

COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON HAWAIIAN „HEIAUS“ AND SIMILAR JAPANESE ROCK FORMATIONS

In Search of the Origin of the Heiaus

by

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Summary

On the fields of Puukohara and Honaunau, the Big Island of Hawaii, there are several huge types of rock features, “heiau”, heaped rock formations dedicated to divinities and spirits. The biggest one is about 2 meter high, 30 meter wide and 50 meter long, and it looks like a big swimming pool built on the top of a hill. The rock formation used to be a sacred place, where religious ceremony or some rituals were held by native priests of a certain tribe. The oldest type of heiaus can be seen at the King’s trail petroglyph field, Waikoloa, Hawaii, where abundant of petroglyphs are carved. There is no record of who made those rock features and rock art, but local legends say that a certain kind of tribes, Minehune, little people, were the builder of those rock features.

According to the heaped up studies by scholars of University of Hawaii and U.C.L.A. as well as the staff of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, several of Hawaiian heiaus were built by the seafarers, who came from the Tahiti island and other Polynesian islands in the latter stage of prehistoric ages, while most of original type of heiaus and petroglyphs are said to have been made by those who came from the west of the Pacific Ocean in latter part of prehistoric ages, although their home-land has not been known yet.

It is an interesting fact that there are 8 similar heiaus in Japan, which lies to the far west of Hawaiian islands. Scholars of the Japan Petrograph Society and Japan Academic Center have made remarkable finds at 8 locations in Japanese islands, where Hawaiian types of rock formations and similar petroglyphs can be seen. This paper aims at suggesting a home-land of the first people, who reached Hawaiian island and built such heiaus and carved Hawaiian petroglyphs. Comparative studies on Hawaiian heiaus (rock formations) with Japanese ones will be sure to surprise most of scholars, who used to believe that Hawaiian rock features and rock art came from some Polynesian islands or from some south Pacific islands, because they had no idea of similar ones exist in Japan, far west of the Pacific ocean. When we think of the circulation of Pacific currents, which might have helped the seafaring people more than 6500 BP, we will safely reach a definite conclusion that boat people must have crossed the Pacific somehow to settle their new found islands and made rock formations, rock art, taking after their custom of their home-land.

This contribution paper is a beginning of a comparative study to examine the homeland of those first settlers on the Hawaiian islands, but I am sure that in very near future, some colleagues do succeed in similar studies as I am going to suppose here in my paper.

Hawaiian Heiaus

Strange rock formations can be seen at some national parks on the Big Island of Hawaii. The biggest one is located at Puukohala National Historical Park, Kawaihae on the north west side of the island (Figure 1).

THE LOCAL legend says, "Kamehameha, who became the first king of the north-west region of the big Island of Hawaii in 1789 had a revelation that if he built a great shrine he would be able to rule over all the Hawaiian islands. Thousands of people worked for the construction, and finally in 1791 the great rock formation, Heiau, was built. Within 4 years, he conquered other islands, Lanai, Morokai, Maui and Oahu, to be a ruler of all the Hawaiian islands."

Although King Kamehameha built the biggest Heiau, he was not the first builder of "Heiau" for on the Big Island of Hawaii there are a lot of old heiaus built in the prehistoric ages. King Kamehameha built an imitation of such older ones according to the revelation. One of the original Heiaus can be seen in the precinct of Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park at South Kona area on the Big Island of Hawaii.

AT THE SOUTH of Hawaii, I chanced to encounter an unexpected formation for ritual on Sept. 26, 1999 together with my JPS colleagues during our fieldwork on the Big Island of Hawaii. Kalalea, at the southeast point of the island, had a peculiar altar, which was made of logs as seen in the picture below (Figure 2).

I got a big shock at it, for the altar wood

frame was very the same one as I used to see in Japanese shrines. The fact that the same altar of wood frame exists in Hawaii gives us a firm suggestion that the builders of such Hawaiian heiaus had something to do with prehistoric Japan, where a lot of heiau-typed rock formations can be seen. Hence new questions, "Who were the builders of Hawaiian heiaus? Where did they come from? How did they manage to reach Hawaiian islands?" arose to me and my colleagues.

