

Notes from Scriptwriting Meeting 3/12/95

Information from Ben Hauanio and his nephew Aku Hauanio, Aku's son Kainoa; Expanded notes by C. Langlas

1) introductions:

Ben-- b. 1928, lived at Kalapana and Volcano (his father John Hauanio worked at the park); they came down to Kalapana on the weekends and he fished on Saturday (thrownet) and Sunday.

I asked if they went fishing on Sunday because many folks say they never did work on Sunday or swam; Aku gave me a significant look, but didn't say anything.

Ben said yes, went crabbing in afternoon for `a`ama crab; described catching crab w. hand (have to grab it so that pinchers can't get your fingers because never lets go), w. baited line (you pull it up slowly).

In 1966 he moved to Honolulu to work for Glover there, 1971 came back to Puna and lived in Pahoia.

Aku--b. 1952, went to Kalapana school up to 5th grade, were only five students so they were shifted to Pahoia school then. Stayed Kalapana till 1970--went into military 1970-73 (Vietnam). Came back to Kalapana and never lived anywhere else since. Met wife Kathy (haole) in Kalapana too.

talk about scenes for video:

2) kukui bark for dyeing cotton seine line for fishing

remove bark from base of tree; needs to be big old tree, the kind with some old rotten branches, or won't be red enough; pound up the bark and add salt water, boil for about 1/2 to 1 hour and then soak line in the mixture;

turns line red--makes it stiff (desirable so it doesn't tangle) and protects it from rotting from the saltwater; lasts for years before you need to re-dye it

when take it out its sticky; have to stretch the line so it doesn't kink; after dries its hard, not sticky anymore

talked about where to find kukui tree to use--maybe in back of Robert (Kelihoomalua)'s place; first we said can't just use any tree on somebody else's land, then Ben said he'd just take from beside the road--not going to hurt anybody (doesn't kill the tree)

3) getting the ohia post

needs to be about 4-5" at base, be pretty straight, have a fork at the top;

Ben's pole is 36'; he's had it long time (In answer to Q., he said he's had only one pole, but I'm not sure he correctly understood question); said he's caught 30 fish w. that pole, notches it each time he's caught a fish

peel the pole when you cut it, put it under house to dry (some months); if dried in sun would split; periodically he soaks it w. water to prevent splitting (Aku mentioned that his pole at Keauhou sits in the sun though.)

some suggested using waivi, but too flexible; some use bamboo but they don't like

4) ulua fishing with the pole (showed video and set-up)

traditional Hawaiian ulua fishing called p p ulua (hang-baiting from an ohia post), different from slide-baiting with a rod and reel (that's also done with puhi for bait)

Top half of puhi (eel) is used for palu (chum), and bottom half for bait on hook.

locations and conditions for Hawaiian ulua fishing:

Earlier Aku said you need a cliff, where there's deep water offshore, where there's enough surge to make white water. Aku said the ulua won't bite the bait in clear water. Several locations were mentioned that are traditionally known places for hang-baiting, Wills [where Charles Wills used to live] in Kaimu, the bluff in back of Catholic church in Kalapana, `Apua point and Keauhou in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. (Also known to me and Aku is `Aikua, west of the old Waha`ula visitor center in the park.) The spots at Kalapana and `Aikua are no good anymore because the sand has come in offshore due to the 1990 lava flow.

The current needs to be fast, to carry the scent of the palu out and down the coast and attract ulua. Generally try to start at daybreak, at a time when there's a high tide, and start when the tide is coming to its maximum. [That's when the current is strongest I think.]

When asked about fishing by season and phases of the moon, Ben and Aku were pretty noncommittal. Aku says his other uncle (Gilbert I think) knows the names of the days according to the Hawaiian moon calendar, but he and Ben don't pay too much attention. (Craig says it doesn't matter as much for daytime fishing as nighttime.) Aku says he doesn't notice much difference according to season of the year.

activity when get to fishing location:

First check current with stick to see if running (to carry

out the palu and attract ulua who range widely in the near offshore).

Then set up pole and baited line; attach top half of eel to palu line & begin to pound palu (with beach rock) and throw it into the ocean on line, pull it back up and pound, thrown it in again--Ben says you have to have patience to sit for hours pounding palu in the hot sun (But later he says that he usually gets 2 fish fast and goes home.) (Bits of the pounded eel come off and the fisherman throws them into the water.)

