**MAHELE LETTERS OF DISTRESS**

Primary Source Documents

August 1851

Love to you,

    Attention, the one whom we have elected as the representative from Ko’olau Poko, to be a member of the Legislature of this year 1851.

    We beg to inform you of our great distress of living, and for you to inform the nobles of the legislature of this government.

    We are in trouble because we have no firewood and no lā’ī (leaves used to thatch the roof of houses) and no timber for houses, it is said in the law that those who are living on the land can secure the things above stated, this is all right for those present who are living on lands which have forests, but, we who live on lands which have no forests, we are in trouble. The children are eating raw potato because of no firewood, the mouths of the children are swollen from having eaten raw taro. We have been in trouble for 3 months. The konohiki (head man of Hawaiian land division or ahupua’a) with wooded lands here in Kāne’ohe have absolutely withheld the firewood and lā’ī and the timber for houses.

    And because of this great distress in which we are living, is why we urge you to let the nobles know immediately, and to let us have firewood, and lā’ī and timber for houses. We make haste these days or children will be dead from starvation because of no firewood with which to cook the food as well as us, and because of this great trouble and these words, we write our names below this 14th day of August, 1851, at Kāne’ohe, here in Ko’olau Poko.

                                                                                    Signed by Hio and 54 others

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Hanalei-Kaua’i
April 1852

Love to you,

    Because of my distress and being sorry about my kuleana (responsibility right, or ownership) situated at Kapukawai, in Hanalei, Island of Kaua’i. This is the reason of my being sorry and my protest, too, concerning the improper survey made by the surveyor on my premises was very much lessened, the places that I worked and raised my crops, pineapple, bananas, onions, yams, pumpkins, watermelons, sugar cane, oranges, replanted and all began to grow again were all pulled up. My taro patch was also taken, piece of kula (plains) houselot and five patches, 3 orange trees bearing fruit and because I was grieved for the loss of my crops and my foreigner who made the survey listened to the lying claim of that foreigner, the foreigner did not buy the place in dispute which was my kuleana, this kuleana was acquired by me from Kaumuali’i (former King of Kauai) because I and my parents lived there from the time I was young, and all my parents are all dead and the land descended to me, their child, and I have been living there ever since and now is the first time it has been taken away without knowing the reasons why it was taken, the claim was under the description that is was to be used for planting cane but, it has not been used for that, my said place was turned into a cattle run and I am living in great trouble now.

    This is mine to you, that you direct the surveyor to come and make another survey and have all made satisfactory to all. Kamuka, one of the agents, commanded Ioane to settle the matter, but he did not do so being afraid of Kale, this foreigner who took my kuleana without any right and I am sorry about my food, you should have pity and have another investigation for the source of my support.

                                                                                                Puamana at Kapukawai

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4th District, East Maui
Janaury 13, 1854

KEONI ANA (John Young II),
        Minister of the Interior

Gracious love to you.

            We humbly complain to you, and hope you will give heed, and listen to the petition that we personally make to you, and it is right that it ought to be attended to, because, you are the father o the people from Hawai’i to Kaua’i. We are in great trouble, and you have seen our many complaints to you, but, we supposed that you do not care for us, - maybe we are Indians.

Dismiss John T. Gower as our Land Agent.

    1. It is not right, that when we wish to buy our own lands that he should sell them to the foreigners.
    2. It is kula (plains) and not taro land, and we offered $1., $2.00 and up to $3.00, the foreigner offered $3.00, and the foreigner got it, it was only $1.50, however, but the foreigner acquired it, it was a swindle and a lie. It was not $3.00. The sale is conducted like an auction, bids are made, and went to the highest bid, that is the way it was done. The law says that the residents are to have the first choice, and if it is not taken up, then sell to the outsiders.
    3. Because he will not listen, and he will not confer with the natives, he only talks in the foreign language, and the foreigners are the only ones he talks with.

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    6. Disposing the land with outsiders, and not with the ones to whom the land belongs.
    7. Running the price of land away up to $250.00 an acre for taro land, and we know that he made the bids himself until the price is too high, and the Government gets it, he pays no attention to the Hawaiians. He does not want the Hawaiians to acquire any land he has no love in him.
    8. Raising the charge for the survey to $10.00 an acre. We told him not to make the surveys, that others make it, that there are other surveyors with transits living in this district. He paid no attention to our wishes.

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    11. His meanness is very apparent, property of others has been lost through his crookedness, and some Missionaries have been ruined in their property through his dishonesty.

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    15. Here is a clever person living in our midst, a minister of gospel, and knows how to make surveys, and has great knowledge, he would be proper, he is Iosepa Mawae, from Lahainaluna, that the position of land agent be given to him.

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                                                                            From us the people in Kaupō, now called Kauao.
                                                                            KULOKU and 61 others.

Source: Hawai’i State Archives, Translations of Letters.