

Some Traditional Native Hawaiian Bird Hunting Practices on Hawai‘i Island

NOAH GOMES

WHY DID NATIVE HAWAIIANS hunt birds in the remote wilderness of the islands' interiors? There is evidence that formerly abundant native bird resources were utilized by Hawaiians for multiple purposes prior to contact with Captain Cook in 1778 and during the period of the Hawaiian kingdom in the 1800s. The most famous of these uses was the spectacular and regal feather work worn by Hawaiian nobility (ali‘i). Birds were also an important source of meat. According to the nineteenth century Land Boundary Commission testimonies of traditional Hawaiian bird catchers, ‘ua‘u (*Pterodroma sandwichensis*) and nēnē (*Branta sandvicensis*) were an important food source in some districts of Hawai‘i Island, demonstrated in this article through the mapping of testimony data, and anecdotal evidence of intense resource competition among traditional bird hunters.

THE LAND BOUNDARY COMMISSION TESTIMONIES

History

The Kingdom of Hawai‘i transitioned from the traditional Hawaiian land tenure system to a western system of land ownership during the

Noah Gomes is from Wahiawā, O‘ahu. He is a recent graduate of the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo with an M.A. in Hawaiian Language and Literature. His thesis is titled “Me‘ha ka Leo i ka Nahele: He Noi‘ina i ka Po‘e Kāpili Manu o ke Au Kāhiko” (“A Lonely Voice in the Woods: Research on the Bird Hunters of Ancient Times”). He is currently employed with the Interpretation Division at Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park.

The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 50 (2016)

reign of King Kamehameha III, between the years 1846–1855, an event known as the Māhele.¹ Some of the larger traditional land divisions such as ahupua‘a and ‘ili kūpono passed largely or completely intact into the new system of ownership. The Commission of Boundaries was established in 1862 by the government of the Hawaiian Kingdom to provide a means of legally settling and establishing the boundaries of ahupua‘a and ‘ili kūpono that had been previously awarded to land owners by the then defunct Land Commission without a formal land survey.²

In order to find the boundaries of these lands the Boundary Commissioners collected testimony from the remaining kama‘āina (long term residents) who remembered where the traditional land boundary points were located. Naturally these testimonies would have been given through the medium of Hawaiian language. The surviving records are, however, predominately English translations of those original testimonies. The testimonies were collected over the course of several decades beginning in 1864 and ending in 1914.³ While the primary purpose for collecting the testimonies was to establish the traditional boundary markers of ahupua‘a and ‘ili kūpono, fragments of Hawaiian cultural and historical traditions were also recorded by the commissioners. Bird hunters were required by their trade to spend long periods of time deep in the mountains. They were particularly valuable interviewees to the Commission because of their detailed knowledge of the upland boundaries of ahupua‘a, places only rarely traversed by other groups of people. These land Boundary Commission testimonies have become a valuable source of information regarding traditional Hawaiian bird hunting on Hawai‘i island.⁴

ANALYSIS OF TESTIMONIES

The Distribution of Bird Hunting on Hawai‘i Island

Even in the mid-to-late 1800s there were still many different traditional forms of bird hunting that were practiced by Hawaiians. As Nathaniel Emerson writes in his article *Bird-Hunters of Ancient Hawai‘i*, “The methods used by one hunter in the capture of the birds differed from those used by another. They also varied somewhat, no doubt, in different districts, on the different islands, at different seasons of the year and even in the different hours of the day.”⁵ It can also be said

that differences in technique varied greatly according to the kind of bird being targeted by a hunter. Some birds were valuable for their feathers, used in the splendid regalia of the ali'i, while other birds were valued as food. There were also birds that had multiple uses. While traditional bird hunting is perhaps best remembered today for its association with Hawaiian feather work, many commonly sought after birds including both the 'ua'u and nēnē were heavily utilized as a source of wild meat.⁶

It is important to understand that 59 percent of all ahupua'a that have testimonies mentioning bird catching do not provide the names or information on which specific species were captured. Fortunately the remaining 41 percent of testimonies *do* mention birds by name, giving us a rough idea of the distribution and importance of particular birds hunted on Hawai'i island between 1810 and the 1870s, the period in which most of the testifiers would have been active hunters. (See Tables 1 and 2 for an organized representation of this data.) The information from these testimonies is an isolated data set from a specific time period in Hawaiian history (from the early days of the kingdom of Kamehameha I in the early 1800s to the beginning of Kalākaua's reign in the 1870s) and does not represent bird hunting on all islands. The frequency of bird catching and kinds of birds caught by pre-contact Hawaiians would have been very different. The same can be said as well for Hawaiian hunters active after this period. The ecological geography of the Hawaiian islands had changed significantly since the first arrival of humans at least 800 years ago and has continued to change during the last 200 years since Captain Cook first landed in 1778.⁷ Many native species have disappeared and new foreign species have taken their place both in the local ecology and in the diet of hunters.

