



I came to Oahu, Hawai'i to do research at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa in April and situated myself near Diamond Head in Honolulu (picture 1). It is hard to believe that it has been over six months already.

When you hear the word Hawai'i, most of you may think of shopping and marine sport in Waikiki. However, Waikiki is just a tiny part of the whole of Hawai'i. Hawai'i is actually made up of eight islands that stretch out over 2400 kilometers. Although those islands are thousands of kilometers away from any civilization, by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a large population had moved here from Polynesia, and created a well-developed society. What we call Hawaiian people are in general descendants of those who moved here back then. Throughout its history, Hawai'i encountered a series of interesting events, which consequently made Hawai'i one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse places in America.

Hawaiian culture is very rich and unique. Their language, for example, has only seven consonants (h, k, l, m, n, p, w) as opposed to 24 in English. Although I am trying to learn Hawaiian, it is very difficult because all the words sound quite similar to me. Driving in Honolulu is especially challenging as most street names are Hawaiian and look the same (picture 2)! When giving directions, people often say makai for 海側 and mauka for 山側. You can imagine how confusing that can be.



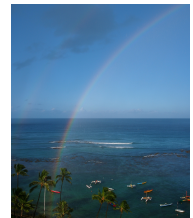
As a huge fan of Hawaiian music, this is like a dreamland as there are a lot of concerts and many of them are free. At a concert, audience members often voluntarily start dancing hula to the music. Nothing can be more relaxing than listening to Hawaiian music sitting on the grass under palm trees (picture 3).



Oahu is comprised of two major mountain ranges, the Waianae and Koolau, which create



beautiful valleys and spectacular mountain vistas. On weekends, I often go hiking and enjoy stunning colors of mountains and ocean from up high (picture 4). Thanks to such geography, we have some showers that often give us a gift of rainbow (picture 5). All in



all, Hawai'i is a wonderful place to be. I am grateful for the opportunity that I was given everyday.