

Olona

Olona was a thing highly prized by one and all. It was very valuable and planters raised it extensively. It was an important article in fishing, for out of it were made nets, long cords, twisted cords, every kind of binding rope of which a man had use, and other articles besides. There were, however, few places where olona would grow and hence, not all people cultivated olona. It grew in rainy districts and in marsh lands and in those parts of the mountain which were saturated with moisture; it did not grow on bare mountain sides but on those ridges where bananas grew and water ran constantly and where there ^{was} plenty of moisture. It thrived on the windward side of the islands and few places besides.

When people in old days planted olona they first looked for a good place in the mountains to plant, a valley where it was fertile and flat, perhaps below a cliff in the bed of a stream. Here they cut down the pulu ferns, chopped down the trees and cleared out the weeds. The planting was done like the planting of the wauke from the young shoots or cuttings from the ground stem... From the time of its planting the farmer must keep watch of it. He must keep the olona free of weeds until it was about half a yard high and so thick that a man could not pass through it. He must be on his guard to pull up the morning glory vines and other creepers lest they creep all over the plant and choke it to death. A field of olona that grew up uniformly with every stalk and every leaf alike was the planter's delight, and if it grew on a level, two or three acres or more of it, his joy knew no bounds. It all grew up like the hairs on the head, with straight stalks and rounded leaves. In a year or more it was full-grown and the leaves began to turn yellow. As long as they were still dark like popolo leaves, the olona was not ready to cut. When the planter saw that the olona was matured, he built long houses in which to scrape it and fenced them in. Then the people who scraped the olona - men, women and children, went up to the uplands to a

place which to be right must be close to some water. The olona promised food and fish, wealth and life to the poor. When the planter heard of it, he raised a great hog, fattened a dog, fished for kahala, the long house was set up, the olona was cut and the scraping was on. The grunting of hogs, the barking of dogs, the crowing of fowl, the noise of the shouldering of fish, ^(When they were numerous in the fish pan?) were the sounds heard by the olona scraper if the lord was a wealthy man and the konohiki had provided hog, poi and fish. Thus were the olona scrapers provided for in old times.

To prepare the olona it was first broken and laid in a pile. Then the branches were stripped of bark and thrown away. The branches and leaves must not be left in the field but thrown away elsewhere lest they kill the olona plants. The bark was laid in water; but it should not be left long before scraping, only one or two days, lest the fibers rot and become brittle and spoiled. For the process of scraping a narrow board was used perhaps ? inches wide, one and a half fathoms long, and half an inch thick or perhaps less. One end of the board was thin so that it could be tied to a post to keep it steady and a prop was laid under the other end of the board. The scraper used was made from one of the plates (uhi) from the back of a turtle, the inside of which had been filed down close to the outer shell that had come in contact with sea water, until it was very sharp, then polished with pumice stone and shaped to the board so as not to break the fibers. The board too was polished smooth. The [strip of] olona bark was then brought, the scraper grasped with the right hand, and the end of the bark doubled over the blade of the scraper, and held firmly at the back of the scraper. Then the scraper was placed down on the front end of the board and slipped forward while the left hand kept the olona bark flat below the scraper as the scraper slipped forward to the end of the strip. Then, while the left hand continued to hold down the base of the olona, the right hand pressed the edge of the scraper down on the board, and releasing the

end, scraped back and forth between the ends until the olona was flattened against the board, then returning to the beginning, brushed aside the pulp or "dirt" of the olona. When that was done, the bark was turned over, and the pulp removed in the same way. The bark was turned upward again and the process repeated until the fiber was clean and white. Forty of these strips made one apana or piece, also called mile, and they were tied together, and so on. An expert man or woman could prepare 400 to 800 apana in one day, but olona scraping required skill and could not be done by one who was untrained.

Maui and Molokai were noted in old times for growing olona for water gourd nets, fishing nets, fish cords; that was the cause ^{of} ~~for~~ the prosperity ⁱⁿ ~~for~~ these lands. The scene in a long house where olona was being cleaned was like a waterfall falling over a precipice, like the snow on Mauna Kea, like crimped hair. The fibers were used for twines and fish nets...