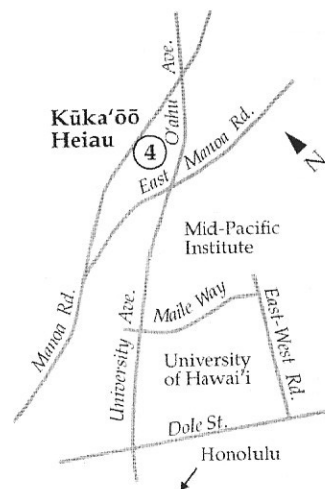
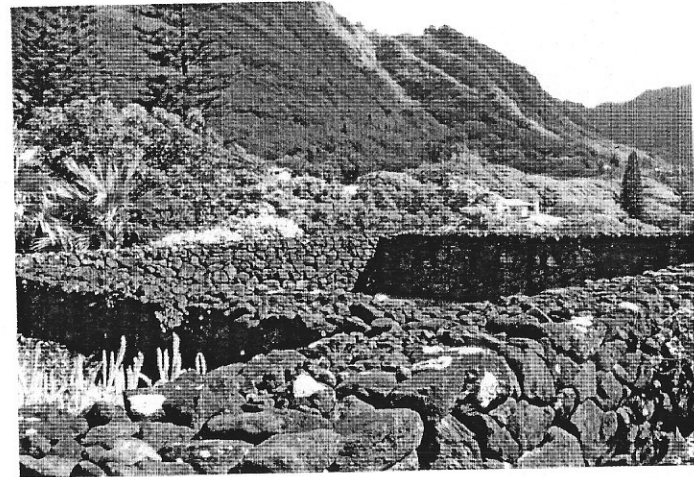


#### 4 Kūka'ō'ō Heiau

Rockwork construction



Kūka'ō'ō Heiau is located in the heart of lush Mānoa Valley, where settlement may have begun before AD 1400 as a natural expansion of growth from the coastal area of Waikiki. Mānoa was an ideal location for agricultural pursuits such as taro, sweet potato, breadfruit, and banana production as it was, and still is, a cool and water-rich valley. The *maka'āinana* (common folk) farmed the valley floor while the *ali'i* (chiefly class) preferred to live on the western slopes of the valley. Hawaiian royalty built retreats on these slopes, including Kamehameha the Great, Ka'ahumanu (who died here in 1832), and Kamehameha III (present site of Wai'oli Tea Room). The location of Kūka'ō'ō Heiau served both regions: the western slope and valley floor. Other Mānoa temple structures, now destroyed, were Pu'uhonua Heiau on Pu'uhonua Street, Kawapopo Heiau on 'Ānuenue Street, Hakika and Hipawai Heiau.

The exact age of Kūka'ō'ō is not known, for oral tradition attributes the *heiau* to Menehune (a small, dark-skinned race). Some believe the Menehune were the indigenous folk of the islands before the Tahitian migrations or a very early migration themselves. Others understand them

to be elemental beings or nature spirits. Many of the older *heiau*, fishponds, and rock walls, especially on Kaua'i and O'ahu, are attributed to these legendary beings who were said to build large structures in a single night. The Menehune were paid one shrimp each for their night's work. Many stories about these little folk abound in Nu'uuanu and Mānoa Valley where they were said to control the upper valleys. Oral tradition claims that they built a wall right across Mānoa and maintained a fortress upslope from Kūka'ō'ō called Ulumahu. In fact, Kūka'ō'ō is sometimes mistakenly referred to by locals as the Menehune Fort. Legend tells that the Menehune were eventually run out of the valley by chief Kūali'i around 1700. Kūali'i rebuilt and rededicated Kūka'ō'ō, using it as the central *heiau* in a series of valley temples. Another tradition holds that owls headquartered at nearby Pu'u Pueo chased the Menehune away.

