**Hawaiian Place Names**

The Polynesians of old were prodigious in their use of place names. They were expert taxonomists, classifying and naming the world around them, the stars in the heavens and fish in the sea, the plants and creatures of the land. They named the land upon which they lived and which gave them sustenance.

The places to which people give names reflect their relationship to the land, and the names and relationships both change in time. When we live in an urban environment, as most of us do today, we name streets and neighborhoods; buildings and stores, or so-and-so’s place, become our landmarks. Traveling at high speed along highways there is no time to observe fine details of the land, as there is when traveling on foot or on horseback.

When the Hawaiians lived on the land as farmers and gatherers they became intimately acquainted with and named countless features and places. But when they left the land or died, many of the names disappeared, too. While some were recorded in the land records of the nineteenth century, which are the basis of this catalog, the stories and meanings are usually lost. They are relics, artifacts from the past, buried in nearly forgotten volumes, yet part of the Hawaiian heritage.