

Herbert Kaaukai, Interview 8, by Mikala Pieper (w. Charles Langlas participating)  
3/18/96

Tape 1, Side 1

M: I'm very afraid to speak Hawaiian.

H: Oh, oh.

M: Because I'm not sure if my speech is correct.

H: Oh, oh.

M: So forgive the clumsiness in what I say.

H: Umhm. Not a problem, keep talking.

M: Yes, that's the thing.

H: Yeah.

M: To speak Hawaiian...okay.

Well, I'll tell you something about myself. Mikala Pieper is my name. I'm from Wai'anae.

H: Yes.

M: My father is a fisherman and my mother is a Hawaiian language teacher.

H: Yes.

M: And they live in Wai'anae, but I moved to Hilo to go to the UH at Hilo.

H: Yes, yes.

M: And I live in Hilo now.

H: Oh, that's good.

M: I'm a student, a Hawaiian language student.

H: Umhm.

M: At this university, and I want to learn the kinds of fishing, the things you learned.

H: What's the topic of the talk?

M: Fishing.

H: Hawaiian language, yes, and what kind of fishing?

M: Different kinds.

H: Yes, oh, on canoe, the deep see.

M: Yes, at the deep sea on canoe.

H: 'Ōpelu fishing. There are many kinds of fishing on the deep ocean, deep sea, only on the canoe, 'ōpelu [is one kind]. And there are many kinds of fish. I forget because it's many years I haven't gone fishing. I was only young. I went, but I remember, yeah, yeah. And aku fishing at the deep sea on the canoe.

M: When did you start to go fishing? When you were young, how old were you?

H: That time I was fourteen, fifteen, young. Not just me. The various boys the same age as me, they went fishing too. And my kind of fishing, I went with the old folks, and they taught us fishing. We just watched. 'Ōpelu fishing is number one, everyday. I go first to fish for 'ōpelu in the morning. Come back, go again at noon, maybe three times a day we go out for various fish, but as for the 'ōpelu, we go get that in the morning, that's the bait.

M: What's the bait?

H: That's the bait for going out fishing again.

- M: Oh, you get the 'ōpelu first, and that's the bait for the...
- H: No different kinds of bait, only 'ōpelu (yeah, yeah), that's the bait. We get that for important fishing like 'ahi and smaller fishes. Kalekale, plenty kinds of fish, I forget now. I haven't gone for a long time. Now, the youngsters, [their fishing] is not like in our time. They have a boat, engine. Us no, just with the paddle, paddle canoe.
- M: Really.
- H: Yeah, yeah. But now, the work is easy because the engine takes you out to the deep sea [for] fishing.
- M: How do you fish for 'ōpelu?
- H: Before.
- M: What is the procedure?
- H: Before only, now people don't go. They died. And us, the youngsters, we can't be compared with them. That's the thing that's completely disappeared, the old folks, and only the youngsters now, with the boat and engine. But before, no, only with the paddle. There were plenty canoes then. My time going in my youth at Kalapana--I'm from Kalapana--just in Kalapana I remember eight, eight was the number of canoes then. Kaimu, the black sand beach, maybe ten canoes. Plenty canoes then. And beyond, on the Ka'ū side, Kapa'ahu, there were canoes there too. Not too many, maybe three. That time, us youngsters went with the old folks. Taught us fishing. The main thing was to bring the bait. There are plenty different baits, but for the deep sea, 'ōpelu is the bait. We get it for deep sea fishing.
- M: How do you know this is the deep sea? You go on the canoe and this place... How do you know?
- H: There's a place [pana] on the land, yeah, up to the ko'a, and you get it, maybe a hala tree.
- M: Umhm, and you look for that.
- H: And you place your canoe straight from that. And another on the right side, maybe a hill there. And those are the two things to get that ko'a 'ōpelu and the fish you're going to bring back.
- M: That's how you know, like my dad, he looks at the mountain.
- H: Yeah, at the mountain maybe.
- M: Some tree, if you're in line, that's the ko'a there.
- H: Correct. If you get that thing, work straight, you get the ko'a.
- M: Look at the land.
- H: Don't miss.
- M: That's it. Then, when you get to the ko'a, what is the first thing for fishing?
- H: A, we go for kalekale in the morning. One kind of fishing, only kalekale, we don't go for two or three kinds of fishing on one trip.
- M: Oh, only one kind.
- H: Yeah, only one kind.
- H: And tomorrow, if we want to fish for aku, only aku.
- M: Only aku.
- H: Yes, we don't go for many kinds of fish.

