

gathered dried branches of *pāpala* trees on the way to the top of one of these cliffs. There they lighted them and tossed them into the wind. The central core of soft pith of the branches burned rapidly, causing streams of sparks to shoot out like fiery rockets. The light, bouyant branches floated in midair, then rose and fell with the wind. Some of the embers dropped into the sea; others were intercepted by some of the spectators in canoes in the sea below the cliffs and used to brand themselves as a form of tattooing to commemorate the occasion. Such a person was looked upon as a hero. This Hawaiian sport is reminiscent of the proud possession of scars “won” in dueling matches in pre-World War II German universities.

SWIMMING

Living as they did on islands surrounded by the sea, it is not surprising that water sports were a favorite of the ancient Hawaiians. Swimming (*‘au* or *malo kai*) was not only a sport but a daily function for Hawaiians of all ages and both sexes. It did not include the use of plant materials and so is outside the scope of this book.

BODY SURFING

Body surfing (*kaha nalu*) was a sport or pastime that could be indulged in at any time because no equipment was required. Again, this subject is not treated here.

BOARD SURFING

It was with boards that surfing (*he‘e nalu*) reached its highest and unique development. It was an exciting experience to catch a wave properly and maintain one’s position, and one requiring great skill.

There were two types of surfboards (*papa he‘e nalu*): a short, thin board, usually made of wood from *koa* or breadfruit trees and called *alaia*; and a larger board, in both length and thickness, and cigar-shaped, called *olo*. The front was convexly curved, and the thickness thinned off toward the



Olo

rounded edges. Although lightweight *wiliwili* was the preferred wood for these larger boards, it was probably difficult to find *wiliwili* trees of sufficient size to make many of them. When such boards were made, they were probably reserved for the nobility, including chiefs.

The boards were cut out in the rough from trunks of trees of the right size with stone adzes. They were then rubbed down with rough coral to remove the adze marks and finally polished with *‘ōahi* (special basalt stones or pumice), as used in finishing canoes. They were then stained with the juice from the ti root, *mole kī*, or the sap, *hili kukui*, from the pounded

inner bark of a *kukui* tree trunk. Other stains sometimes used were the juice from banana inflorescence buds, and charcoal obtained by burning *hala* leaves. When the stain was dry the board was rubbed with *kukui*-nut oil. Boards were well cared for: dried after use, oiled, and placed under shelter, and sometimes even wrapped in tapa.

Surfboards were used throughout the Islands along coasts where waves were high and had a long roll before breaking. The short *alaia* boards could, for the most part, be used on waves close to shore, but the long *olo* boards required high waves to prevent them from digging into the surface instead of riding freely on the forward slope of the wave. Surfers using the *olo* board lay on these boards as they paddled with their hands, avoiding breaks in the waves, until they were well beyond the line of breakers. Because waves come in series, it was important to watch for a suitable wave. Both this and subsequent action on the board required great skill and perfect balance. Having chosen a proper wave, the surfer, with his (or her) board directed toward the shore, paddled so as to catch the wave on its front surface; the surfer had to keep paddling vigorously to maintain his position. Having accomplished this, he or she stopped paddling and the wave carried the board and paddler to shore.

The surfer might be content to retain a prone position (*kīpapa*), or, to make the ride even more exciting, by holding on to the sides of the board he could draw his or her body up to a kneeling position, or by placing his or her feet forward he could assume a sitting position. The climax was reached, of course, when he rose from the kneeling position to stand erect.

In surfing it was important to keep forward of the base of the wave while still being carried forward on its front surface. The board could be directed into a slide to the right or left by leaning one's weight to that side, or by trailing one's foot in the water to act like a rudder. This movement to right or left not only added excitement to the ride but could also be

used to get away from the wave being ridden in case it began to break behind the board.

Races were held with a "buoy" placed near shore to mark the end of the "run."

Canoe races were conducted much like surfboard races.

SLIDING

Sliding down a hillside on some kind of sled was common throughout Polynesia. The simplest kind of sled in old Hawai'i was the cluster of terminal leaves and the stalk of the ti plant. The sledder sat on the leaf cluster and held the stalk passed forward between his legs as a rudder to steer himself. This ti-leaf sliding was called *ho'ohē'e kī*. A steep, grassy slope made especially slippery after a rain was chosen as the site for this sport, which was primarily a sport of commoners, both younger and older. The *ali'i* engaged in a more sophisticated sledding sport, *hōlua*.

SLEDGES (Sleds)

Hōlua was a sport for young male and female *ali'i*. The term *hōlua* was applied to the sport, to the sledge (sled) itself, and to the sledge course. The sledge was sometimes called *papa hōlua*. It was an unusual sledge compared with Western sleds, being very long and very narrow. A *hōlua* was made of two parts: a pair of runners and a superstructure. The lower edge of each runner was rounded for smoother sliding; the after ends were cut vertically while the fore ends curved upward to prevent these ends from digging into the runway.

The runners were made from the hard native wood *kauila*. They were fastened together (held apart) with crosspieces consisting of an upper bar with a downward leg on either side to fit over the upper edges of the runners. The horizontal bars were made long enough to project slightly beyond the outer edges of the legs with which they formed external angles.

The crosspieces were attached to the runners with