Motherland of the first Hawaiians

DR. J. HALLEY Cox and Dr. Edward Stasack write in their joint work book, "Hawaiian Petroglyphs" (Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, 1970) as follows: "A few petroglyphs may have been made by the first settlers, following a tradition of their homeland, and the trait would have been emulated in Hawaii. Then at some time, probably in late prehistoric period, one style caused a rapid expansion of the art, resulting in the heavily concentrated sites today. This sequence of events would also account for a number of forms that are peculiar to Hawaii and not found in other Polynesian areas, since elaborate invention of new form is a natural result of continued or intensive activity in the arts". (page 52)

This statement above refers that the first settlers, probably seafaring people, reached Hawaiian islands and carved petroglyphs on the vast lava fields where heiaus exist. Although the two scholars do not tell about who made the heiaus, the builders of heiaus seem to have something to do with the first settlers, because on the King's trail



Figure 1: One of the biggest Heiaus at Puukohala Kawaihae, Hawaii



**Figure 2: The Japanese styled Altar made of logs in Kalalea Heiau;
south point of Big Island of Hawaii**

petroglyph field, the oldest type of heiaus co-exist with petroglyphs made by those settlers. (Figure 3)

About the question, who made heiaus, Dr. Katharin Luomala gives shocking answers in her book, "The Menefune of Polynesia and Other Mythical Little People of Oceania" (Bernice Bishop Museum, 1951):

"IT IS AS stoneworkers that the Menefune excel. They have built heiaus, watercourses, fishponds, causeways, rock stone canoes, rearranged boulders; dug caves and made many forest roads and trails. The Kauai dam and watercourse, the so-called Menefune Ditch – a job of fitted and dressed stone work and engineering, which involved the course of Waimea River and directing the water around a corner of a mountain – still commands respect. A watercourse at Kohala, Hawaii, was left unfinished when a cock crowed and daylight came. Both, Kauai and Molokai Islands have Menefune fishponds." (page 19)

Menefune is the name of certain groups of people who are very little; about 90 cm high, hairy and stout people. About the population of Menefune, she writes, "Once when all the Menefune of Kauai assembled, they numthan 500, 600, not counting the children under 17." (page 11) "I find that there were nearly 902 menquare mile on the island of Kauai at the peak of the menefune period as contrasted with the 65,7 people per square mile in 1948. This is a world record, for 902 people per square mile, with uncounted children under fot, is surpassed today probably only by modern Java that population warren of the world. But, of course, the menefune, being small, would not seem to be as crowded as the Malays. However, besides the menefune on the island, stohat there were also Hawaiians and the Mu, a people similar to the Menefune." (page 11)

Here most of scholars will be eager to know where Menefune people came from. Dr. Katharine Luomala writes, "The name of Menefune probably reached the Hawaiian Islands from central Polynesia, where it is known, with dialectical variations, in the Society, Cook, and Tuamotun, Archipelagoes," (page 83) while she writes, "Storytellers in many parts of the world have in their repertoires tales about little people who seem to share many of the qualities as the Oceanic mites. Often they are believed to have preceded the present inhabitants of a region and to have been a race apart from them. Such is the belief among the Ainu of Japan about a race of littel people, Earth Spiders, whom subsequent scientific research has suggested to be the ancestors of the Ainu the folklorized and made exaggeratedly small by later narrators." (page 82)

THE REASON why she referred to Earth Spider people in the earlier Japan may be that just as legends in Japan tell most of prehistoric stonework was done by very little people, "Kumpirah", who used to live at every part o Japan. I am of opinion that this Kumpirah people crossed the Pacific to reach Hawaiian islands, where they called themselves Mene-hune, which is a Japanese word meaning "boats" or "ships" that carried them over waves to Hawaiian islands. To be in short, it is my idea that the motherland of Meine-hune must be Japan, where original Heiaus are to be seen.