M: You get some things for that fishing, for the aku these things for the aku, these things for the 'ōpelu.

H: That's how our fishing was.

M: Then, when that fishing was done, you returned to the land.

H: We return to the land, and the people are waiting to carry the canoe [hāpai wa'a] to the land. The old women, children and babies all gathered at the place where the canoe lands. Take the canoe inside, and the people, the women and children come help, pull this canoe and carry it on top the land.

M: And you give the fish (yes, give) to them. How is it if you don't have any fish?

H: The fish isn't ever couldn't. Give to you, grab with the hand whatever you get. Say, "open your bag," [then] twice, three times maybe you put it in. Plenty fish.

M: Hoh, good then, eh.

H: Now, you count out five [fish], that time no.

M: Ah, one, two, three, that's all.

H: That time, no... two handfuls... your bag almost full. You wait. And afterward, another canoe lands. You go carry that canoe in, plenty more fish. Plenty fish. If you wait for all the canoes, a great many fish. The important thing that time, you don't \_\_\_? Because that time we didn't have ice [box] like now, only salt. Salt. The store was a long ways away, and the stores weren't many like now. If you didn't have salt, you couldn't take the fish, because it would go bad. When you got the salt, you sprinkle it on these fish, and then it's good. Dry it, the majority you just dry.

M: Did you get the salt at the store or from the sea?

H: No. \_\_\_ That place is called Kealakomo.

M: Oh, Kealakomo.

H: That's the place with plenty of salt. If you come in the summer, and the salt is dried up, you go and get what you want. You don't fish so much that you can't use it all. You take the appropriate amount. Go by horse.

M: Oh, by horse.

H: Horse, and by donkey too we go.

M: Now too?

H: No. It's gone, covered by the lava. Oh. There was plenty of salt. We sold then, because we didn't have ice [box] like now.

M: And how at this time? at the store?

H: Sometimes, the bulk of the fish. And if you take it to the house, some for raw, some for boiled, only a little is left. One, two kinds, cooking, eating twice. That's enough. You don't take a huge amount. And some to dry.

(continues)

You can't mistreat [waste] the fish, because it's hard work to go out in the early morning, come back maybe 9:00, and rest, go again at noon.

M: Go again, what kind of fishing?

H: For the big fish, yes, the 'ahi. (Kawele'ā?) Kawele'ā is just at night.

M: How do you fish for that 'ahi?

H: It's below. You let down the lead and the bait below with forty things.

M: Is that a kākā line?

M: Yeah, the depth is 40 fathoms.

K: What's the word for fathom?

H: Fathom, anana.

M: Anana?

H: Yeah, one anana, two anana, three anana. Just like this [gestures] the anana, with the hand. It wasn't counted like now with the ruler. See they only measure with the hand, one fathom.

M: So, 40 anana.

H: Yes, forty. And it's as you like. The thing to make this line is olonā, plenty. It's braided this line. If you want some, you come to my house, and "How much do you want?" You tell, "Forty anana." I count forty anana, cut. "How much do you want?" "Oh, 60," and they do again, just with the hand, cut, and "Here's yours." You don't pay, these are all fishermen.

M: What's the nature of this line?

H: Olonā. That bush is gone. There was plenty in Kalapana before on the road, if you go mauka.

M: Mauka?

H: Yeah. It's gone, because that time, us people of Kalapana, we raised donkey. They eat that thing. That's what eliminated this olonā.

M: Only the donkeys? What about the goats?

H: I don't know. Plenty people had donkeys, they let the tame ones go. And they got this olonā and ate the leaves and it died out. That time, the old folks didn't plant it. It just grew by the road sometimes, and inside the bushes. The place I heard of for olonā is in Maui. Hana, Maui. It's there until today. I don't know where it gets olonā. Before my place had it, and now it doesn't. The line from the haole came in, from the Japanese, and that you bought at the store.

M: How did you make that olonā?