Although it is impossible to completely confirm the accuracy of the data set from these testimonies, it is valuable for analysis of this period of Hawaiian history and provides a possible glimpse into the lifestyle and culture of traditional bird catchers living during this time. While other species of bird beyond the seven listed in these tables were certainly hunted in the period examined, these are the specific species mentioned by testifiers. Evidently these were the bird species most important in the minds of Hawaiian bird catchers living during the 1870s, when much of the relevant testimony was gathered.

Table 1 shows the number of ahupua‘a for each of Hawai‘i island’s six moku (districts) in which testifiers mention birds or bird catching. The relative percentage of the number of ahupua‘a for which each bird species is mentioned has been calculated for each moku. The total numbers of each bird species for the island of Hawai‘i were also calculated. Table 2 translates these total numbers into approximate percentages while excluding testimonies that do not specify bird species by name, for a more accurate idea of which specific species are more prominent in the testimonies.⁸

The moku of Kona and Hilo are disproportionately represented in Land Boundary Commission testimonies that mention bird hunting. Probably this has little to do with any particular importance of bird hunting in these moku, and more to do with the fact that Kailua, Kona and the city of Hilo were important centers of commerce and trade during the 1800’s. As such, kama‘āina from these moku may have been easier for the commissioners to locate and interview, skewing the representation of these moku in the data set.

Interestingly the ‘ua‘u (*Pterodroma sandwichensis*) is the bird with by far the most representation in the testimonies, comprising 39 percent of the Hawai‘i island total. This may indicate its relative importance to bird catchers during this period. This information, coupled with the fact that one of the two bird species with the next highest ranking percentage is the nēnē (*Branta sandvicensis*), would suggest that the historical importance of native birds as a meat source has been relatively overlooked. However, some previous archaeological work has been done on the subject of meat-birds by Moniz-Nakamura and Athens et al.¹⁰ The primary use for nēnē and ‘ua‘u would have been as a source of food (though Malo mentions nēnē feathers can also be used for kāhili).¹¹

Much greater attention has been given to research on the rapid historic disappearance of Hawai‘i’s highly unique forest bird diversity rather than the decline of seabirds such as ‘ua‘u. The cultural importance and fame of native forest birds as a source of valuable feathers for use in feathered garments for the ali‘i may also have historically overshadowed the importance of native birds as food for the maka‘āinana. Indeed, of the seven species mentioned by name in the testimonies, only two are known to be important for feather work. These would be the ‘ō‘ō (*Moho nobilis*) and mamo (*Drepanis pacifica*).¹²

Besides the nēnē and ‘ua‘u at least two of the other species listed are known to have primarily been used for food.

It is also worth noting that one important kama‘āina for the ahupua‘a of Kahuku in Ka‘ū named Kumauna provides the following information:

In ancient days the people of Kahuku did not go fishing, but were after birds of all kinds to eat, and this is the reason all the land on the mountain belonged to Kahuku.¹³

MAPS

The following map shows the ahupua‘a distribution of bird species hunted on Hawai‘i island according to data from the testimonies.¹⁴



FIGURE 1 Bird Catching Ahupua‘a of Hawai‘i Island

TABLE 3. MAP KEY FOR FIGURES 1 AND 2

Species	Key
Birds hunted primarily for meat ('ua'u, nēnē, 'a'o , and koloa)	Black
Birds hunted primarily for feathers ('ō'ō, mamō, and forest birds)	Gray
Data deficient	White

Although all moku have at least some ahupua'a with testimonies which mention bird catching, there are still many ahupua'a with no available data. Many of these lands were never surveyed by the Commission, so no testimonies are available. There are several reasons why this may have happened. Sometimes the land owners of an ahupua'a did not request a survey of the boundaries. Some lands were also owned by the government or king, so they were not surveyed. At other times ahupua'a were even "absorbed" into other land divisions through private ownership, and so no survey was necessary.¹⁵ Even when an ahupua'a actually was surveyed and the kama'āina sought out for testimony, sometimes there were no kama'āina left who were knowledgeable in all of the industries once practiced there. Migration to major population centers, and the well-documented continual decline of the Native Hawaiian population throughout the 1800's, resulted in the loss of a huge amount of local knowledge.