Kūka'ō'ō is also connected in legend to Kapunahou, the spring at Punahou School (Site 3), through the story of a ten-year old boy and his twin sister who found shelter here. Kauawa'ahila and Kauakuahine (sometimes called Kauaki'owao) fled a cruel stepmother in Ka'ala and "hid themselves in a small cave on the side of the hill of Kūka'ō'ō." After some time, Kauakuahine longed for fresh water to bathe in. Kauawa'ahila spoke to Kakea, the *mo'ō* of Kānewai pond, some ways away, who was also one of the boy's ancestor gods. Kakea magically provided a sparkling spring near the cave where there had not been one before; the spring was called Kapunahou and the area has become known as Punahou.

The story of princess Kahalaopuna, daughter of the wind and the Mānoa rain, should also be mentioned here. She was slain many times by her husband Kauhi, but was always brought back to life by her *'aumakua* (guardian spirit), the owl. Pu'u Pueo ("owl hill") is just across the street from the *heiau*. However, Kauhi was made to pay for his crimes by being turned to stone and facing up to the gods. From Kūka'ō'ō Heiau one can look across the valley to Wa'ahila Ridge and see the profile of Kauhi, Mānoa's Sleeping Giant. His head is *mauka* and his feet *makai*.

Based on its size and location, Kūka'ō'ō, was most likely an agricultural class *heiau*. Its name too suggests this function, as one of the god Kū's duties was presiding over agriculture and the 'ō'ō is a traditional digging stick. So "god of the digging stick" is a possible translation. A second translation is derived from an oral tradition that tells of Kawelokamamahai'a, from Kaua'i, who came over to O'ahu and stood on Mānoa's highest peak, Konahuanui. From there he threw his pronged spear, resembling an 'ō'ō, that stuck upright (*kū*) in the ground at the *heiau* site. Thus, Kūka'ō'ō, "the upright digging stick." As an agricultural *heiau* it would have been used to promote crop growth through ritual practice and offerings of first crops.

Kūka'ō'ō Heiau is a small terraced rock structure above a short, steep slope. The outer dimensions of the temple are about 50 by 40 feet. There is an enclosure with a 5-foot wide opening in the western corner. Some reinforced walls are 3 feet thick and the

highest wall is 9 feet tall. During restoration it was discovered that the main wall was originally constructed with three layers of stone for structural strength. An oval feature was also uncovered near the *heiau* entrance, and has been retained. Kūka'ō'ō Heiau was cleared of over growth and restored in the 1990s.



Kūka'ō'ō Heiau stands directly behind the historic Cooke home, Kūali'i, which will eventually become a museum.

The *heiau* stands behind the Sam and Mary Cooke house, built by Charles Montague Cooke Jr. in 1911 by the architects Emory and Webb, who also designed Hawai'i Theatre and the Wai'oli Tea Room. The architects originally wanted to build on the *heiau* site itself but landowner "Monty" Cooke insisted on preserving the temple. Done in a Tudor revival style, using volcanic basalt rock quarried at the site, the house was named Kūali'i, after the historic local chief. The house, *heiau*, and grounds (landscaped with native plants) are

on the National Register of Historic Places. The main house, Kūali'i, and the Cooke's collection of quality art and artifacts, will eventually become a museum.

Kūka'ō'ō Heiau is cared for by the Mānoa Heritage Center, a non-profit organization founded in 1996, whose mission is to promote the stewardship of the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai'i, and specifically to preserve and interpret the *heiau*, gardens, historic home, and Mānoa Valley. (12/18-30; 20, 27/285-289)

**NOTE: Reservations must be made to visit this site. Walk-ins will be turned away.**

**PHONE: (808) 988-1287, for reservations and directions.**

**WEBSITE: [www.manoaheritagecenter.org](http://www.manoaheritagecenter.org)**

**HOURS: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays to Saturdays**

**ADMISSION: Adults \$7; senior/military \$4; children/students free (regardless of age). Advance reservations required.**