H: The olonā line, the braiding, just two strands, and then you get a little \_\_\_\_, with two lines. This thing is spun, this is the thing that braids. That of today has three. The machine makes that. In the old time, the Hawaiian people didn't do that, they made this thing in big piles with the hand. xxx It was just given, not sold. That time there was plenty [olonā] to use to make, today it's all gone. And the line comes in from the haole and Japanese. You buy.

M: What about the coconut, not good?  
(doesn't answer)

M: When you fish for 'ahi, how do you know that's an 'ahi?

H: Ah, [you're] at the ko'a. This place of 'ahi, it was called by the old people a ko'a.

M: Just they stayed there.

H: No.

M: Plenty kinds fish.

H: Yeah. My time I left the land, three of us paddled out for fishing. The one in front was the captain of the canoe, he was the one to search the land for this, maybe a coconut

tree, maybe a hala tree. Here a coconut, over there a hala, then we compare. And at that place, let down the net there. I've seen it. That 'ahi ko'a, for some people it's a hill, a hill like at Kapoho that's the mark for the ko'a of Kapoho. There's plenty hills and the hills is the thing to line up and get the ko'a. At Kalapana it's not, only the box and the tree, hala tree, 'ohi'a tree, coconut tree, and another by the pali. One place at the pali, the hills, a cave is taken as the mark. You search for the ko'a. You won't miss it. Only one man, he's the one to use that thing. Three people, and two of them don't, they only paddle. This first man, he's the one to search for it. If they get it, they stop paddling, and fish. My thing to fish with is all fixed when I wake up at the house. It's baited at the house, you make what you like, as many hooks as you want. If you make 60 hooks with bait, that's how many fish you'll bring back.

M: Only at the house?

H: Yes.

M: Not in the canoe.

H: No. When you get there, you fish.

M: When the bait is finished...

H: Yes, when the bait is finished, us three are not all the same. Maybe you only have 10, I have twenty, so You're the one that finished first, we wait until all the baits are eaten, then we go back. This is the morning, we go back, eat. Get ready again to go at 1:00. I remember Kalapana that time, eight canoes went at one time and separated, and there were plenty ko'a. You fish one kind, another fishes another kind. The 'ōpelu nobody goes for. That's finished in the morning, the 'ōpelu is the first thing when it's still dark. That's the bait for the different fishes of the different fishermen.

M: If you don't get the 'ōpelu, you can't fish.

H: Yeah. The 'ōpelu, that's the first thing of the day, you go get because that's the bait for the various fishes. And if you take another bait, it's not very good. The 'ōpelu is the best because it's soft. Another bait of another fish isn't good. When it touches the water, the fish don't come, it's not soft like the 'ōpelu. The soft 'ōpelu, when the fish comes to that bait, it's caught fast on the hook. The various fish have tough flesh. Sometimes [the fish] bite, come off, not caught fast. So, the 'ōpelu is the number one, that's the number one to get fish. That's the first fish of the day, the one to get at dawn.

M: What about fishing for swordfish (a'u). Do you know about that?

H: The a'u is different, there's not a bait like that. If you remember the calf, that tail, half of that is taken, yeah. That half is tied to the hook.

M: That's the bait?

H: Yeah, that's the bait.

M: For the a'u.

H: A'u. (laughs). You don't believe. Today there's a bait but in the old days, not like that, the bait is the calf tail.

M: And you get the fish?

H: You get. It doesn't get away. You don't wait for many hours, and you catch. This fishing for the a'u is not below, it's above. You paddle the canoe, paddle strongly [so the canoe travels just like you trolling like.

M: So just travel

H: You go and this a'u follows, grabs, gets caught, that's it. You take up all the slack until the fish is close. You look at the fish and its dead, Because this line is long, yeah, you're winding this line up until you get to the fish, it's dead. So this is the bait for the a'u, the calf tail. Today, no, there's a bait, a fish for bait.

M: So, when you pull the line in and the a'u is close to the canoe, you don't need to kill it, because it's already dead.

H: No, it's exhausted. Yeah, tie it fast with the nose in front and the tail against the canoe, tie it there.

M: You don't load it in the canoe.

H: No, you can't. It's too heavy, baimby swamp the canoe. This canoe is big and the a'u is not close to the same length as the canoe, you can't.