While not always documented, most likely some sort of bird hunting was practiced in virtually every ahupua'a on Hawai'i island in pre-contact Hawai'i. Useful birds would have been found all the way from the seashore (various sea birds, shore birds and wet land species), through the open lands (shorebirds such as kōlea (*Pluvialis fulva*), and other birds such as pueo (*Asio flammeus sandwichensis*)), the forests, and even the barren mountain slopes above the forest line, where 'ua'u still nest in modern times.¹⁶

THE SHAPE OF AHUPUA'A IN RELATION TO BIRD CATCHING

Certain kama'āina noted the importance of the shape of an ahupua'a to the relative accessibility of particular resources such as birds and fish. Kakio for Keauhou 1st, Kona, relates:

They say in the days of Keaumoku [Ke'eaumoku Nui? Ke'eaumoku Pāpa'iahiahi?] the Akule used to belong to Keauhou 2nd, and the birds to Keauhou 1st, but the chief of Keauhou 2nd married a chief of Keauhou 1st and after that all the fish were given to Keauhou 1st and the birds and land mauka [*sic*] to Keauhou 2nd.¹⁷

When examining a map of North Kona, Keauhou 1st and Keauhou 2nd (which share a border) have different shapes. Both are quite large ahupua'a. Keauhou 1st has a greater and wider amount of land ma kai (seaward), and Keauhou 2nd takes the bulk of the land ma uka (inland). Keauhou 2nd stretches far up to the top of Maunaloa and cuts off all neighboring Kona ahupua'a on the mountain. These huge land holdings far up ma uka are obviously at least partly related to Keauhou 2nd's traditional wealth in nēnē and 'ua'u, which were probably an important traditional source of wild meat to the residents of that ahupua'a.

Kahuku, Ka'ū, is another large ahupua'a with major land holdings that stretch up to the summit of Maunaloa. Keauhou 2nd and Kahuku share a border at high elevations. Kumauna gave testimony that bird hunting was also a significant source of meat for the inhabitants of Kahuku.

In ancient days the people of Kahuku did not go fishing, but were after birds of all kinds to eat, and this is the reason all the land on the mountain belonged to Kahuku.¹⁸

Kapāpala in Ka'ū and Humu'ula in Hilo are the two other ahupua'a that include a part of the summit of Maunaloa. Keauhou 1st, Keauhou 2nd, Kapāpala, and Humu'ula are all very large ahupua'a and all four have testimonies highlighting the importance of bird catching to each respective district. All four also have records of hunting 'ua'u, a species now restricted to high elevations above the tree line on Hawai'i. Three of the four have testimony records of hunting nēnē.

There is a correlation between ahupua'a with large land holdings and bird catching for meat. In fact the summits of Hualālai and Maunakea are also a part of large ahupua'a that have testimony records of 'ua'u hunting. Although not mentioned, it seems likely that nēnē would probably have been traditionally abundant in these ahupua'a. Ka'ūpulehu, the ahupua'a which encompasses the summit

of Hualālai, borders Pu‘uwa‘awa‘a, an ahupua‘a known from other sources to have had a significant historical nēnē population.¹⁹ Ka‘ūpūlehu may have had similar wealth in birds. All of these large ahupua‘a that stretch to the summits of Maunaloa, Maunakea, and Hualālai probably relied heavily on wild bird meat as a food source. The only one of these large ahupua‘a with land at the summit of one of the three mountains that has testimonies that name forest birds (specifically ‘ō‘ō and mamo) as important is Kapāpala. No doubt all of these ahupua‘a would have had at least some significant populations of feather birds even in historic times, but it seems apparent that the value of meat birds was more important in the minds of the kama‘āina who provided testimony.

Many of the smaller and narrower ahupua‘a also have reports of bird catching, especially those which extend at least some distance ma uka. Most of this type of ahupua‘a are found on the windward side of Hawai‘i island, such as Pu‘u‘ōhua and Makahanaloa in Hilo. These are verdant and wet lands where the rainforest extended all the way down to the sea, allowing bird hunting for forest birds in more accessible lowland areas. Ahupua‘a that do not extend very far inland at all though, seem less likely to have had bird catching for forest birds. Such ahupua‘a include Ka‘apoko in Hilo, and ‘Opihihale 1st and 2nd in Kona.

The moku of Puna has relatively few ahupua‘a mentioned as bird hunting localities, the obvious exceptions being the larger ahupua‘a that extend far inland. In Puna Kula is the only small coastal ahupua‘a that has a report of bird catching. Kauai gives testimony for a place called Kahupele in Kula “where nets used to be set to catch birds.”²⁰ Perhaps these were kōlea, a shorebird for which nets have been reportedly used in hunting.²¹ There is also in the legend of Kumuhana, a tradition of kōlea being caught at Kumukahi in Kula.²² It may also have been some sort of seabird caught while returning to nest sites. It is unlikely that small forest birds were abundant in a small coastal ahupua‘a such as Kula. Shorebirds, and maybe some wetland and coastal nesting sea birds could have been important in certain ahupua‘a of this type.

