



What is it?

A loko i‘a kalo, also sometimes called a loko lo‘i kalo, were modified taro patches to include aquaculture. It is a freshwater lo‘i where both kalo and fish were raised and harvested. The kalo was planted in mounds or pu‘epu‘e. Once the lo‘i was flooded, the channels between each pu‘epu‘e created a perfect habitat for the fish to swim through and feed from the ripened stalks of kalo.

This type of pond was located in the uplands to cultivate kalo and simultaneously grow a selective range of fresh and brackish water i‘a. Juvenile fish in the kahawai were commonly stocked into the pond during the months of January to March, when juvenile fish were bountiful. Some fish would swim up stream into the mākāhā as well. Loko i‘a kalo were commonly cared for by the maka‘āinana on their own property. The ownership and responsibilities of this practice was passed down from generation to generation.

Significance

The idea of an integrated system, such as a loko i‘a kalo, is used all around the world and throughout history. Kalo and fish were the principles of life, and still are today. Fish were used for subsistence, ceremonial purposes, and managed carefully to ensure that the resources were not abused. Kalo on the other hand has been a key resource for the self-sufficiency of the people and holds an important genealogical role in the kumulipo as Haloanakalaukapalili, Hawaiian’s first ancestor.

This type of sociocultural system contributed a great amount to the development of aquaculture and agriculture networking. The resources from a loko i‘a kalo gave life to an entire family. When one was hungry or eager to eat after a restful night, fish wrapped in lau of the kalo was brought to the table. Loko i‘a kalo were also convenient when families were visited by malihini or the haku ‘āina within the night. Food was laid on the table as generous hospitality to their guest.

The convenience of having a loko i‘a kalo allowed the people of old Hawai‘i to lack nothing.



I‘a

‘Ōpae: Two species of ‘ōpae spend the first part of their lives at sea and the rest in streams or a kahawai. Hawaiians enjoyed eating the ‘ōpae and would raise them in the loko i‘a kalo.

‘O‘opu: The ‘o‘opu flourished in loko i‘a kalo. ‘O‘opu was used in house warming ceremonies, so that they would have good luck throughout their lives. Some Hawaiians believed it looked like a mo‘o and was another body form of the mo‘o deities.

Āholehole: The āholehole was an important fish to the Hawaiians and their culture. It was used in ceremonies and sacrifices when a white fish was needed. It was considered to be the “pig of the sea” and would often times be used in place of an actual pig in ceremonies if a pig wasn’t available.

Awa: Awa fish were one of the Hawaiians favorite fish to eat. It was a very important source of food because of its abundance in Hawai‘i and its fatty flesh. It was one of the main species of fish raised in the loko i‘a kalo.

Limu Kala: Limu kala commonly liked to grow in shallow coastal waters throughout Hawai‘i. It was traditionally harvested for medicinal purposes and is still eaten today with fish.

‘Ama‘ama: ‘Ama‘ama was one of the most important fish species in traditional Hawaiian culture. Young fish were caught in nets along the shoreline, then raised in the many fish ponds throughout the islands.