M: What's the length of the canoe?

H: Twenty (feet) maybe the length of the canoe, sometimes twenty-ve. You can't because this [fish] is really big, it won't go in. And the canoe is narrow.

M: Yeah.

H: Yea, so it's tied to the side, to the side of the outrigger, and you paddle, return to land.

M: Won't the sharks follow?

H: They follow. Sometimes you reach the land, there's no more stomach to the fish, it's all been eaten out. We don't notice because the shark comes below to get it.

M: Oh, below. And after that what do you do?, cut it up and give it out?

H: Yes, the folks that carry the canoe in.

M: That's a big fish.

H: Yeah. The bulk of the fish we just give away. Plenty people come, mothers, old folks, and children come. If you come help, pull the canoe, that's what's called "hāpai wa'a," carry the canoe up.

M: How, did you fish on the shoreline?

H: Kapakai, that's the word.

M: Kahakai. Did you fish there?

H: What's the nature of that?

H: The pole is the bamboo, the line, the hook. Now you only see [fishing] at the shoreline.

M: What was the nature of the hook?

H: The hook used...I'm not sure, but I saw a good hook, number one that thing on the bed, the mattress, coil springs, that wire. It's steel that, strong. That's the wire that was made into hook for the small fish. For the big fish, it wasn't used.

M: What about the he'e?

H; Yeah.

M: Did you fish for the he'e with the lūhe'e? [Herbert didn't hear the question.]

H: Yes, for the big fish like the ulua at the coast, only at the pali. That kind of fishing is called pīpī ulua. The hook, it wasn't this wire. Before you could get this at Pāhoa, at the plantation they had mules before. This kind of mule and it pulled the wagon before.

This kind was big, with big feet. His horseshoe, that was made into ulua hook, number one that.

M: For big fish?

H: Yes. Today there's no more. Just buy from the store. Only in the old days we made. So, you know about the old days, Langlas.

### Side Two

Before they used to get mules of the big kind. Today the small kind. The foot was big, that's the reason the horseshoe was big. That was the steel, number one, made into hooks for ulua before and for the small fish. And today, no, the sugar plantation is finished, not one place left. I know that place, the place where the people threw away plenty horseshoes. They [got] thin and were thrown away. We went and got them, it was at the dump at Kea'au. You know?

L: Yes.

H: Yes, that entrance from that banyan tree above, that's where, plenty there. We went to get them there. The people today don't know. Us, we made our hooks before. The small hooks were no trouble, you made them with the coil springs of the carriage. It doesn't bend, but it breaks if there's a big fish. It's not used for the big fish.

M: What about the he'e? Did you fish for he'e?

H: No.

M: Or for the he'e pali?

H: He'e pali, yes. But true he'e. We had a hole where the he'e were, but us youngsters, we weren't accustomed to [fish for them]. Hoh, scary.

L: Scared?

H: Yes, plenty he'e. The fathoms. Only one man went to catch at Kalapana before.

L: Who was that?

H: William Peleiholani.

L: E.

H: He was first rate at all kinds of fishing. He taught me fishing, hook making, that kind of tying [hooks].

If you don't tie it right, it comes off.

[bit untranslated]

M: What was the work of the women and the keid on the land at that time? Did they fish too? Did they collect the things at the shore? [Herbert didn't hear the question.]

H: Yes, sometimes when you return there's plenty people there waiting for the fishermen to return. Get the fish and some stay there. And cut there fish, and dry them there on the pāhoehoe. They fish too. Afternoon, the fish are dry and they go home.

M: Who got the limu, the women, yeah?

H: Yes.

M: The limu and the things at the shore, the crabs, the 'opihi, who got those things? the women or the men?

H: Yes, limu was gathered.

M: Who gathered them?

H: For the limu, we did. In the old days, we went. Not only the old folks, youngsters went to get limu. There was plenty of different kinds of limu. Limu kohu is the number one, kō'ele.

M: And 'opihi?

H: 'Opihi too.

M; Plenty 'opihi there then.

H: Yes, plenty 'opihi. We just get it sometimes, not every day. Sometimes we don't fish all, that's for another time. You go and it's grown, gotten big. Not just little ones and you take. Later on there's nothing left. Like today, if you go it's all been swept up, the little and the big. The old days, no. You take what's right, not the little ones.

