



The Waiwai of 'Īao Maui

Long ago, as part of their famous travels, the akua Kāne and Kanaloa landed on Maui in the moku of Hāmākua-loa. They were thirsty and what they craved most was their favorite drink, 'awa. They located the 'awa plant, but they had no wai to prepare the drink. So Kāne thrust his mighty 'ō'ō into the ground creating a pūnāwai, a fresh water spring. This area became known as Puni'awa (to be fond of 'awa) and the spring was named Kāne Loa (Long-lasting Kāne). The two akua enjoyed their refreshing drink, then moved on.

The 'ō'ō that belonged to Kāne was made of hard kauila wood. It even had a name, Kō-mole (Pushed Through to the Foundation). As the two gods traveled through every district of Maui, Kāne used his legendary 'ō'ō to create numerous cool, thirst-quenching springs along the way. These pūnāwai were named for the two akua, or their actions, and are famous to this very day.

Kāne formed more than springs though. In the mountain range of Mauna Ka-hālāwai, commonly known as the West Maui Mountains, the entire valley of 'Īao with its powerful rushing waters is his creation. Kāne is responsible for the abundant wai flowing on the surface, and Kanaloa cares for the wai flowing underground. This valley has been cherished and appreciated from ancient times until today.

The sharp ridge of rock that many know as 'Īao Needle is one of the forms of Kanaloa. To its north is Mauna Kāne (Kāne's Mountain). Standing tall in the lush natural setting of 'Īao, these two friends continue their relationship for all to see. Not by chance, one of the names of 'Īao Needle related to Kanaloa is Nānāhoa (Looking at the Fellow Traveler).

Kāne and Kanaloa are connected to health, life, and the afterlife. While ali'i treasured the waiwai of 'Īao Valley, the highest of the chiefs selected hidden caves in 'Īao as their final resting places. So, just as Kāne and Kanaloa provided energy, nourishment, and blessings in days gone by, they continue to do so today and will carry on far into the future.

The opening line of a lei chant composed by High Chiefess Kekāuluohi for her son, King Lunalilo:

Ea 'Īao, he po'o no nā wai

'Īao rises, a source for the waters