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## The Lihu‘e Place Name on Kaua‘i

DID KAIKIOEWA name Lihu‘e?<sup>1</sup> Ethel Damon says he did. She makes the claim three times in *Koamalu: A Story of Pioneers on Kauai and of What They Built in That Island Garden*.

On page 402 of *Koamalu*, Damon states:

When [Kaikioewa’s] house and church in the ahupuaa of Nawiliwili were completed, he elected to call the spot *Lihue*, a place name not of Kauai-nei, but one borrowed from the region of his earlier home on the Waianae plains of Oahu. This fact was once told to Thomas G. Thrum by Miss Lucy Peabody, a Hawaiian of rank revered by us all, and one deeply learned in the lore of her native country. Mr. Thrum, himself one of our foremost Hawaiian scholars, further remarks that the Hawaiian word *lihue* means *gooseflesh*, and on Oahu probably had some original association of meaning. But even in the days of Kaikioewa, this early flavor of the name had perhaps become merged in that of a place merely, and as such, in the sense of *home*, was doubtless brought across the Kauai channel by the old chieftain from Oahu.<sup>2</sup>

Eleven pages later Damon again reminds her readers about Kaikioewa’s Lihu‘e, “the very name of the little settlement borrowed from the neighboring island of Oahu.” And on page 905 she reiterates Kaikioewa’s authorship of Lihu‘e: “its name was of his adoption.”

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Ethel Moseley Damon (1883–1965) spent much of her life writing about Hawai‘i. She penned biographies of David and Sarah Lyman, Elias Bond, and Sanford Ballard Dole in addition to Samuel Chenery Damon, her Massachusetts-born grandfather who arrived in Honolulu in 1842 to serve as chaplain of the Seamen’s Bethel Church. Damon also wrote about Kawaiaha‘o and other early Hawaiian churches, and she composed plays and celebratory mementoes. Her best-known book, *Koamalu*, is still regarded a bible of bygone times on Kaua‘i eighty years after its publication. Courtesy of Grove Farm Museum.

Damon’s desire to explain the name is understandable. While she was working on *Koamalu* she surely wondered how Lihu‘e, neither *moku* [large land district] nor *ahupua‘a* [unit within a land district], emerged from obscurity to describe the great district stretching from the Wailua River to the western boundary of Kīpū, not far from today’s landmark Tree Tunnel that lines Maluhia Road to the island’s south shore. Damon was acquainted with a wide spectrum of

early nineteenth century sources, yet the name Lihu‘e did not surface in them. It wasn’t labeled on the earliest maps, nor did it appear in the copious missionary accounts and station reports of the 1820s and 1830s, which referred instead to Nāwiliwili, Hūle‘ia or Kalaiamea. *Mo‘olelo* [oral history, traditions, stories] recounted by knowledgeable residents, such as Paul Kanoa and William Hyde Rice, were silent on the origin of the name Lihu‘e.

#### DAMON’S SOURCE FOR THE KAIKIOEWA CLAIM

During the process of writing *Koamahu*, Damon discovered a breakthrough clue in her search for the origin of the name. She found it in the *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1905*, commonly known as Thrum’s Annual. The article, “On Hawaiian Duplicated Place Names,” reviewed a few of the common appellations used on more than one island across the chain, among them Waimea, Kilauea, and Kona. A brief sentence described Lihu‘e: “The name of a village and important agricultural district of Kauai, is found also in the grazing districts of Oahu, and of Hawaii.” Nothing new there, but an endnote teased: “*Nawiliwili, Kauai*.—When Kaikioewa moved there to live he called the part selected by him Lihue, after his place on the Waianae plains of Oahu.”

Damon wrote her old friend Thomas Thrum to probe that titillating but anonymous hint. He replied in a letter now archived at the Kaua‘i Historical Society:

HONOLULU. T. H., Mch. 16. 1929

My dear friend Ethel:

Replying to your connundrums of 8th inst. the foot-note data obtained after the article was in type, that it refers to, was furnished me by the late Miss Lucy Peabody. You will notice that Kaikioewa applies the name Lihue only to his place, at Nawiliwili, (wherever that may have been), probably from that it spread to take in the village, whatever that was; perhaps that of the harbor, Nawiliwili. . . .

