Many of you may know the word moku or even ahupua’a, but did you know that many other land divisions were made by Hawaiians too? Have you heard of mokupuni or 'ili lele? Think of it like this- from smallest to biggest, the most common names for land divisions are listed below. There are many more, but these are a few important ones with their definitions:

'ili lele: these are areas that are separated from the main part of the 'ili, but are still considered part of it. Think of this like your garage or shed it is part of your “home,” but not really attached.
‘ili: this is a smaller area of land usually worked by one extended family within the ahupua’a. Think of this like your particular house where your family lives.

ahupua’a: even smaller areas called chiefdoms- ruled by a chief or ali‘i. These usually were divisions from land to sea, including the valley and ridges on both sides as boundaries- like Nānākuli, Mākuʻa, or Waikiki.

moku: districts within the island. Think of these like Ewa, Waialua or Wai‘anae.

mokupuni: island kingdoms like O‘ahu, Kaua‘i or Maui.

You may be thinking, why did the Hawaiians have so many land divisions? Well, if you really think about it, we still sort of have them today, even if they are called by different names. When the land is divided up, it is easier to manage and control. Because everyone knows which spot is “theirs,” and who the boss of their spot is, we are sure that all of the land is being taken care of and none is forgotten. Hawaiians knew that every piece of the island was useful in some way- they wanted to make sure they took care of every little piece and got everything that they possibly needed from the various moku, ahupua’a, and ‘ili. Look at the picture below and the one at the beginning of the reading-
are they related at all? Notice how the land divisions get smaller between the two pictures:

Many people think the land divisions were first made by 'Umi, the son of the great Hawaiian ali'i, Līloa. 'Umi decided the four larger islands of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i would be mokupuni and were divided into separate districts or moku. The smaller islands of Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Kaho'olawe became moku or districts of Maui. Ni'ihau became a district of Kaua'i. Smaller divisions, mauka to makai, were made and called ahupua'a. Every year the people of each ahupua'a would give offerings or ho'okupu to their separate ali'i or chief. Once the ali'i accepted these offerings, the festival of Makahiki began—think back to your

DRAFT: Science in Hawai‘i: Nā Hana Ma Ka Ahupua’a – A Culturally Responsive Curriculum Project
Retrieved & adapted in part from www.honoluluadvertiser.com; and
reading on the Makahiki season. Each land division separated the island into smaller and smaller units so that the chiefs could make sure that everything ran smoothly. What if there was only one ali‘i for the whole island? How could he possibly make sure everything was going okay? In this way, the land divisions were very useful.

The shape of the land divisions also had a specific purpose. The ahupua‘a stretched from mountain (mauka) to ocean (makai) so that all of the resources that the Hawaiians needed to survive could be found within the ahupua‘a boundaries. The middle land between the mountain and ocean where much of the kalo or taro
was grown is called the **kula**, or field. Farmers who grew kalo and fisherman would give each other what food they needed just as others would exchange the tools and other resources that were needed. Look at some of the things people gave each other:

The word **ahupua’a** comes from the combination of the words **ahu** or stone altar and **pua’a** which means pig. At the boundary between ahupua’a a stone altar, called a **heiau**, was built and a pig’s head carved out of wood, would be placed on top. This altar was there not only to tell people where the boundary was,

but as a place to bring your offerings for the ali‘i, ho‘okupu, once a year.

Think about the piece of land you’re standing (or sitting!) on right now. Who does it belong to? Hawaiians did not believe in owning land, they cared for it and felt as though it was their responsibility to do so, but did not pay money or trade land. We buy and sell land now, right? Think about what this does to our environment. What does it do to land that maybe does not grow crops as well or does not provide what we want it to- who wants this land? Do you think this means that it is worthless? Don’t worry about having a right or wrong answer, just figure out what your own opinion is. Read the small passage below so you can know more about the term ‘āina - what do you think it means??
It is the earth (honua) that quakes and the land (āina) which is spread and flattened out. In other words āina is surface and honua is mass.

Make sure you know this difference the next time someone uses the word āina- you can share your knowledge!