Comparative examination of Hawaiian and Japanese Heiaus, holy rock formation for rituals

I AM EAGER to know what you think at the pictures I am going to show you from now on. In these 25 years, I have done 12 official studies on Japanese rock-art and on petroglyphs, scholarship by Ministry of



Figure 3: The oldest type of Heiaus are the ones encircling the engraved spaces with heaped boulders



Figure 4: The Heiau at Honaunau



**Figure 5: The typical Japanese Heiau at Sumoto-cho,
Amakusa, Kumamoto province**



Figure 6: Heiau on the small island of Tsuno-shima in the Japan Sea



Figure 7: A wide outlook of the Puukohala shore



Figure 8: Puukohala shore with an earlier Heiau



Figure 9: A big Heiau at Kalalea by the South Point shore of the Big Island of Hawaii



Figure 10: Heiau at Mt. Nakatsu-mine showing the gate



**Figure 11: Heiau at Mt. Nakatsu-mine;
the inner sanctuary**



Figure 12: Shodo-shima Heiau, Japan

Education and Science. Even now, I am the leader of the official study-team under the title of, "Diffusion of Sea-people around the Pacific seen from prehistoric rock art and ruins". Of course, the word, sea-people I use here, contains Kumpirah and Menehune people who once were representative seafaring people.

NOW MY challenging examination begins with the figure 4. Picture 4 shows the heiau at Honaunau.

At a glance, the Sumoto Heiau (Figure 5) looks like the Heiau built by Kamehameha at Puukohala, Kawaihae. It is a matter of great interest that although the builders of the Japanese Sumoto heiau are not known, in the very district are several caves which used to be dwelled by very little people. JPS members dared to go into the narrow opening, but nobody succeeded in the trial. Only very small people under 90 cm high and 25 cm wide could enter the cave. To our surprise, the cave had three rooms separated with pillar poles. Two rooms were about 1 m high, 6 m wide, and the front room was about 1 m high and 3 m wide. The cave was dug on the east side of a steep peak of rock. All were amazed at the nice skill of digging sand-rock. Probably, the cave-builders were a kind of Earth Spider, "Ana-sachi" (cave-people) who were similar to Minehune. I know that in Arizona, there used to live the Ana-sazi clan, who built cave houses in rocky hills. The Ana-sazi is the Ana-sachi (Japanese language) whom ruling classes called "Earth Spiders" because of their life-style.

ANA-SACHI were the people who lived in the mountains, while Umi-sachi were the mariners, among whom were the Amas, Azumi and Kumpirah. The heiaus built by the mariners are to be seen near the sea.

The most famous one is located on a small island of the Tsuno-shima (horn-island) in

the Japan Sea. Next is the picture 6 (Figure 6) of the Tsuno-shima island, Yamaguchi pref. If it were not for the shrine-gate, nobody can tell it from the old haiaus at Puukohala, Hawaii. Figures 7,8,9 show Puukohala heiaus.

At the top of a hill which commands a good view of seas, mariners built heiaus. The biggest one can be seen at Mt. Nakatsu-mine (776 m above sea-level), Tokushima city. Figure 10 is the gate and figure 11 shows the inner sanctuary. It is dedicated to Deity Nigihayahi, son of the Sun god.

AT THE TOP of Mt. Hoshi-ga-jo (star-castle), Shodo-shima island in the Inland Sea, Japan, there is an old heiau-shrine, dedicated to the guardian deity of the island. The altar house and the shrine gate are peculiar to Japanese heiaus, but without them nobody can tell them from Hawaiian ones. Figure 12 is the Shodo-shima heiau. It is a matter of great interest that the island of Skarabrae, Scotland has a lot of similar heiau-typed rock formations on almost every top hills, which used to be sanctuaries for mariners' clans.

Conclusion

HAWAIIAN heiaus, which are said to have been built by the seafarers who settled there or by Minehune, little peoples similar to the legendary Kumpirah people in Japan, in general have close similarity to Japanese heiaus, although the reason is not clear. But now that the heiaus and petroglyphs in Hawaii were not made by native islanders but by settlers who arrived there in some prehistoric period, and since they were made following a tradition of their homeland, Hawaiian and Japanese ones are to be regarded to have a same origin.

Hence I suppose that one of the homelands of the seafarers who settled in Hawaii must be Japan.

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