

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

For every-day communication with his gods, the Hawaiian could conduct his simple ritual with his *'aumakua* at some shrine or wherever it suited. The temple was an expansion of the shrine to meet the requirements of larger groups of people with more elaborate ceremony and ritual. Large temples were built for public ceremonies connected with some major event, such as war or the increase of food supplies. The ruins of many such open-air temples, or heiaus, are found throughout the Hawaiian Islands.

Chiefs and an organized priesthood conducted the correct temple rituals, which sometimes lasted for days. Between such major events, the temple was left untended, which accounts for the seeming neglect remarked by early voyagers. When circumstances demanded it, an old temple was reconditioned or a new one was built. Some temples go back to a remote period, and others are known to have been built to the order of chiefs who lived in comparatively recent times. In building a new temple, the chief erected a monument to himself, for the name of the builder as well as the temple was recorded in the oral history of the people. Though an architect designed the temple and priests conducted the services, it was the chief who ordered the construction; and a chief might build more than one temple in his lifetime.

Throughout Polynesia, temples underwent changes over a period of time. Some features were abandoned and new details were elaborated. It is of scientific interest to distinguish between what was brought by the original settlers of Polynesian islands and what developed locally during a long period of occupation. As settlers of the Hawaiian Islands are known to have arrived at different periods, it is also possible that new techniques were brought in from still another area by the later arrivals.

A Hawaiian legend tells that the Hawaiian form of temple was introduced by a priest named Paa'o some time after the islands had been occupied. The Paa'o story implies that a simpler form of temple was originally in use here. It would, in fact, have been extremely difficult for the earlier form to survive in the permanently settled islands of the group.

SIMPLE TEMPLES

A temple of simpler construction than the form which prevailed in the inhabited islands of Hawaii has been described by Emory as still surviving on the now uninhabited islands of Necker and Nihoa. These two islands form a north-west extension of the Hawaiian chain. The type of temple is described as follows by Emory (1928, pp. 60, 61; fig. 25.): "The type form is a low, narrow, rectangular platform which faces on a paved rectangular terrace. Along the full length of the rear of the platform an odd number of upright slabs which average $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in width, and 8 inches in thickness, are set at equal intervals. . . ."

Some further details are given by Emory, whose plan of the type temple is reproduced here in figure 324. In the plan, the width of the temple is 25 feet, the depth of the platform, 4.5 feet, and the depth of the terrace, 12 feet.

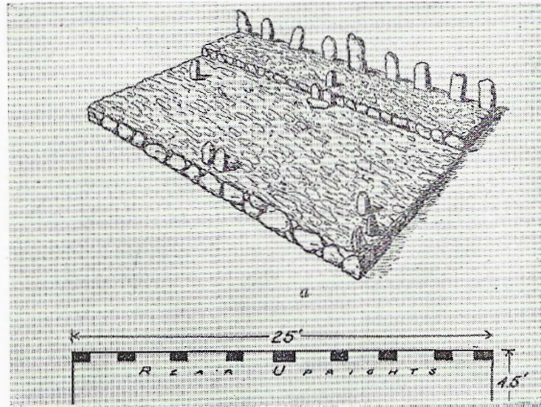


FIGURE 324.—Necker Island heiau (after Emory).

The simple form of the Necker and Nihoa temples offers evidence that the builders left one of the inhabited islands, probably Kauai, before the more elaborate heiau had been introduced. It may be assumed that the Necker type of temple was built according to the pattern which existed in Hawaii before the arrival of Paao.

COMPLEX TEMPLES

Bishop Museum has published extensive information on heiau ruins in its Bulletins on the archaeology of Lanai (Emory, 1924), Kauai (Bennett, 1931), Oahu (McAllister, 1933a), and Kahoolawe (McAllister, 1933b). It also has manuscript reports on Hawaii and Maui and detailed notes and sketches by J. F. G. Stokes. Good descriptions of heiaus have also appeared in the Hawaiian Annual as the result of the painstaking work of T. G. Thrum. However, no heiau survived in its complete form at the time these numerous investigations were made, so we are dependent upon early artists. The best picture of a fully equipped heiau is a drawing of one on Kauai by Webber, the artist on Cook's third expedition (fig. 325).

Out of the mass of information available emerges the fact that the ground plans of heiaus varied considerably, even on the same island. This great variation was undoubtedly due to the fact that the new heiaus were built frequently enough to create a profession of temple architects whose services were called upon when a chief wished to build a new temple. The professional architect was termed a *kahuna kuhikuhi pu'uone* because he showed (*kuhikuhi*) his proposed plan to the chief by drawing it or moulding it in sand (*pu'uone*). Professional

pride impelled him to plan something different than the work of others, though in his professional education he studied the history and form of existing and historical heiaus. When a temple was built for a specific purpose and success followed its construction, the architect naturally attributed the success to the form of the heiau. In planning a new heiau, the architect was able to cite the form of a temple which had been successful and to advise incorporating some part of its plan in the proposed new construction. It is no wonder, then, that variations in ground plans continued to multiply. Only the reconditioning and alteration of old temples prevented them from being more numerous than they are.

