

A heiau is a temple, or sacred stone structure used by Hawaiians for religious worship and communication with the gods. A heiau is a place where supernatural or divine power is concentrated and transferred through religious practices.

Kūka‘ō‘ō heiau at Manoa Heritage Center is a small, peaceful agricultural heiau. It is situated close to the once vast taro lo‘i (irrigated fields) that filled the valley below. At Kūka‘ō‘ō, farmers and their kahuna could recite chants and make offerings of pigs, vegetables and sweet potatoes, in hopes of guaranteed rain and agricultural fertility and plenty.

This illustration (by Herb Kane): The heiau shown in this picture is not an agricultural heiau like Kūka‘ō‘ō, but rather is a **luakini** heiau - a large sacrificial government war temple dedicated to the god Kuka‘ilimoku (Ku).

Types of Heiau: Life in ancient Hawaii focused on constant communication with the gods, and there were many types of temples invoking peace, war, health, success or profitable fishing and farming. Heiau range from simple structures to stone walled enclosures to massive open-air temples with terraces, platforms and numerous carved figures in which ruling chiefs paid homage to the major Hawaiian gods.

Placement: Heiau often occupy a prominent place in a landscape. They are often placed on hilltops or on sites with commanding views of the surrounding area.

Construction style: Dry-stack or stacked stone masonry. Rocks were not cut or modified in any way and were dry laid without mortar.

Heiau restoration: 1993-1994; Project Manager and stone mason- Billy Fields; Hawaiian cultural specialist: Nathan Napoka

Antiquity: Kūka‘ō‘ō is an.... “old heathen temple that dates back many hundred years. Its erection is credited to the Menehune, but was rebuilt during the reign of Kualii, who arrested it from them after a hard fought battle.” (Thrum)

Mana: Heiau were places that possessed great mana. As rituals, prayers and offerings occurred in this same space over hundreds of years, its sense of sacredness and mana would increase.

Heiau today: Today, for Native Hawaiians and other residents of Hawai‘i, these places are still regarded as sacred space and are highly respected as a visible link to the past, and for many, a link to the gods of old Hawai‘i



