

## Archaeology, Legends, and Oral History of Nu‘uanu

### Geography, Place Names, and Legends

#### I. Introduction

Born and raised in Kailua

Long fascination with Nu‘uanu—looking up at those notches

Growing up jumped off the rocks at Alapena Falls, mud slid and swam at Jackass ginger  
(potentially Kahuailanawai)

Professional archaeologist

#### II. Geography, Place names, and Wahi Pana

### FIGURE INTRODUCTION—TWO IMAGES MODERN AERIAL PHOTO and 1874 LYONS MAP with MODERN STREETS OVERLAY

#### Natural Environment

Ampitheater headed valley—six miles long from Nu‘uanu Pali Lookout to Honolulu Harbor

Width: makai portion 0.9 miles wide (adjacent to Punawaina [Punchbowl]), widest mauka portion 1.6 miles wide—“peak to peak”

**Annual rainfall in this area is between 80 inches mauka and 40 inches makai**

**Two primary streams, Nu‘uanu Stream and Waolani Stream, as well as their associated tributaries including Lulumahu, Makuku, Mo‘ole, Niniko, and Kauhipuna.**

**Elevations:** Konahuanui—c. 3100 feet, Lanihuli 2800 feet, Nuuanu Pali Lookout c. 1200 feet, Mulvehill Residence c. 400 feet, Philippine Consulate c. 250 feet

Vegetation changes over time, Pre-Polynesian, Pre-Contact Hawaiian, 1800s, 1900s

**Known for its extensive irrigated Lo‘i Kalo—fed by the numerous ‘auwai coming off springs and streams**

**Known for is Koa trees—resource for Canoe Building**

**Known as a wet windy place:**

**Ka makani kā‘ili kapa o Nu‘uanu.**

The garment-snatching wind of Nu‘uanu.

**Ka ua Pōpōkapa o Nu‘uanu.**

The Tapa-bundling rain of Nu‘uanu.

#### Wahi Pana (Storied Places)

Nu‘uanu (cool height) also “Nukuanu” (cool pass)

Pu‘u Lanihuli (where the heavens change) Nuku o Nu‘uanu (the pass), Kōnāhuanui (large fat innards)

Luakaha (place of relaxation)

Makuku (hill, stream and heiau)

Kahapaʻakai (salt place)

Waolani (heavenly forested area)

Kaniakapupu (The singing of the land snails)

Hānaiakamalama (adopted child of the light or moon)

Ahiupuu (hill of fire)

Kawānanakoa (“the fearless prophecy”)

Village of Kou

Honolulu Harbor at Nuʻuanu Stream mouth--rare protected canoe landing along Oʻahu’s South Shore

Kawa and Kuwili Fishponds—feeding the royalty

Pākākā (“low and broad” or Pā Kākā “courtyard for smiting”) religions and political center at foot of Fort Street at Honolulu Harbor—luakini heiau

### **III. Legends and Oral History**

Nuʻuanu is one of the richest places in Hawaiʻi in terms of legendary accounts. A synopsis of a selection of Nuʻuanu legends is offered here.

#### **The Legend of Keaomelemele**

Long legend with many characters including Kane and Kanaloa, Moʻoinanea (supernatural being that could take the form of a lizard), and Keaomelemele or “yellow cloud” herself. One important component of the legend is the geologic formation of Nuʻuanu. At one point in the legend Keaomelemele gave an exhibition of her hula and chanting skills at Waolani. The hula exhibition and Keaomelemele’s chanting were so powerful, the great mountain Kōnāhuanui was cleft in two, separating it from Waolani, which is what caused the modern appearance of Nuʻuanu Valley.

#### **The Waolani Religious Complex**

Built by Menehune or the eʻepa people—the complex included the first heiau in Hawaiʻi—dedicated by Papa and Wākea—progenitors of the Hawaiʻian people.

Home of Moʻoinanea—supernatural protector of the gods and man

Kawalua heiau—luakini heiau—annual dedication could only be undertaken by the Mōʻi, highest ruler of Oʻahu—the site of dynastic intrigue, political maneuvering, and open warfare over the rights to complete this annual dedication

Site of the Pōhaku a Umeume—stone of contention—with the fingerprints of the giants and Menehune that vied for control of this large boulder.

Complex functioned as a Puʻuhonua—place of refuge and healing

## **Forest Spirits at Nuʻuanu**

There are numerous accounts of forest spirits (typically referred to as *ʻeʻepa* or *menehune* or both) at Nuʻuanu.