In addition to having individual proper names, temples were classified according to the particular function for which they were built. Malo (1951,

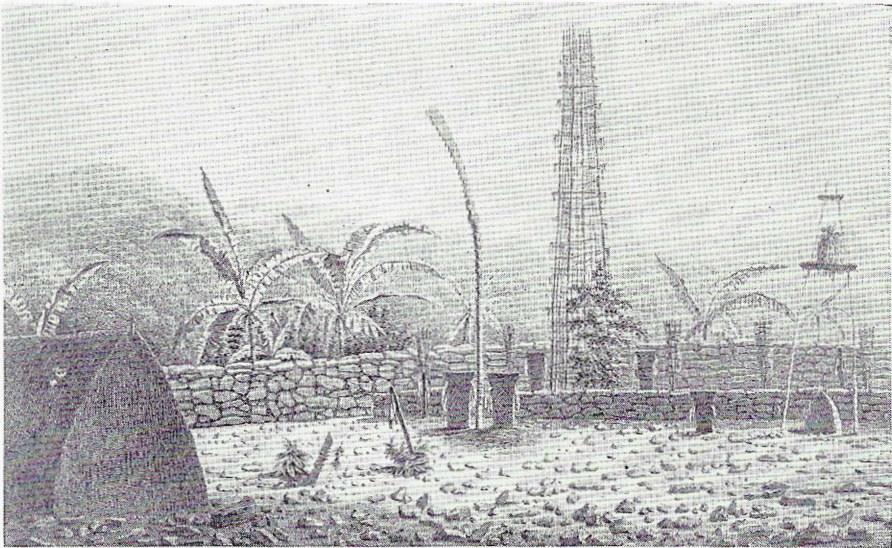


FIGURE 325.—Webber's drawing of heiau at Waimea, Kauai.

pp. 159-162) says that there were two main services; one addressed to Ku, the other addressed to Lono. If the king decided to make war, the temple he ordered built or reconditioned was a war temple (*heiau waikaua*) termed a *luakini*, and the service was conducted by priests of the order of Ku. These priests constituted the highest order, and they were also called priests of the order of Kanalu after their first priestly ancestor. The other form of service, directed toward Lono, was conducted on a form of temple termed a *mapele*. Other names given by Malo are *unu o Lono*, *kukoa'e*, and *'aka*. The priests who officiated belonged to the order of Lono (*mo'o Lono*). The purpose of the *mapele* temple was to invoke the blessing of Lono on the crops and other peaceful needs.



Any chief could build a *mapele*, but only the king could order a *luakini*. Human sacrifices were offered on the *luakini*, but pigs sufficed for the *mapele*. Different kinds of wood and thatch were used in the furnishing of the *luakini* and the *mapele*.

Heiaus were usually built on some commanding site, such as a hill top, the seaward end of a range, or a promontory of higher land which overlooked valleys, villages, or the sea. According to McAllister (1933a, p. 9) the orientation depended only upon the slope of the land. Heiaus face in all directions of the compass, the only generalization being that most of them face the sea.

COURTS

The first essential was the court (*kahua*) generally alluded to in the literature as the terrace. The shape was usually rectangular, but irregular forms existed and a few heiaus have been reported as circular. The size depended on the size of the assemblage which needed the temple. Small temples were made by a family group or a lesser chief, whereas large courts were needed for the temples built by kings and high chiefs to accommodate the larger assemblage during ceremonies of a public nature. McAllister (1933a, p. 9) gives the dimensions of a small Oahu temple as 50 by 40 feet and those of the very large Puu o Mahuka temple as 570 by 170 feet. Owing to the great diversity in structural details, it simplifies matters to follow a general classification such as that suggested by McAllister. I have reworded it as follows: terraced temples, walled temples, and composite temples.

TERRACED TEMPLES

The terraced temple consisted of an open court without boundary walls. It was paved with dirt, sand, or large flat stones carefully laid with smaller stones between. Bennett (1931, p. 38) writes that some of the Kauai courts were paved with stones 4 or 5 inches in diameter, making a rough [cobbled] surface. As most terraced temples were built on sloping ground, the court had to be leveled by building up a stone facing on the lower side of the slope and filling in to the required level, sometimes by excavating the upper end of the slope. To enlarge the court, it was easier to make another terrace below the first than to provide the fill required to build up the enlarged area to the level of the first court. Further enlargements necessitated additional terraces and so temples were made with two, three, and even four terraces. McAllister (1933a, p. 9), describing the terraced temples of Oahu, states that usually the upper terrace was the smallest and the lower, the largest. The height between terraces varied, but usually it was about 3 feet. Commonly there were narrow terraces or steps between, which might have been at one corner, a portion of the side, or run the entire length of the terrace. The terraced temples were more common on Oahu than the walled temples, and more impressive.

