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Features

Photographs and poems lament sites lost due to the H-3 freeway

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Kapulani Landgraf and Mark Hamasaki show the large-format camera that Hamasaki used to take photos collected in their book, "E Luku Wale E," last month at Windward Community College in Kaneohe.

"E Luku Wale E," by Piliamo'o, the team of Mark Hamasaki and Kapulani Landgraf, is a collection of 125 large-format landscape photographs that's not your usual coffee-table book. While the images are beautiful, shot in the Koolau mountains with the same type of 4-by-5 large-format cameras that Ansel Adams used in the high Sierra, they chronicle the destruction of significant natural and cultural sites.

From 1989 to 1997, carrying their heavy cameras and tripods, Hamasaki and Landgraf hiked to track the construction of the H-3, the freeway that cuts through the valleys of Halawa and Haiku to connect the military facilities at Pearl Harbor and Kaneohe.

In the image used on their book cover, sunlight ices the majestic ridges and each leaf and blade of grass surrounding Likelike Highway on the Windward side. A mysterious pyramid shrouded in dirt looms above it.

In advance of Piliamo'o's book signing and talk from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Windward Community College, Landgraf, 49, spoke with the Honolulu Star-Advertiser about "E Luku Wale E" and working with Hamasaki, 60, a fellow Kaneohe native who had been her photography teacher at WCC.

'E LUKU WALE E: DEVASTATION UPON DEVASTATION'

With authors Mark Hamasaki and Kapulani Landgraf, designer Barbara Pope, contributors Dennis Kawaharada and Richard Hamasaki, and vocalist Aaron Sala:

>> **When:** Feb. 21, with book signing from 1 to 2 p.m. and discussion from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

>> **Where:** Windward Community College, Hale Akoakoa 101-105, 45-720 Keaahala Road, Kaneohe

>> **Cost:** Free

>> **Info:** hihumanities.org/talk-ELukuWaleE

Question: Is that a heiau on the cover?

Answer: Yes. It's Kukuiokane Heiau, "kukui trees of Kane." They buried it and H-3 ran straight over it. It was a whole complex lying beneath the peak of Keahiakahoe, "fire of Kane." I can see it from my bedroom window in Puahuula. It's my front yard and Mark's backyard.

It was a huge complex, supposed to be the largest in Kaneohe. In the archaeological reports they separated all the sites, said it was 17 discontinuous sites so you could build in between them.

Kukuiothane is the most lost. And it's the most tragic because after it was covered over and built on, the archaeologists confirmed that it was Kukuiothane Theiau.

Q: Why after the fact?

A: They were doing bulldozer archaeology; the monitors were there right before the bulldozers. I read all their field notebooks at Bishop Museum. They would say, "That looks interesting," and then, "Oh, too bad, it's gone."

Q: So when you started, you weren't sure what you were looking at?

A: When we started we didn't know what we were shooting because we didn't have any information. It was the last weekend in March 1989, and they were just building the access road to build the freeway. Usually the archaeological reports are supposed to be done before you build the freeway, but an agreement was signed in August 1987 that said they didn't need to. I graduated with an anthropology major from University of Hawaii at Manoa and wanted to go into archaeology. This changed my mind.

Q: What else did you later discover was there?

A: In the photo of a dug-out rock wall with a steel tire rim, they found a burial there; we didn't know it at the time Mark took the photo.

Q: What are some of your favorite sites?

A: There are the natural rock formations at Hooleinaiwa, a 4-foot standing stone in the center of a grouping. It's a phallic stone pointing to Kukuiothane — Kane is the god of creation. There's a spring called Kumukumu that's supposed to be associated with the heiau, and a natural spur and Papua o Kane, "the pigpens of Kane," right above it. Earl "Buddy" Neller, the archaeologist, pretty much saved this site.

Q: Can you comment on your use of perspective?

A: One of my favorite photos is a close-up of a bulldozer wheel and a heavy metal arm (dwarfing) the mountains behind. And the photo with what looks like another Koolau ridge in the foreground of the cliffs? That's actually one of the stones at Hooleinaiwa.

Q: Other favorites?

A: Mark and I both like the one where they're digging the hole through the mountain for the H-3 tunnels. You can see the ieie and the lehua and the slurry spray.

Q: H-3 opened in 1997. Why did it take so long to bring out your book?

A: We tried, but were told it was too controversial. Or a publisher wanted changes we didn't agree with. This book is self-funded.

Q: What inspired you to compose the poetry in Hawaiian that opens each section?

A: I composed it for an exhibit we had in the gallery of the old (Honolulu) Advertiser building. It's a kanikau, a lamentation chant. There are 11 pauku (verses) with 10 lines. Each line reflects a photo.

Thanks to Barbara Pope, who designed the book, we were able to include everything, from the kanikau to the notes to the photographs and the timeline with press clips in the back, and it's not cluttered: it's readable, it's beautiful.

Q: How could you keep going out to shoot something that caused you pain?

A: It's evidence. How could I not do it? It would not be responsible as a person, as a Hawaiian. No one else was doing it.

I want people to remember. My students thought H-3 had always been there. And you know that film is going to last. a