

Makahiki Games . . . Gone and just about forgotten

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Specific dates on early Hawaiian sporting events is limited, as information came down through myths, legends, and oral history. Fact and assumption go hand in hand. One sifts through the documentation with the aplomb of "The Galloping Gourmet", a bit of this mixed with a smattering of that and a taste of reality. Luxury of the written word used in keeping records was not fully developed until after the arrival of the missionaries. It was then a Hawaiian alphabet was developed and schools were established.

Generations of Kahunas (priests) passed on knowledge and traditions of the Makahiki games to the next generation. David Malo, historian in the late 19th century was a contributor in the field of history, literature, archeology and ethnology.

The celebration itself was held in honor of the god LONO at the culmination of the harvest season, It was *some* celebration! No other civilization put on such a spectacle. It lasted four months, rolling in the atmosphere of Christmas, New Year's, Baster and the Fourth of July!

Minimal work was performed. No doubt some committee was in charge of the events and locale. There was to be no war during this period. Training was held for participants in wrestling, boxing, running and weightlifting. Other sports were surfing, canoe racing and diving. Spear tossing combined the practical aspect. Spears were tossed at targets, gourds and in some instances each other. Early war games. You had to be on your toes.

Gambling played an important part in the festivities as well. Wagers would include fishing nets, kapa cloth, household goods, livestock, stone tools, wili-wili wood and produce.

Today there are some surviving sporting events; surfing, interisland canoe racing and swimming. Isolated areas may have imitation Makahiki games. There is a growing interest in Hawaiian culture

and preservation. The Kamehameha Schools and some local societies promote the customs and traditions. "Culturel survival depends on the continuance and acceptance of tradition."

Mahalo.