Me ke aloha mau,  
Thos G. Thrum

Lucy Peabody certainly enjoyed a distinguished pedigree, though she could not have been acquainted with Kaikioewa himself, having

been born on Hawai‘i island the year after he died on Kaua‘i. Because Peabody herself died the year before the Damon-Thrum exchange, Damon had no opportunity to interview her directly about her basis for the claim.

Lacking specifics about why Peabody believed that Kaikioewa named the Lihu‘e on Kaua‘i after the Lihu‘e on O‘ahu, Damon nevertheless published it in *Koamalu* with a nod to Peabody embedded in the text itself. Given the two women’s weight of authority and without evidence to the contrary, even prominent historians, archaeologists, and chroniclers have repeated the Kaikioewa attribution for the past three-quarters of a century. The more such a “fact” is repeated, the



Juliette May Fraser (1887–1983), like Ethel Damon, was born in Honolulu and graduated from Oahu College (Punahou School) and Wellesley College. The acclaimed Hawai‘i artist created several components of the two-volume *Koamalu*, including illustrations, the design of the endpapers, and this label for the spine. Courtesy of Kaua‘i Historical Society.

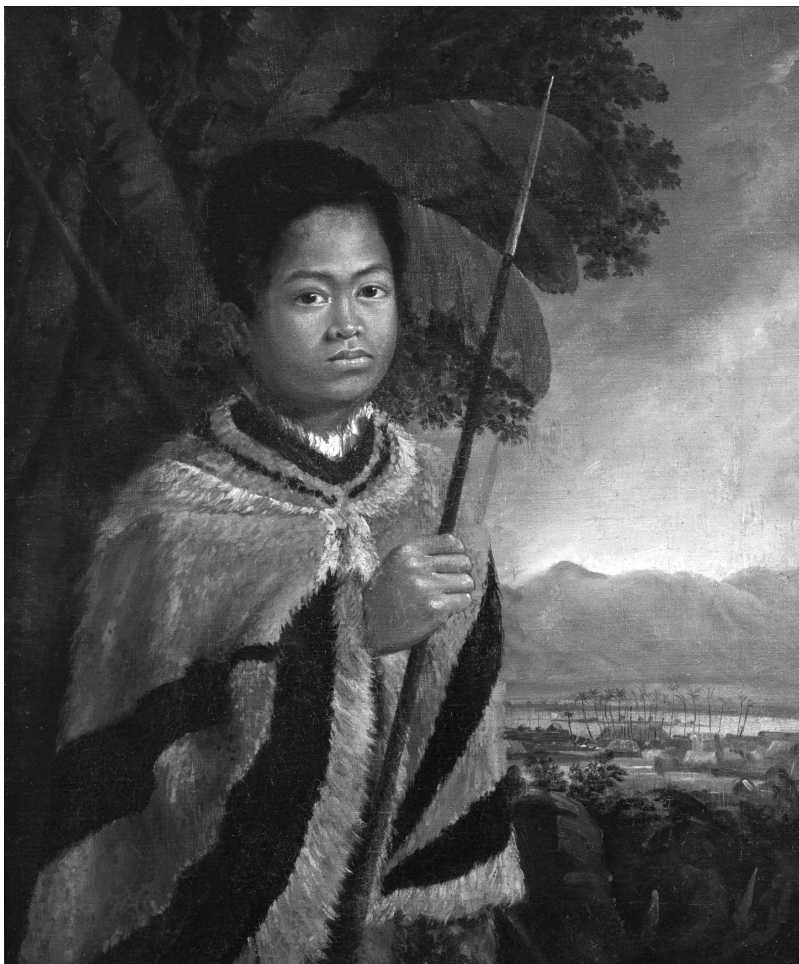
deeper it settles into the unassailable realm of “common knowledge.” But is it true?