WALLED TEMPLES

The construction of the walled temple was an elaboration on the terraced temple, in that the court was bounded on all sides by a stone wall. Bennett (1931, p. 34) gives the average size of 12 walled temples on Kauai as 101 by 162 feet. He states (1931, p. 36) that the commonest form of wall was made of regularly piled-up stones, "faced and filled at the same time." Waterworn or rough stones were used, depending upon which kind was abundant at the site. Smaller stones were filled in around the larger stones as part of the fill. Another type of wall was made with parallel rows of large stone facings, and the part between was filled in with rubble. The walls averaged 6 feet in width [thickness] and 5 feet in height. A third type of wall was stepped on the outer side of one wall. Cook

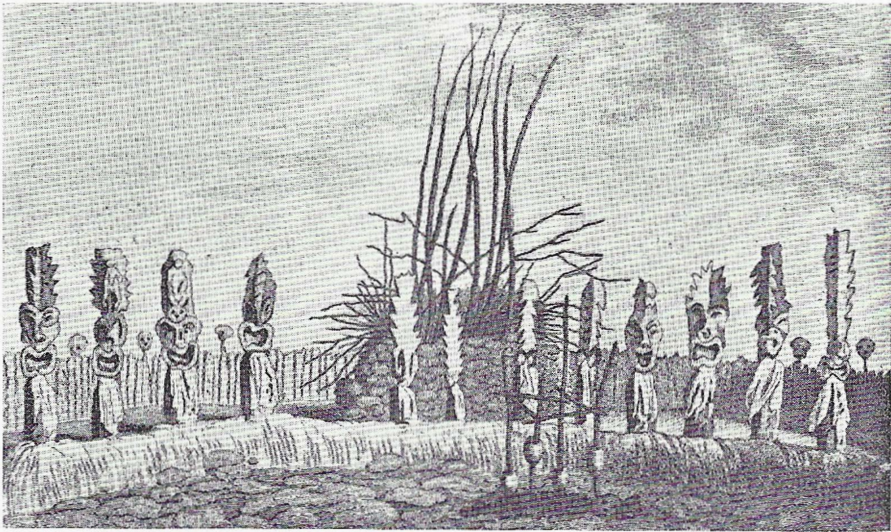


FIGURE 326.—Heiau on Hawaii drawn by Surgeon William Ellis.

(1784, vol. 2, pp. 200-201) describes the Waimea temple as an oblong space of considerable extent, surrounded by a wall of stone about four feet high. The wall shows up well in Webber's drawing (fig. 325).

Some temples had wooden fences around the court in place of stone walls. Malo (1951, p. 161) refers to making a new fence in the alterations to an old temple. The drawing by Arago (fig. 306) shows a wooden fence with upright stakes. Surgeon Ellis (1782, vol. 2, p. 180) also shows a fence and remarks that the temple was "surrounded with wooden pales about four feet high, upon which were fixed a number of human skulls, belonging to those who had at different times been sacrificed to their deities." (See figure 326.)

A raised platform at one end of the court was an essential feature of both the early, simple, and the later, more complex, temples of the Society Islands; and it was found in the simple temples of the neighboring atolls. It was also a constant feature of the simple Necker Island temples, and it is present in many of the other Hawaiian temples. Bennett (1931, p. 43) states that several of the Kauai heiaus had a terrace, raised one or two feet, running across one end and along one side. The width ranged from 6 feet to 42 feet, and the sides were faced with stones, some on edge. The usual technique was to build up the sides and fill in the intervening space with earth, rubble, or stones. McAllister (1933a, p. 13) describes them for Oahu temples and mentions two heiaus with "a small almost square elevation on the back-center of the upper terrace." The oft-cited Waimea heiau (fig. 325) shows the raised platform at one end very clearly. Some platforms had the front facing made in two concave curves instead of the usual straight line, and in some accounts, the *lele* (stands for offerings) and the *kuahu* are referred to in conjunction with the same heiau. It is probable that the term *kuahu* in a temple was applied to the raised platform and thus followed the pattern introduced from Tahiti by Paa'o. One new Hawaiian function of the raised platform was the formation of a site for the oracle towers. Owing to the diversity in building, raised platforms were built in other parts of the court. Some of them formed foundations for the temple houses and images and others were probably associated with food offerings.

COMPOSITE TEMPLES

Composite temples were a combination of the terraced and the walled types. McAllister says that they were the best preserved of the heiaus on Oahu, and he describes Kaneaki Heiau in the Makaha Valley, Waianae, as the best preserved of all (1933a, pp. 9, 10, 119). It has two main terraces or courts, the upper terrace being walled on three sides with the fourth side open to the terrace below. The second terrace, without walls, is 6 feet lower and connected with the upper terrace by three narrow steps. A number of subsidiary features do not affect the main plan.

Some temples had more terraces; and in some the walled terraces were the more important, whereas in others the open terraces were of greater importance. The great variety was due largely to the alterations and additions to older temples. Whereas the rectangular court, raised platform, and stone walls were the really fundamental features of the heiau, both platform and walls might be lacking. However, when present, they were the parts which survived and which are found in the ruins of today. Stone foundations, pavements, and pits may also be seen. The furnishings of the temples have disappeared, but information concerning them is to be found in Malo's book (1951) and in the accounts and drawings of the early European navigators who saw them in position.