M: How did you get them, with the knife? [Herbert heard, "at the pali?"]

H: No. Where it was low, there's pāhoehoe flats there. And at the pali, that's just for the strong folks. Because you'll fall, and you can't. Only the strong folks go at the pali. Some go with the rope. Maybe seventy-five feet. And that is useless. At the low place, yeah.

M: How about the crab? 'a'ama, Kona crab

H: Oh, yes, it was gotten at night.

M: How did you get the Kona crab?

H: We don't have that here.

M: At sea, one the canoe... You don't have at Kalapana?

H: No, we don't have. Only in Kona they get.

M: Why? You don't have sand below?

H: No, only rock.

M: What about the mahimahi?

H: We don't have that kind of fish, rarely. The number one in Puna, the first is the 'opelu. And in the deep sea, the 'ahi, a'u. Plenty. These are during the day. The 'ū'ū, little fish. The kawele'ā, that's only at night. That's a good kind of fishig, for kawele'ā. Close to the land. You don't go far out. But you go during the day too, and we go in a row in the canoes and fish. And you get maybe eight, maybe ten, whatever you want to take to the house, it's up to you. And then you're finished, there's enough fish. And you go home. This kind of fishing is different. The 'ū'ū, yeah.

M: What are the good days for that kind of fish?

H: Yes.

M: What are the good days?

H: Torching.

M: What are the good days for the 'ū'ū?

H: In Puna. It's not like it used to be before. Before, the calm days lasted long. Today it's not really good. The majority of the time now it's bad surf, you don't get the calm like before. Before it was calm for a month or more, the surf was dead. No waves, just got out with the canoe. The fishermen went every day, no resting. When the sea got bad, then they stopped and sat in the house, and prepared the fishing tackle for the next calm period, and they were supplied. Go again. Sometimes you couldn't just look at fish. Sometimes, you went to the mountain, planted kalo. Because if you didn't have kalo, it was no use to have all this fish to be eaten with poi.



M: How did you fish for 'ū'ū?

H: 'Ū'ū, yes, at night that. Fish with a pole on the canoe.

M: With a long line?

H: No, no. This is like fishing on the land, the bamboo and that, one the canoe. If there were three of us, you and us, three, we fish.

M: You have a lamp on the canoe?

H: Yes a light. That time not a kerosene lamp. The torch was made with the bamboo. Then we didn't have the lamp like now. When we fished for 'ū'ū, with the short bamboo from the canoe. The work went well. It's better on the land, but this was on the canoe. The 'ū'ū bites. If you know... [with the] torch, the 'ū'ū floats up above. If the light of the torch isn't good, they go down. That's not good, they don't bite. And then if your torch shines good, the 'ū'ū come up. The work goes fast, without delay the box is full, you go home. We don't do this kind of fishing during the day like this, only at night, with the bamboo. No line far down. This torch is the thing that brings the fish up. [portion omitted] The bait, above the hook [you get] this rag, a little piece, you tie it above.

L: That's the bait?

H: Yeah. I'm not done, you listen. You get this hook and this bow and a liquid inside. You make a liquid with 'a'ama perhaps. And this hot chile pepper, a little inside. And you put the hook inside that thing, get it wet, and they bite. Don't put too much, or it will be too hot, they won't bite. Today the fishermen don't know, only in the old days, akamai. Yeah, don't make it too hot. The chile is the things that will work on this fish, it will bite. They like it.

L: If there's no chile...

H: They'll bite, but slow. But with the chile, without delay, rapid the getting, without delay, your bag is full, you go home. Only a few hours. The present kind, it takes long, sometimes don't get.

M: When you're done with that, you go home to the land? at night, eh?

H: Yeah, at night. Only some hours, and you go. Yeah, if I get 50 'ū'ū, that's enough for me. I wait for you, and when you get enough, we're done and we go home. I don't just think about myself, oh, I get enough, and go. No. Once you have enough, then we go together.

M: And do the people wait for you at night? [Herbert doesn't hear the question.]

H: Yeah, only at night this fishing for 'ū'ū. We don't fish in the day like this. Only at night, but with the torch.

M: What about diving? diving at sea?