Marshall Sahlins points out that different kinds of resources were available to different ahupua‘a of each moku.²³ This was advantageous to the self-sufficiency of the moku as a whole since the sharing of those unique resources unified multiple ahupua‘a as one large community. In the context of traditional bird catching, certain ahupua‘a

had greater bird resources than others, and certain ahupua‘a may have even specialized in particular kinds of bird resources, whether for food or for feather work.

THEFT OF BIRD RESOURCES FROM NEIGHBORING AHUPUA‘A

The testimonies indicate that at one time virtually every Hawaiian knew many of the land boundaries between his or her own ahupua‘a and bordering lands. Children were taught land boundaries at a young age, and that it was wrong to go into a neighboring ahupua‘a to steal resources. In general, Hawaiian society practiced careful resource management with potentially harsh negative sanctions. Here are three separate testimonies as examples:

Haaheo for Waikoloa 1st and Wai‘ale‘ale 2nd, Hāmākua:

I was born at Waikoloa in Hamakua Hawaii, at the time of the first tidal wave at Hilo (1837). I have always lived there. Alo was my father. He died sometime since. I am a kamaaina of these lands. My father pointed out the boundaries to us, so that we could keep our animals on our own lands, and not have them trespass on other lands.²⁴

Kaaukai Kaiawahanui for Kalōpā, Hāmākua:

Was born on Kalopa in Hamakua Hawaii after the arrival of the second missionaries and books were around. Have lived on Oahu a few years but most of the time on Kalopa. Am a kamaaina of said place. My father Keiki now dead showed me the boundaries when we went after mamake [*sic* māmaki (*Pipturus albidus*)], he showed them to me so that I should not trespass on other lands . . .²⁵

Ohakee for Kalōpā, Hāmākua:

I was born on Kalopa, Hamakua, Hawaii at the time of the building of Kiholo, live on Weha, have always lived on Kalopa and adjoining lands and know the boundaries of said land. My father Haole showed me the boundaries when we used to go after mamake [*sic*] birds and canoes. I am a canoe maker. We could not live on one land and take things off another, without having our property taken away by people of the other lands, so he pointed out the boundaries to keep us from trespassing on other lands.²⁶

Because the consequences of theft could be severe, land boundaries were important common knowledge. Many examples can be found in the Land Boundary Commission testimonies of children being taught the boundaries of their home ahupua'a.

If a person were to try to steal resources from another ahupua'a and happened to be caught, there were two possible consequences. The first possibility is that sometimes the trespasser's belongings (including any stolen resources) would be seized by the kama'āina of the ahupua'a to be given to their own konohiki (headman) and ali'i. The trespasser would then be promptly kicked out. Here are four examples from testimonies as evidence of this practice:

Kenoi for Kapāpala, Ka'ū:

In the old days one didnt [*sic*] take from another land, only from your own. And if you tried to, the thing you were stealing was taken away. . . .²⁷

Kumauna for Kahuku, Ka'ū:

I was born at Kahuku before Kamehameha 1st went to Maui, and before the building of the Peleleu canoes. My parents told me the boundaries of Kahuku, at night we used to go out and catch birds to eat, and I asked them the boundaries as I did not wish to trespass on other lands, as we belonged on Kahuku. If people of other lands came onto Kahuku their birds and property were taken away from them and given to our chiefs. I know the land of Manukaa [*sic* Manukā] and the boundary between said land and Kahuku; my grand father told me.²⁸

Kamohaiulu for Humu'ula, Hilo:

I have heard that in olden times if Humuula people caught birds in the ohia woods Piihonua people took them away. And if Piihonua people caught birds on Mamani [*sic* Māmane], Humuula people took them away from them. I heard this from the bird catchers of Humuula and from our place [Laupāhoehoe].²⁹

Kaliue for Makahanaloa, Hilo:

I was born at Humuula a little before the Okuu. My parents belonged there, the boundaries of lands joining Humuula have all been pointed out to me, I know the boundaries between Humuula and Makahanaloa.

. . . thence to Pohopaele an old village on Makahanaloa, at a swampy

place, above this swamp. Humuula people had their houses below here, Makahanaloa people took our feathers away; At Kapahee Hakalau people took our ducks away . . .