## **Nuʻuanu and the Origin of Kapa Cloth**

**Maikoha**, “the tapa-maker’s god” and his daughters—progenitor of the wauke tree—the inner bark of which is used to make kappa (bark cloth) for bedding and clothing—daughters bury Maikoha along Nuʻuanu Stream at Pūiwa (near the Queen Emma Summer Palace)—Wauka Tree grows from the grave, daughters follow Maikoha’s instructions and create the tapa industry—Wauke spreads throughout Hawaiʻi along with the daughters kappa making technology. Thus Maikoha and his daughters became the chief gods of the kapa-makers. [Westervelt 1963:65–66]

## **Bandits at Kahaukomo and the Guardians of the Nuuanu Pali Pass at Kahaumoko**

Kahaukomo (the hau begins)

Kahaumoko--Two pōhaku named **Hapuʻu and Kalaʻiola**

## **Ahipuʻu—hill of fire**

Military signal area and installation guarding the Kona side from attack from the Koolau side

## **History of Kūaliʻi (*Moʻolelo o Kūaliʻi*) and Importance of Ceremonies at Kawaluna Heiau**

Fornander recounts a second story of the battles in Nuʻuanu, where Kūaliʻi battles the Kona chiefs, and emerges as the victor:

In the valley of Waolani, a side valley from the great Nuuanu, stood one of the sacred Heiaus called **Kawaluna**, which only the highest chief of the island was entitled to consecrate at the annual sacrifice. As Moi of Oahu the undoubted right to perform the ceremony was with *Kualii*, and he resolved to assert his prerogative and try conclusions with the Kona chiefs, who were preparing to resist what they considered an assumption of authority by the Koolaupoko chief. Crossing the mountain by the Nuuanu and Kalihi passes, *Kualii* assembled his men on the ridge of Keanakamano, overlooking the Waolani valley, descended to the Heiau, performed the customary ceremony on such occasions, and at the conclusion fought and routed the Kona forces that had ascended the valley to resist and prevent him. The Kona chiefs submitted themselves, and *Kualii* returned to Kailua. [Fornander 1996:280]

## **The Breadfruit Tree God of Nuʻuanu**

There are many variations of the legend of Papa (or Haumea) living in a human form and saving her husband Wākea by escaping into a breadfruit tree—typically at Waikahalulu Pond.

### **IV. Prior Archaeological Investigations**

Summary of general settlement pattern over time

Archaeological Remains at Waolani (Oʻahu Country Club)

### **The Waolani Hōlua**

McAllister (1933:86) mentions there was once a *hōlua* slide in Waolani. His informants told him that it was “at the end of the ridge dividing Waolani and Nuuanu valleys,” but nothing remained of it. If this place name does refer to a *hōlua* slide, the name could be translated as *Kapo-hōlua*, the “*hōlua* of Kapo.” Kapo, the sister of the Hawaiian goddess Pele, was said to have lived in nearby Kalihi Valley. An alternate translation could be *Ka-pō-hōlua*, “the *hōlua* of night” or “the *hōlua* of the gods.” The place name may not refer to a *hōlua* slide at all; one alternate translation would be *Kapoho-lua*, “the depression, or the pit,” an unusual name for a peak.

### **Makūkū Heiau**

Thrum (1906:44) mentioned a second *heiau* in Nu‘uanu, Makūkū, associated with rituals to propitiate rain. He did not locate the site. Kamakau says of Makūkū, “In Nuuanu there was a rain-bringing heiau called Makuku, but its duties were not so important as those of other *heiaus*, it had only to send rain” (Sterling and Summers 1978:309). There is a peak and stream called Makūkū near the upper Nu‘uanu Reservoir and this may be the general location for Makūkū Heiau.

### **Nu‘uanu Petroglyph Site**

In the early 1930s, Kenneth Emory noted some petroglyphs on a large rock, below Alapena pool. McAllister (1933:83-34) found additional figures on the rock and adjacent stones and on rock “several hundred feet downstream.” McAllister records these figures as Site 67. Additional figures south and west of Alapena Pool were listed as Site 68 and a third cluster on the west bank of Alapena Pool was designated Site 69. These sites were combined to form the National Register Nomination site 50-80-14-1161. Most of the petroglyphs are human figures. The site is unique in its fine collection of dog petroglyphs. There are numerous traditions concerning dogs in Nu‘uanu, including stories about *kupua* (demigod) dogs and *Kaupē*. Although not given a site designation, McAllister (1933:86) also mentions there are many caves on either side of Nu‘uanu Valley, near Kauai Street and below ‘Ālewa Heights. He personally examined five

### **The Pali “Notches”**

#### **Excavations at Kaniakapuu**