H: Diving? with the spear?

L: With the spear?

H: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes, it was done. [For] little fish, and sometimes uhu, ulua. And the little fish, that was eaten raw, hoh, the number one. That was called the kole. There's two kinds of kole, yeah? This kole make onaona and that kole nukuheu. That was kind of big and dark. Same as the maiko. And eating that fish is good, both kinds of kole.

M: And the lobster too, did you dive for that?

H: Yes, only by diving with the spear for that fish. I wasn't fished for with hook.

M: Did you dive at night or in the day?

H: No, only at night. We didn't fish for that kind of fish in the day. In Kona that's done, in Puna not.

M: What did you use on your eyes in order to see?

H: Oh, glasses.

L: Did you buy those glasses or did you make them?

H: No, this... You know this plumeria tree? Sometimes they call that puamelia, that tree. The branch, you cut it, and inside there's a hole. You make it big until it's right for the glass. That time, our small kid time, wasn't like now. In the old time, the house and glass pane, six glass panes for one window. We get one glass pane and make diving glasses.

M: What about that glass box.

H: Glass box (for seeing). Yeah, same thing. It was made with the window glass. It has two pieces for one [?]. And one piece of glass, that's enough. You make a square wood box. And this glass box is made for the 'ōpelu. Only the first man [in the canoe], that's the fisherman, only he looks 'through the blox]. And us, if we want to look, we bring the kukui nut. Only the inside, separate the shell, put it inside the bag. If we want, bite that, then threw it. You do like this with the paddle, the fish are visible to you.

L: You believe that?

M: Yes.

H: Yeah. That's how in the real old time. After they got the glass the task was easy. In the old time, no, the kukui nut.

M: Yes. I did that, that's good.

[Section looking at pictures of ulua to identify them. Part left out of translation.]

H: This is the thing, 'aukea, gotten frequently. One hundred pounds, very big this fish. This, it's not gotten frequently, but this is the number one. At noon. 'Ōmilo is good. To me, you know, but some folks don't like it much.

M: Ulua pa'opa'o, have you seen this before?

H: No, I don't know. I haven't seen it.

L: What about the ulua hāuliuli? You told me that tame before.

H: Hāuliuli.

L: Hāuliuli. It's not in the book, eh?

H: No, no more. This is the hāuliuli. Round the nose, yea. Maybe it's this, it's kind of similar.

L: Kind of like the 'aukea.

### Tape 2, Side A

This man went fishing, only him. No net. A bag and this kauila stick. Concerning this kauila stick, it was given supernatural power before by the Hawaiian people. He went with that, used it for palu (to attract), the fish came in. This man went, fooled these fish with this kauila stick. And all the fish followed this pole. the bag was open, all the fish came inside the bag, until there was as much as he wanted. This old man at Kalapana. I

saw it with my eyes. Yes. The first time I saw it, I went home and talked with my father. “I saw this man with the stick and it fooled the fish. They came inside the bag.” Our father laughed, “That’s not a kind of fishing. That kind of fishing is entirely different. It’s just for that man only.” Strange, but he didn’t cause any harm. He took what he wanted, and went home. And these fish came out and left. When I told my father, he said, “yes, that’s rare. Not everyone fishes like that. That’s magic, it’s not good. Fish caught that way don’t taste good. For good tasting fish, you get them with the hand and the net. That kind of work isn’t good.”

M: Did you hear about the fishhook made from the human kneecap?

H: Yea. The old time. Not now, only the old time, yeah, it was used. Not with me and you that kind. Those were different people.

Did you hear the story of the ‘ōlohe?

L: Yes.

H: Yeah, that kind people.

That’s the thing remembered that was done to make a fish hook, that’s the gest. It won’t miss, you get the fish. You don’t inquire to get the fish that way. From the ‘ōlohe, not that kind of people of today. They’re all gone, dead, killed. The last was in Puna. at Nā‘ulu. You know that place?

L: Yes, yes.

H: That’s where these people lived until they were all killed. Because the folks who went to fish below, came back with fish, they all disappeared. They were killed. All their goods were taken, all the fish. These people inquired. That’s the reason this man from Kona went and killed that ‘ōlohe. That was the last ‘ōlohe living in Puna, Kānewahine.