasonable in this research to calculate a population estimate of the konohiki based on the approximate number ahupua’a.

George Kanahele, a 20th century Hawaiian historian, estimated “[i]f each ahupua’a, and even the few large ‘ili, had its own konohiki, about one thousand or more managed the economy of the islands before 1778” (1986: 354). Kanahele combined the number of independent ‘ili with ahupua’a totaling 1,000. Therefore, his ahupua’a count is less than 1,000. According to Māhele records, there were more than just a “few large ‘ili” with many ‘ili in Waikīkī and Mānoa areas where kalo cultivation was highest.

American anthropologist, Robert Hommon estimates there were 973 ahupua’a but claims that “the number of contact-era ahupua’a cannot be determined with precision because the most complete lists of traditional “lands” in government documents of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include both ahupua’a and certain of their large ili ‘āina...” (2013: 12-13).

There were a multitude of independent ‘ili divisions managed by konohiki. ‘Ili were most abundant on O‘ahu (Alexander 1890a: 107) and ‘ili kūpono in Waimea, Hawai‘i (Lyons 1903: 28). “The “ili” often had a different owner from that of the ahupuaa in which it was situated” (Lyons 1903: 5). The larger ahupua’a “sometimes contained as many as thirty to forty ilis...” (Lyons 1903: 27). Since ‘ili were commonly managed by konohiki, then dozens of konohiki could be living in large-sized ahupua’a with ‘ili or managing the independent ‘ili as well.

According to the land records of Ka‘awahua, a konohiki of an ‘ili in Pāmoa, Mānoa, O‘ahu, he was third in rank within a four-tiered konohiki hierarchy. His senior ranking konohiki nui was Charles Kana‘ina (Native Testimony (LCA 10613) 10: 373), the father of Mō‘ī William Charles Lunalilo and the husband of Kuhina Nui, Kekāʻuluohi.

Contemporary Hawaiian scholar Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa estimates,

...there were 1,004 ahupua’a recorded in the Buke Mahele; subsequently after detailed maps began to be made in the 1880’s, it was discovered that there were another 104 ahupua’a divisions that had been unassigned (2010: 12).
An 1848 Māhele land surveyor, Curtis Lyons, claims “[a] rough estimate would give about 2,000 Ahupuaas in the group [Hawaiian islands]” (1903: 5) which is nearly double the amount of Kanahele’s, Hommon’s and Kameʻelehiwa’s estimates. Therefore, Lyon’s ahupua’a estimate doubles the konohiki population to 2,000 with only one konohiki per ahupua’a.

The most recent ahupua’a count in a study by Gonschor and Beamer (2014) calculated 1,825 ahupua’a which is closest to Lyons’ calculation of 2,000. Since there were typically more than one konohiki per ahupua’a, my conservative estimate of at least 10 to 15 konohiki in each of the 1,825 ahupua’a would place the population as high as 18,250 to 27,375 throughout the pae ʻāina. The population was very likely higher with multiple levels of konohiki administering independent ʻili ʻāina in addition to the 1,825 ahupua’a.

My konohiki population estimate seems highly plausible since a very large population of konohiki were required to sustain expansive loʻi kalo, loko iʻa (fishponds), fisheries, and dry-land kalo and ʻuala field systems. In addition, the konohiki also managed a sizable labor force to build and maintain these food producing areas.

The lack of any konohiki population study means more research is greatly needed on this topic. It will provide better understanding of the konohiki’s invaluable function, ubiquitous presence in Hawaiian society, and why the konohiki “filled the most important position in the socioeconomic system of Hawai’i” (Kanahele 1986: 351).

By 1848, the konohiki population and their role had rapidly diminished for various reasons. Relentless Native depopulation by foreign diseases, the collapse of traditional society, and newly introduced foreign socio-economic and political systems contributed to the decline of their class and the traditional Konohiki System. Many konohiki died prematurely or were being eliminated and reduced to the lower makaʻāinana class as they lost their lands and status after the 1848 Māhele. This resulted in their functions being taken over by foreigners (Kameʻelehiwa 1992: 295). Many of these foreigners were American missionaries who came to save the “heathen” through their Christian ministries but craftily took the power from the konohiki through the Kingdom’s government ministries.

Hawaiian-language sources, like the Māhele land records and newspapers examined in Chapters 3 and 4, provide further evidence of the konohiki’s decline in power, their
replacement by government officials and the loss of more than 50% of their lands in the Māhele.

This chapter has shown for generations, Hawaiian society flourished prior to foreign contact due to the large population of konohiki who successfully administered the land and resources of their Aliʻi Nui under their Konohiki System. Its success was attributed to the Hawaiian values of Mālama ʻĀina, the strict Kapu religion, and the perpetuation and intergenerational transmission of ancestral knowledge, traditional cultural practices and chiefly values within their class.

Chapter 2 discusses the specialized ‘ōihana or functions of the konohiki pertaining to their religious duties, and the management of labor, taxation, cultivation, freshwater, and marine resources.
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