When you pull palu back in, you squeeze out the water; when it comes hot, that means the ulua have arrived (But not everyone can feel it--some people don't have the right hand to feel); Aku says if it comes real cold that means "jaws" (shark) around--but Ben didn't say that--just that if its cold it means no ulua.

(Cliffs which are known as good spots for ulua fishing often have depressions or holes which have been used for pounding palu for generations--right at the edge of the cliff where you sit when you pound palu and throw it in. Such holes exist at Keauhou and on the bluff in back of Kalapana, but they didn't know of any at Wills in Kaimu.)

Bottom half of puhi has hook inserted, hangs from main line through fork (line tied to base of pole). Second "bottom" line runs from base of pole to the mainline and tied to it just above bait.

Reason for stick (ohia post)--ulua has to fight the stick and tires it out (bait hangs high, so only the wave crests hit it

and the ulua can't fully get into the water to dive down with power); when it's tired and just hanging, you untie the lower line from pole and pull fish up cliff (real heavy if big)

Some ulua have already bitten the hook before and won't take the bait, only eat the bits of palu that float around (They call this `au`a, "to be stingy, withhold"). Then you try another style of ulua fishing, called ma`ama`a (after the Hawaiian sling or ma`a) or "cowboy style" (because the line is swung round and round and then throw out like a lasso). You throw the line with baited hook out and pull it back in. Ben emphasizes you do this in white water. (Ulua won't bite the bait in clear water. Another time he told me the ulua can see it too good.) Ben says he usually sets up his stick and line and pounds palu, then throws in the ma`ama`a line--catches two ulua at once that way. Aku sounds like he usually uses the cowboy style only if the ulua won't bite the hook.

Ben says you have to be careful with cowboy style, have your line coiled up carefully, because when the ulua takes the

hook and turns to run, it takes it fast--so fast the line floats a yard up in the air. If you're not careful, could catch you and pull you into the water. You hold on with your hands (he never uses gloves), wrap the line around your body to slow the ulua down. (Rips your clothes up.) The weight of the line in the water will tire the ulua, but you have to get it to stop before it uses up all your line. Ben said his line 5-600'. Aku said you might tie the end of the ma`ama`a line, but Ben doesn't do that.

Ben doesn't use any "leader" from the line to the hook, just runs the seine line direct to hook. (I think Aku maybe uses leader.) The hook is their own design. Aku's is a stainless steel copy of his father's. (Father made from horse hoof rasp file.)

5) puhi

Ben & Aku gave 4 kinds of puhi that are common & relevant (tho' Ben says there are more kinds):

h (white eel, called tohei, w. white underside and darker back) the best for baiting hook; sometimes has stripes and the stripes tell how many ulua you'll catch (asked whether that's how many you catch, Aku said sometimes the bait gets busted up...)

k p (grey, spotted w. white)

wela (brown w. yellow/green spots)

kauila (striped?)--this one not good for bait/ earlier Aku said only useful for palu and not to bait hook

First has no teeth and broad (?) mouth, caught only at night. Walk along shore with torch and spear it if you see it (unpredictable). Other three have more pointed mouth and caught during day. Come out when you clean fish and throw guts into water. Bait small hook w. fishgut, push hook into bamboo stick and push it out where eel stays, when eel takes bait hook pull out of stick, pull the eel out with line so it whacks head on shore and killed. Or pull it out and kill it by pounding head w. stone. (Need to protect tail from damage.) Ben says on sand beach don't need to whack it because the sand sticks to its body and immobilizes it, will die.

Where to film catching puhi? Aku says many small puhi at Pohoiki or Wills. Notes that the puhi at `Apua are less wary than at Halape (too many people there). When I asked if puhi getting more scarce, said no.

Ben spoke of eating the h, which he really likes. He used to go out and catch two ulua with his puhi, come back with remainder and fry it up, eat it. His father would get mad if he

saw that. Not supposed to eat bait, keep it for catching more ulua.

6) ulua

Craig asked if there was any special symbolism of the ulua, that in Samoa you had to give certain parts of the ulua to the chief. Ben said he remembered hearing something from before, that certain dins of ulua went to certain families.

Ben says there are four types of ulua (white, black, etc.). They have different Hawn. names but he forgets the names. [Actually, the Puku`i Hawaiian dictionary gives terms for several types, but doesn't identify all the types.]

7) Hawaiian cultural rules (collated from various parts of the discussion)

--not supposed to point at the fish (Aku said he's seen people get excited when a big fish is about to take the hook, point at it and the fish veers away, it knows. When we did our trial shoot Aku didn't want me to point camera at fish, or even to get the camera out until he got the first fish hooked.)