#### A “CHIEFTAIN FROM OAHU”?

Abundant evidence suggests that Kaikioewa was not, as Damon claimed, a “chieftain from Oahu.” Rather, his roots burrowed deep in the substance of Hawai‘i island. Kaikioewa was a high-ranking *ali‘i* [chiefly status] and a descendant of “leading families under the ancient kings of Hawaii.”<sup>3</sup> According to historian Samuel Kamakau, his mother and his father were both related to Kamehameha the Great, by an older brother on one side and a younger on the other, which made him a cousin of the conqueror twice over.<sup>4</sup>

Kaikioewa also had ties to Kaua‘i. Kamakau places his birth at Waimea, Kaua‘i about 1765, but he was already living at Hilo when Kalani‘opu‘u, the ruling *ali‘i* of Hawai‘i island, died in April 1782. Kaikioewa participated with his father, brother and sisters in the subsequent wars of succession, fighting first against Kamehameha then with him. From that point until the end of his life, Kaikioewa’s fate was tied to the Kamehamehas. In 1795 he followed the Great Conqueror into the momentous Battle of Nu‘uanu on O‘ahu, then returned to Hawai‘i with Kamehameha in 1796 to quash rebellion on that island.

After the turn of the century, when Waikiki then Honolulu became the kingdom’s capital, Kaikioewa was a member of the royal retinue who resided on O‘ahu. He was back living on Hawai‘i by 1813, when Kamehameha’s highest-ranking wife, Keōpūolani, gave birth to their son, Kauikeaouli, who was destined to become Kamehameha III. The story is well known that Kaikioewa traveled with the *kāula* [seer] Kapihe, to Kauikeaouli’s birth and insisted, after all others proclaimed the babe stillborn, that he did indeed live.<sup>5</sup> As a reward, Kamakau wrote, Kaikioewa became *kahu* [guardian] to the prince and took him to live at ‘O‘oma, Kekaha, an “out-of-the-way place” on Hawai‘i island. Kaikioewa remained on Hawai‘i and in 1819 joined other *ali‘i* at Kailua to be present at Kamehameha’s deathbed.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards, he and the young Kauikeaouli moved to Maui. Missionary accounts located him there still when the Kaua‘i uprising occurred at Wahiawa in 1824.<sup>7</sup> The next year Kaikioewa was appointed governor of subjugated Kaua‘i. He moved to Waimea, both a traditional royal residence



Kaikioewa served as *kahu* to Kauikeaouli from 1813 until he was appointed governor of Kaua'i in 1825. This portrait of Kauikeaouli by Robert Dampier was painted that same year, when the boy unexpectedly ascended to the Hawaiian throne as Kamehameha III. Courtesy of Honolulu Academy of Arts, gift of Eliza Lefferts Cooke, Charles M. Cooke III, and Carolene Alexander Cooke Wrenn in memory of Dr. C. Montague Cooke, Jr., 1951 (1066.1).

and the location of the island’s Christian missionary station. Kaua‘i remained Kaikioewa’s home for the final fifteen years of his life. He died of the mumps at Kōloa in April 1839.<sup>8</sup>

From the written records, then, Damon’s reference to Kaikioewa as an “old chieftain from Oahu” does not hold up to scrutiny. He actually spent a relatively small percentage of his long life there. Kaikioewa’s ancestry lay on other islands, and his fealty to the Kamehamehas kept him elsewhere too.

#### A “HOME ON THE WAIANAĒ PLAINS OF OAHU”?

If Kaikioewa’s family connections were to Hawai‘i and Kaua‘i, he certainly lived on O‘ahu for some period between 1804 and 1812 when that island served as Kamehameha’s seat of government. As an *ali‘i* and brave general in the Kamehameha retinue, Kaikioewa would certainly have received favors from him. Could the Great Conqueror or one of the subsequent Kamehameha dynasty have granted him the land on O‘ahu that encompasses Līhu‘e? Could he actually have maintained a “home on the Waianae plains of Oahu” through such a gift, as Damon claimed?