Kapahee is on Hakalau, near Makahanaloa, it is in the woods probably not a mile from the upper edge of the woods.³⁰

At other times the kama'āina would actually fight the trespassers, which would sometimes result in deaths on both sides.

FIGHTING BETWEEN BIRD CATCHERS

The testimonies contain examples of fights that occurred between bird catchers at the boundaries of ahupua'a. Though never explicitly said outright, it appears that these fights were probably over bird meat.

Kamalo for Pi'ihonua 1st, Hilo:

I used to go bird catching on Piuhonua with Malo and others. Humuula people catching birds outside the woods, and Piuhonua people catching them, to the mauka edge of the woods. That was the boundary and my kupuna told me fights used to occur if the Humuula men went below the edge of the woods or if the Piuhonua people went above them. From the time I was young to the present day I have caught birds without let or hinderance from the Humuula people within the boundaries I have defined.³¹

Komaka no Kahuku, Ka'ū:

My kupuna told me the birds on the mountain belonged to Keauhou and Kahuku, did not hear where the division was. I was told that a Kau bird catcher named Kau killed a Keauhou bird catcher at Keanapaakai, mauka of Kolo and put his bones in the cave. I also heard that Kahuku and Keauhou bird catchers fought at Pauewalu and elsewhere. Do not know which side was victorious at Pauewalu. I have seen Pauewalu, a cave, on Pahoehoe. It is some distance makai of Umi's upper road, and mauka of land of Pahoehoe.³²

Kumauna for Kahuku, Ka'ū:

Kahuku is an Ahupuaa, Kau, Hawaii. I am a kamaaina of Kau and used to follow the bird catchers the children of Hooupu told me the bound-

aries. Kaneakakaiuli k. used to go into the mountains with his father. Kanekoa was husband to Kaaheiea, daughter of Kaneakakaiuli k., parents of my wife. Ohuli k. was one of the old kamaainas. Kumualii 2nd [a small cave where people used to dwell] is where the Hamakua natives had the fight, when they came onto Kahuku after birds. In ancient days the people of Kahuku did not go fishing, but were after birds of all kinds to eat, and this is the reason all the land on the mountain belonged to Kahuku. My makuahonoai [parents-in-law] and others always took their weapons with them as they used to have fights, when they found people from other lands catching birds. The sandalwood belonged to Kahuku. There was none in Kona except on Kapua, and when the other Kona people came on Kahuku after it the Kahuku people would take it away.³³

Awakamanu for Kahuku, Ka'ū:

I was born at Kahuku at time of Okuu and lived there until the time of Hookupu mamō at the Lae (1835) in time of Kamehameha III. Am a kamaaina of Kahuku, now live on Olaa in Puna. I used to go after birds and the boundaries were pointed out to me by Moo k. For if we of Kahuku caught birds on other lands, they were taken away from us.

Kahuku joins lands of Keauhou at Pauewalu (a place where Moo k. killed eight Kona men, they shut him up in a cave and when he got out he killed them.)

I think we never went beyond here [Pau'ewalu] to catch birds as Keauhou folks would take them away.³⁴

Kahulanui for Honokua, Kona:

Thence to Pauewalu an ahua, so called from one man having killed eight men there, who were trying to get his birds away. Or the eight killed the one man, I am not sure which. I have heard Keauhou bounds it [Kahuku] here.

I do not know whether all the men were from Kona or not.³⁵

Kaleikoa for Honokua, Kona:

I have heard that the other mauka corner of the land is at Pauewalu but I have not seen the place. It is where some bird catchers had a fight. One man had birds and eight had none. I dont [*sic*] know whether any got killed or not.³⁶

Kupakoa for Keauhou 2nd, Kona:

Thence to Kahiulinaunei a lae aa, where Puawaa [perhaps Pu'awa'awa'a? or perhaps Puaa] ends and Kaohe and Kapapala corner on the boundary of Keauhou [2nd] (This is a place where the bird catchers used to quarrel).³⁷

Keakaokawai for Keauhou 2nd, Kona:

I was born at Kealakekua a few years before the death of Kamehameha 1st (Note this is the same witness that was on Kahuku boundaries) I moved at time of Kaua o Kekuaokalani (1820) to Lehuula, (was grown at the time) I now live at Hookukano North Kona and am a kamaaina of Kona. I used to go on the mountain with my father collecting sandalwood and catching birds, his name was Kauluahi, an old bird catcher and kamaaina now dead.

Kapapala ends at Pohakuhanalei and Humuula joins Kaaawa there and Puanahulu [*sic* Pu'uanahulu] joins Keauhou and bounds it to Kalalua, the place where Puanahulu [*sic*] people tried to kill my father.³⁸

While certain battles may have been rather widely known, such as the massacre at Pau'ewalu high up on Maunaloa, it doesn't seem likely that battles between bird catchers were very common. Still, people were aware of the dangers that could be had when going hunting in the mountains, and were prepared to fight, if necessary.