--not supposed to say before you go that you're going fishing, say you're going "holoholo" and since you have your fishing gear (`ukana, baggage) everybody knows where you're going. Ben said that's how it is when he leaves to go fishing.

His wife knows he's going fishing from what he takes, but doesn't know where.

We had some discussion of this, what really you can't say.

I was trying to ask--is it okay to plan a fishing trip sometime in the future, just can't say right when you're going. Aku said it's okay to talk about what you did in the past. Craig said he thought it was especially that you shouldn't boast about what you're going to catch. Still not completely clear.

--not supposed to talk while fishing (I mentioned this, but didn't hear too much from Ben or Aku. Need to get them to talk again.)

--not supposed to take food (Ben says he just takes his pole and water, it's bad luck to take food with you. Aku however obviously doesn't observe this rule.)

--not supposed to lay down/that makes the fish lazy and they won't bite the hook (Aku still pays attention to this. Ben said when he was young, that if a kid laid down his father would pick up everything and go home.)

We were speaking of teaching kids. Kainoa is in 9th grade, says video will be good for kids in 7th grade (Aku thinks down to 5th or 6th). How young kids learn fishing? Aku can't

remember first fishing, thinks father took him hunting at 4 or 5. He took Kainoa hunting at 5 yrs. already. Ben says didn't take kids too young because of all the rules about fishing. In the old days you couldn't lay down, couldn't step over the fishing line (had to walk way around). Too much trouble to have young kids around and make them keep the rules.

--should fish "own area": Ben and Aku don't recognize this as a rule. Ben said some people say private property and try to keep you out, but he fishes anywhere, can walk in below the high water mark. Asked about `Opihikao, he said yeah he fishes there--but you have to know the fishing spots to go to an area.

I said I heard from older people that before if you were from Kaimu you didn't fish Kalapana or Kapa`ahu and vice versa. But he said not true of his time. (We should explore this more perhaps, in terms of outsiders from Hilo coming into Kalapana area, in terms of who can fish in the National Park.)

--shouldn't take more than you can use: Again it was hard to get Ben to respond to this. Asked if he would stop after he got one ulua, he said if there were two or three he'd try to catch them all. (Maybe this question needs to be rephrased and explored further.)

--should share: We didn't ask about this, but Aku mentioned sharing with someone you met on the beach (in context of saying you wouldn't share with someone who told you not to come fish here.) (Needs further exploration--about past and today.)

8) preparation to go fishing

The puhi tail(s) has to be fastened on to the hook(s) the night before. Remove part of backbone, stick onto hook, sew up the cut end so that it doesn't bulge open and "look ugly" as it gets dunked into the waves. (About 5 minutes) When Ben saw the way Aku's tail was placed on the hook in video, he said it was different from his way. His way the tail hangs straight down, but Aku's the tail has a curve in it, so it looks like it's swimming in the water. Aku said his father taught him that way.

9) preparing and eating

I asked Ben about eating the ulua eye (cheek?) for luck. First he said, yeah his father used to eat and he did too. Talked of eating the fish head because it's fat, brains because they make you smart. Then he said his father didn't eat all fish eyes, only the ulua eyes. That was his kapu. He took all those kapu with him when he died, so they wouldn't affect his descendants.

Asked whether the ulua was `aumakua for someone, he said probably. Asked their `aumakua, Ben thought a long time. Aku said I hope you're not going say something I eat. Ben said was turtle. But his father took that kapu with him when he died. Then talked about eating turtle--turtle steaks, turtle stew. Best thing he ever ate. Illegal, but if he could he'd catchem.

Preparing ulua--Aku said big ones you dry (he still does). Ben talked about cutting up and stewing (?) w. homemade coconut cream. I said I heard the big ones smelled strong. Aku said yeah, maybe that's why you dry em.

9) teaching Kainoa

Both Ben and Aku said it was good that Kainoa was learning to fish, that he should pass that knowledge on to his son. Afterward Craig, Rita and I clarified that learning is by the child watching and doing--not by the parent deliberately showing/teaching. Rita said there's some things Kainoa doesn't know yet, so try to get a shot of him watching: sewing up the puhi tail on hook for bait, cutting the kukui and dyeing the line. Rita notes Kainoa is always moving fast, ready/willing to help when needed--so that Aku won't scold him.