

TESTIMONY TO THE MAUI COUNTY COUNCIL, DECEMBER 18, 1992
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HAWAIIAN HISTORIC SITES AT
WAIHE'E, MAUI, INCLUDING THE ENVIRONMENT SURROUNDING
SUCH SITES.

My name is Marion Kelly, I am a cultural anthropologist and a professor at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, in the Ethnic Studies Program. Among the several classes I teach, one deals with changes in land tenure and land use in Hawai'i over time. That is to say, each semester University students and I discuss the traditional Hawaiian system of use rights in the land, and the events that forced changes in the relationship between the land and the people and gave us what we have today, a highly concentrated private ownership of land in the hands of very few powerful individuals or corporations. Since the mid-19th century, this concentration of private land ownership has had a tremendous influence on changes in the use of the land. Under these conditions, it is very difficult for public officials to represent the needs of the people to preserve our heritage, or protect our fragile Hawaiian environment.

The last time I gave testimony on Maui was nearly three years ago. At that time we were trying to call to the attention of the Maui County Planning Commission the need for preserving the traditional sand dune burials at Kapalua. I might say that the disasterous situation at Kapalua could probably have been avoided had there been full community involvement from the beginning. The preservation of our heritage is the concern of all of us.

Some lessons are difficult to learn, however, especially when contrary messages are coming through from persons who have other interests, and many times, conflicting interests.

Evidence is abundant that the area we are discussing today at Waihe'e makai contains many very early Hawaiian sites which should be preserved in their natural environment. I say "in their natural environment" because I do not believe you can respectfully preserve a Hawaiian heiau in the middle of a golf course, as has been tried elsewhere on Maui, or in the middle of a hotel complex as has been done at Keauhou, Kona. Respectful acknowledgement of the culture developed here in Hawai'i by Hawaiians is long overdue. This is the same culture that the tourist industry so readily packages and sells to tourists, and pockets the profits therefrom.

In the Autumn of 1988, I was invited to give a presentation on the Preservation of Historic Hawaiian Sites to the Historic Sites Committee of the Hawaiian Association of Civic Clubs Convention in Kona. In doing the research for this important paper, I discovered that at one time there were approximately 500 sites on the State Historic Registration List. The Review Board had tried to provide protection for these important sites. Then, in 1980, the Review Board removed 490 of the sites from the list. Since then, the Board has added very few new sites, and it has returned to the list only a very few of those previously removed. Such is the dedication of our government to the culture of the Indigenous People of these Islands. The Hawaiian people are hoping for Maui County to take the lead in the preservation of Indigenous Peoples' historic sites.

In the arena of land use, the first concern of government officials should be to insure the preservation of the unique cultural heritage of the Indigenous People, the Hawaiians who occupied these islands for nearly 2,000 years. Nowhere else in the world can such sites be found; they are truly unique to Hawai'i. As trustees of the land and the culture for future generations, we must preserve the corpus of the estate for its beneficiaries. Short-term monetary gains that are based on the destruction of unique cultural sites must inevitably result in long-term cultural losses.

We have a choice; it is not too late. Perhaps, because of a lack of funds at present, we cannot immediately create a respectful, peaceful area where these important sites will be preserved. But, does this mean we must agree to have all of this cultural heritage destroyed for a golf course?

The estimated dates for Hawaiian occupation of this area are as early as A.D. 300 to 600. Proof of continued occupation by carbon-14 dates places the time with certainty through the 11th to the 14th centuries and on into modern times.

There are over 500 hundred golf courses in these islands, either built, planning to be built, or waiting for permits. Is this the future we want for our beautiful, unique Hawaiian Islands? I submit to you, that you have a responsibility to assure the people of Hawai'i that you will do all you can to prevent these sites from being destroyed, and prevent Hawai'i from succumbing to the epidemic disease of golfcourse overbuilding.

Before I close, I must add one more bit of information for the purpose of setting the record straight.. I understand that one person

who testified previously in favor of the golf course had used my name in a way to suggest that I would support such a development.

I admit that in 1978, 12 years ago, I carry out a walk-through survey of Waihe'e Valley, with the assistance of Clayton Hee, who at that time was a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i, I believe. We were there representing the Department of Anthropology of the Bishop Museum under a contract from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to write a brief history of the valley. The Army Corps of Engineers were collecting information about two valleys the islands, one was Waihe'e Valley, for the purpose of determining whether or not they might be used to create hydro-electric power. Our trip had nothing to do with any other type of development, least of all a golf course.

We walked deep into the valley to observe how the water was being diverted by a large grill across the stream bed. The water dropped through the grill and was carried away in a ditch that wound along the side of the valley. We were told that the water ended up in the sugar cane fields of Wailuku Sugar Company. No water flowed in the stream bed past the grill work. The only water available to taro farmers down stream was through a pipe controlled by a large valve that could be opened or closed.

I hope this statement will clarify my position on the importance of preserving the traditional historic sites and the environment in which they occur today.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to this issue.