LANDS WHERE BATTLES TOOK PLACE

Listed in Table 4 are the lands where battles between bird catchers are known to have occurred. Knowledge of all but one of these battles comes from Land Boundary Commission testimonies. The single exception comes from a note written on an old map (see endnote).

Figure 2 is a map showing the ahupua'a involved in the battles listed in Table 4.

The ahupua'a where these battles occurred are among the largest on Hawai'i island, and include the summits of the island's three largest volcanoes. All but two are also ahupua'a that are known to have historically had 'ua'u colonies. The testimonies do not say outright if these two, Pi'ihonua and Pu'uanahulu, had 'ua'u. There is, however, a poorly transcribed testimony by Hoakimoa for Humu'ula

TABLE 4. LANDS WHERE BATTLES OCCURRED

Lands Where Battles Occurred	Source
Pi'ihonua (Hilo) and Humu'ula (Hilo)	Kamalo
Keauhou 2nd (Kona) and Ka'ū	Komaka
Keauhou 2nd (Kona) and Kahuku (Ka'ū)	Komaka, Kumauna, Awakamanu, Kahulanui, Kaleikoa
Kona and Ka'ū	Kuiline
Ka'ohē (Hāmākua) and Kapāpala (Ka'ū) and Keauhou (Kona)	Kupakoa
Ka'ohē (Hāmākua) and Kona	REG map 1641 ³⁹
Keauhou 2nd (Kona) and Pu'uānāhulu (Kona)	Keakaokawai

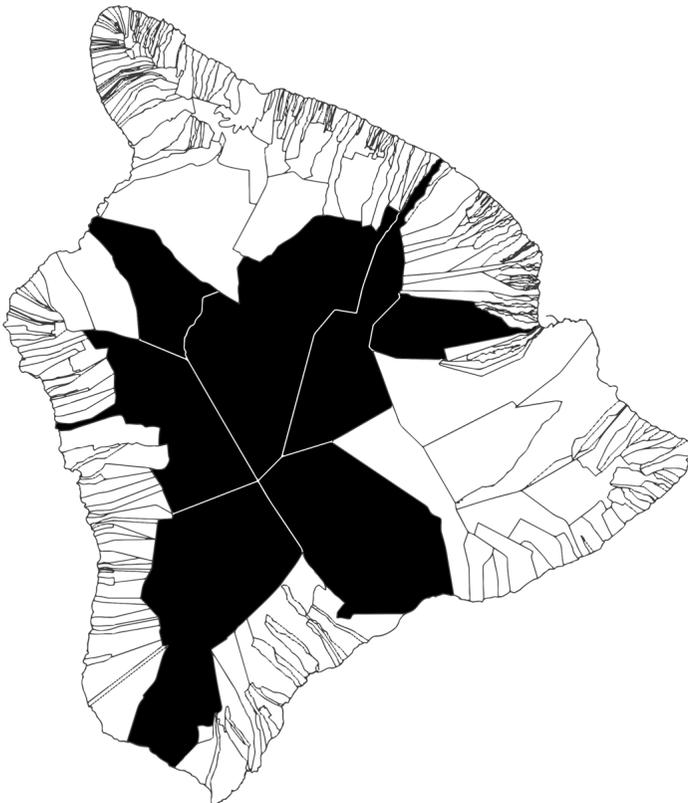


FIGURE 2. Ahupua'a Where Fights Over Birds Occurred

that appears to say that Pi'ihonua at least *did* have an 'ua'u colony, ". . . in only [*sic*] time only these [three?] men ran after Uau on the mountain, along the side, was Kaohe above, Humu'ula below, and Piihonua at foot of mountain."⁴⁰ Perhaps Hoakimoa's testimony was originally, "In time only the men of three ahupua'a ran after 'ua'u on the mountain, along the side were Ka'ohe above, Humu'ula below, and Pi'ihonua at the foot of the mountain." This would mean that Ka'ohe, Humu'ula, and Pi'ihonua were the main ahupua'a with control over 'ua'u colonies on Maunakea. While the testimonies make no mention of bird hunting at all on Pu'uanahulu, the similarity of the size and shape of the ahupua'a to other ahupua'a known to have had important bird resources would make it seem likely that 'ua'u could have been found there as well.

Even without solid evidence that Pu'uanahulu had 'ua'u, the confirmed presence of the bird in every single one of the other ahupua'a suggests that 'ua'u may have been the birds that men were fighting over. In addition, testimonies situate the places where these fights occurred above the tree line, limiting the probability that other species of bird were involved.

