

Kua‘āina Kahiko: Life and Land in Ancient Kahikinui, Maui. By Patrick Vinton Kirch. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014. xxiv + 310 pp. Illustrated. Appendices. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$49.00 cloth

Patrick Kirch remains one of the eminent scholars on Hawaiian archaeology. His work leads the field. This book ultimately makes some important contributions to his legacy, the most important of which is the testing of his theory that “the marginal lands” of Polynesia have become “hotbeds of historical dynamism” (p. xvi), using his years of field research in Kahikinui on the island of Maui as a case study.

Kirch undoubtedly proves his point regarding the significance of archaeological peripheries. The significance of this claim reaches far beyond this text and academia. Areas like Kahikinui, which remain rich with integrity due to the lack of development, may be poised for greater protection as a result of foundations Kirch establishes herein. In this regard, this text is a must-read for archaeologists and cultural resource managers. Communities and policy makers should be paying attention.

Kirch’s strength remains research. In the preface, he explains that he “tried to give a sense of what it has been like to do field research in this kua‘āina landscape” (p. xvii), and he accomplishes this. This text chronicles seventeen years of research in Kahikinui and his engagement with the community there. This book should be a must-read text for any course in archaeology in Hawai‘i or the Pacific. It should be required for any permitted archaeologist in Hawai‘i.

Kirch theorized that these peripheral areas would be significant to understanding traditional Hawaiian living. His seventeen years of dedicated fieldwork uncovers a tremendous amount of data, much of it gathered from house sites. He writes:

... suffice it to say that the many months spent mapping, digging, sifting, and studying the scraps of stone, bone, and shell from those Kahikinui house sites has opened a window on the world of the maka‘āinana who made that windy land their home. It has revealed something of . . . how they structured their lives in their humble kauhale, the menfolk offering prayers to the ‘aumakua, men and women cooking their sweet potatoes in the separate imu, yet eating together in their hale noa (even as they roasted fish and other foods in separate hearths). The picture that emerges of this habitus—this practice of everyday life—is

in its main outlines consistent with the accounts of Davida Malo and Samuel Kamakau. Yet the habitus of these country folk had its own peculiarities, as with eating in the hale noa. Studying these sites has reinforced my belief that archaeology can add important insights into ancient Hawaiian lifeways that are not recorded in the classic written sources. (p. 133)

This insight that archaeology, and empirical science generally, can serve to offer additional viewpoints that enrich contemporaneous understandings of pre-contact traditions, emphasizes the potential for collaboration between varied fields of study. This method is known as *makawalu*, literally “eight eyes,” but figuratively the term means to see something from many perspectives. The hope is that more archaeologists, ecologists, researchers from other fields will begin to see how they can work in collaboration with communities and traditional texts to build enriched historic records of pre-contact societies.

The author makes considerable strides towards this effort in this book with his recounting of the community’s engagement with the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. Articulating the modern struggle Hawaiians face in maintaining traditional activities and accessing land is an important part of the discursive narrative that is often excluded from academic texts; I am pleased to see it included here. The ‘ohana of Kahikinui add a richness to the text too often missing from these accounts, especially when written by western authors. Ultimately, the story of Kahikinui is Hawaiians’ to tell and Kirch seems to understand that—my hope is that other authors begin to follow suit.

An author’s engagement with community voices should be seen as an initial step for American scholars, but it should surely not be the last, but this text should not be mistaken for ethnography. It could have been an extraordinary ethnography, because it is clear that the author built an important and trusting relationships with the families of Kahikinui. One cannot help but wonder what sort of undiscovered treasures remain unpublished from the notes of those encounters. It would have been refreshing to hear more not only about peripheral places but even more from peripheral voices.

The lack of the use of Hawaiian-language resources also cannot be overlooked. Online resources such as Ulukau, the Hawaiian Electronic Library and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs’ Papakilo Database of Hawaiian-language newspapers offer invaluable cultural reference materials. In this digital age, there is simply no excuse for no longer accessing these resources. The failure to use these resources; the continued decision to italicize Hawaiian words when it is no longer commonly done because Hawaiian is a native and offi-

cial language of the state of Hawai‘i; the use of dated texts when Hawaiian-language scholarship has progressed so much weakens *Kua‘āina Kahiko* in a way that is both unfortunate and unnecessary.

It is hard not to be frustrated with the author’s decision not to use more Hawaiian-language resources and with the decision to italicize Hawaiian words when both are outdated practices. As a leading scholar in the field, and one with such influence over students and emerging professionals, one would hope that Kirch would see the importance of reinforcing the progressive trends in the field like the use of Hawaiian-language newspapers, mele (songs), mo‘olelo (stories), and other sources for the Hawaiian-language caché. Most references to traditional Hawaiian resources are retold through the author’s own interpretation, a largely outdated practice.

Further, the corresponding cultural studies, enriched with Hawaiian-language resources from this area, already exist. Kirch refers to the Auwahi renewable energy project, but makes no use of the corresponding cultural impact assessment conducted by the late Kahu Charles Maxwell on the area, nor does he reference the seminal study done by Kepā Maly on the moku of Honua‘ula. Considering the author’s stature, one cannot help but wonder: were these studies overlooked? Were they intentionally excluded? The lack of reference to them is difficult to explain.

Kirch is an outstanding scholar, and there are so many wonderful things about this text that may be lost by how he uses Hawaiian-language resources. I hope for his next project the author ventures into a collaboration with a scholar like Puakea Nogelmeier or Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui who can truly fuse archaeology with knowledge from the Hawaiian-language archives. That is a book I, and I imagine many others, would be eager to read.

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