When we consider the likelihood that these fights were over birds that were valued as meat sources rather than feather birds, the question of why meat birds were so important arises. 'Ua'u chicks are commonly said to have been a delicacy reserved for ali'i in ancient times.⁴¹ Perhaps men would steal 'ua'u chicks from neighboring lands under the command of their ali'i. The threat of displeasing an ali'i may have been enough for a man to risk his life by stealing. But if what Kumauna of Kahuku said about bird meat being a common food in Kahuku was also true for some other large ahupua'a, then it may have been that hunters were protecting their own source of food and survival, rather than the source of food for their chiefs. 'Ua'u chicks may have been kapu (taboo) to the ali'i at least some of the time during ancient times, but we also know that 'ua'u adults and fledglings were caught and consumed by some Hawaiians.⁴² There is no evidence that these were also normally kapu to the ali'i in the old days.

This evidence also suggests a correlation between the size and shape of an ahupua'a and the importance of wild birds as a major food resource. It supports the claims of previous work done by other

authors that the design of these large ahupua‘a allows “. . . increased efficiency in managing precious forest and cultural resources in the mauka regions and island summits.”⁴³

CONCLUSION

The historical importance of Hawai‘i’s grand feather work is widely acknowledged and well documented. Feather work was a very valuable resource to the ali‘i. This research suggests that for the maka‘āinana, the common people, wild birds played a very different role in day to day life as a source of food. The availability of certain species of formerly abundant birds, as well as their subsequent scarcity in modern times, may have had a profound effect on the lives of the common people, and thus the history of Hawai‘i as a whole.

NOTES

- ¹ Stauffer, Robert H. *Kahana: How the Land Was Lost* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press 2004) 1, 4–5.
- ² Thrum, Thomas. “A Brief History of Land Titles in the Hawaiian Kingdom,” in *HAA*, 1891, 117; Gonschor, Lorenz and Kamanamaikalani Beamer. “Toward an Inventory of Ahupua‘a in the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Survey of Nineteenth and early Twentieth-Century Cartographic and Archival Records of the Island of Hawai‘i.” *HJH* 2014, 58–61.
- ³ Soehren, Lloyd J. *A Catalog of Hawaii Place Names Compiled From the Records of the Boundary Commission and the Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles in the Kingdom of Hawaii: Part 1: Puna and Hilo, Honoka‘a, HI, 2005*; Maly, Kepā, and Onaona Maly. *He Mo‘olelo ‘Āina: A Cultural Study Of The Pu‘u O ‘Umi Natural Area Reserve And Kohala-Hāmākua Mountain Lands, Districts of Kohala and Hāmākua, Island of Hawai‘i. HINARS80-Puuoumi (051504-c)*. (Department of Land and Natural Resources - Natural Area Reserves, 2004a) 48–50.
- ⁴ Boundary Commission Testimonies, [BCT] Volumes A, B, D Hawaii, Volume no. 1 Maui 1864–1914.
- ⁵ Emerson, N.B. “The Bird-Hunters of Ancient Hawaii,” in *HAA for 1895*, 103.
- ⁶ This article does not attempt to document the voluminous traditional lore on Hawaiian bird hunting practices, but it is important to understand *why* people hunted birds in pre-contact Hawai‘i.
- ⁷ Olson, Storrs and Helen James, “Descriptions of Thirty-two New Species of Birds from the Hawaiian Islands: Part 1: Non-Passeriformes,” in *Ornithological Monographs*, no. 45 (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1991) 84–86; Berger, Andrew John. *Hawaiian Birdlife* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawai‘i, 1981 [1972]) 7–16.

- ⁸ Percentages given are approximate and rounded to the nearest integer.
- ⁹ Two testimonies from Kona mention a mystery bird called “kapiopio” that was hunted in the upper reaches of the ahupua‘a of Ki‘ilae and Keauhou 2nd. It was associated with scrub ‘ōhi‘a and māmane forest. It is tempting to speculate that the kapiopio might be related to the now extinct “Kona Finches” (*Chloridops sp.* and *Rhodocanthis sp.*) historically only known from similar habitat in Kona, but further evidence is lacking.
- ¹⁰ Moniz-Nakamura found that ‘ua‘u remains were by far the most abundant among faunal assemblages from Hawai‘i island, supporting the idea of their previous importance as food. See Moniz-Nakamura, Jadelyn Joy, “The Archaeology of Human Foraging and Bird Resources on the Island of Hawai‘i: The Evolutionary Ecology of Avian Predation, Resource Intensification, Extirpation, and Extinction” (Ph.d. dissertation. University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa 1999) 138; see also Athens, J. Stephen, and Michael W. Kaschko. *Prehistoric Upland Bird Hunters: Archaeological Inventory Survey and Testing for the MPRC Project Area and the Bobcat Trail Road, Pohakuloa Training Area, Island of Hawaii* (Honolulu: International Archaeological Research Institute, Inc., 1989).
- ¹¹ Malo, David. *Ka Mo‘olelo Hawai‘i, Draft Six*, ed. by Charles Langlas and Kapali Lyon (Unpublished archival document in private collection, 2008 [1853]) 13:9.
- ¹² Emerson, N.B. “The Bird-Hunters of Ancient Hawaii,” in *HAA for 1895*, 102–103. Also note that featherwork remained a commodity in high demand at least through the turn of the century. See Henshaw, H.W., *Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Being a Complete List of the Birds of the Hawaiian Possessions, with Notes on Their Habits* (Honolulu, Hawai‘i: Thos. G. Thrum 1902) 70–71.
- ¹³ Kumauna. BCT 1873, Book A. 140–145.
- ¹⁴ Maps adapted from ahupua‘a map created by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2009.
- ¹⁵ Gonschor and Beamer. “Inventory of Ahupua‘a,” 66–68.
- ¹⁶ Berger, Andrew John. *Hawaiian Birdlife* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawai‘i, 1981) 45–46, 84–89, 242.
- ¹⁷ Kakio. BCT 1873, Book A. 266–267.
- ¹⁸ Kumauna. BCT 1873, Book A. 140–145.
- ¹⁹ Kear, Janet and A.J. Berger. *The Hawaiian Goose: An Experiment in Conservation* (Vermillion, South Dakota: Buteo Books, 1980) 28–30.
- ²⁰ Kauī. BCT 1873, Book A. 201–202.
- ²¹ Wise, J., and A.K. Williams, “Bird Catching (by Hawaiians),” 1917, John Stokes Collection. Ms sc Stokes group 2, box 1, folder 1. BPBM Archives.
- ²² Beckwith, Martha, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1940) 119–120.
- ²³ Sahlins, Marshall, *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii: Volume One* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) 20.
- ²⁴ Haaheo. BCT 1873, Book A. 91.
- ²⁵ Kaaukai Kaiawahanui. BCT 1873, Book A. 111–112.

- ²⁶ Ohakee. BCT 1873, Book A. 110–111.
- ²⁷ Kenoi. BCT 1873, Book A. 155–156.
- ²⁸ Kumauna. BCT 1873, Book A. 127.
- ²⁹ Kamohaiulu. BCT 1873, Book B. 48–49.
- ³⁰ Kaliue. BCT 1873, Book A. 187.
- ³¹ Kamalo. BCT 1873, Book B. 20–22.
- ³² Komaka. BCT 1873, Book B. Komaka 317–319.
- ³³ Kumauna. BCT 1873, Book A. 140–143.
- ³⁴ Awakamanu. BCT 1873, Book A. 156–157.
- ³⁵ Kahulanui. BCT 1873, Book A. 210–211.
- ³⁶ Kaleikoa. BCT 1873, Book B. 211–212.
- ³⁷ Kupakoa. BCT 1873, Book A. 448–449.
- ³⁸ Keakaokawai. BCT 1873, Book A 256–260.
- ³⁹ Map titled “Kaohe and Humuula Hawaii,” Government Survey Map by C.J. Lyons (1891, on file in Hawai‘i State Survey Division as REG map 1641). The exact words as stated on the map are: “Naohuleelua scene of battle between Hamakua and Kona bird-catchers settled w [with] cows [bows?].”
- ⁴⁰ Hoakimoa. BCT 1873, Book D. 53.
- ⁴¹ Munro, George C., *Birds of Hawaii* (Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1967 [1944]) 26–27; Moniz-Nakamura (1999), 230–231.
- ⁴² Gomes, Noah. “Meha ka Leo i ka Naele: He Noi‘ina i ka Po‘e Kāpili Manu o ke Au Kahiko” (M.A. Thesis, University of Hawai‘i at Hilo, 2015) 188–208; Athens, J. Stephen, and Michael W. Kaschko, *Prehistoric Upland Bird Hunters: Archaeological Inventory Survey and Testing for the MPRC Project Area and the Bobcat Trail Road, Pohakuloa Training Area, Island of Hawaii*. (Honolulu: International Archaeological Research Institute, Inc., 1989) 80, 86–87.
- ⁴³ Gonschor and Beamer, “Inventory of Ahupua‘a,” 74.