In ancient times the central plateau of O‘ahu “had large villages and extensive agricultural complexes in order to support a large population and a political center at Lihue.”<sup>9</sup> Known for centuries as an O‘ahu royal residence, Līhu‘e was celebrated in *mele*, *mo‘olelo* and *oli* [songs, poems, chants; stories, oral history; and chants without dance]. Nearby is Kūkaniloko, one of two royal birthing places in Hawai‘i (Holoholokū at Wailua, Kaua‘i is the other).<sup>10</sup> Various descriptions exist about the location of Līhu‘e. Hawai‘i State Parks identifies it as being “within the lands of Wai‘anae Uka,” with Kūkaniloko a short distance away, “within the Waiālua district.”<sup>11</sup> Abraham Fornander includes Līhu‘e in the “uplands of [the] Waianae side of Wahiawa,” although he qualifies the location by saying that the name was “rarely applied thereto of late years.”<sup>12</sup> The 1881 Hawaiian Government Survey Map of Oahu by C. J. Lyons locates it in the *ahupua‘a* of Honouliuli.<sup>13</sup> Other sources concur, including an 1877 Hawai‘i Supreme Court decision. In *Harris v. Carter* the court specifically classified Līhu‘e as an *‘ili ‘āina* within the *ahupua‘a* of Honouliuli. It defined an *‘ili ‘āina* as “a mere subdivision of the Ahupuaa for the



convenience of the chief holding the Ahupuaa.” It was not a separate territory, as was the case of an *‘ili kūpono*, which was “independent of the Ahupuaa.”<sup>14</sup>

Records of land distribution in Hawai‘i can be elusive prior to 1848, when the Māhele, an unprecedented division of land and recordation of ownership, was signed into law, but a significant moment in land grants arrived after the Battle of Nu‘uanu. Nineteenth century chronicler John Papa Ii wrote of those grants following Kamehameha’s key victory in his march to unify the islands:

Parcels of land at Waikiki, where the chiefs liked to live because of the surfing, were given to chiefs and prominent persons. Other *ahupua‘a* all over the island of Oahu, which Kamehameha had won after the battle of Nuuanu, were also divided.<sup>15</sup>

The *‘āina* [land] Kamehameha granted Kaikioewa included Kewalo *ahupua‘a* and Kulaokahu‘a (which today includes Thomas Square).<sup>16</sup> Kaikioewa did not receive Honouliuli, however. Kamehameha granted it, the largest *ahupua‘a* in the district of ‘Ewa, to Kalanimoku, who became the king’s *kūhina nui*, or principal advisor.<sup>17</sup> Kalanimoku later gave Honouliuli to his sister, Wahinepio. She in turn passed it to her daughter, Kekau‘onohi (a granddaughter of Kamehameha), whose inherited claims to almost the entire *ahupua‘a* were formally recognized and awarded to her in the Māhele.<sup>18</sup> Nor did Kaikioewa receive control of the adjoining *ahupua‘a* of Wai‘anae. It was claimed by Kekūānāoa, the governor of O‘ahu (and father of Victoria Kamamalu, who received vast acreage on Kaua‘i, including most of the lands in and around Lihū‘e), although he relinquished it to King Kamehameha III in the Māhele.<sup>19</sup>

Neither Kaikioewa’s wife, Emelia Keaweamahi, nor his *hanai* [adopted] son, Moses Kekuaiwa, challenged others’ rights to Honouliuli or Wai‘anae. Keaweamahi’s Māhele claims included but one *‘ili* on O‘ahu, and that was in Ko‘olau.<sup>20</sup> Kekuaiwa, as one of the ten *ali‘i nui* to sign the *Buke Mahele*, held a great deal of land, but little was on O‘ahu and none was in or around either ‘Ewa or the Wai‘anae plains.<sup>21</sup>

Substantial records exist, therefore, to counter Damon’s assertion that Kaikioewa held rights of residence on or near the Wai‘anae plains of O‘ahu.



## A LĪHU‘E HOUSE AND CHURCH?

Likely after Thrum’s March 1929 letter, Ethel Damon became committed to the notion that Kaikioewa had brought the Lihu‘e name to Kaua‘i. To support that position she cited an 1840 account by James Jackson Jarves of Kaikioewa’s activities in the Puna district:

Half way to Wailua there is a fine tract of land which the late governor selected as a site for a sugar plantation, many acres of which he caused to be planted with cane, and also built a large church, and a house for himself. But death soon terminated his scheme, and his city, that was to be, still retains its original diminutiveness, while all his improvements, like his own body, are wasting away to mother earth again. Since his demise, the situation has been used for camp-meetings, at which a large concourse of natives assembled. They erected a large number of little huts around the church for their temporary quarters; in appearance and size they resemble dog-kennels, being not over four feet high, and allowing only a sitting posture. The little cove at Hanamaulu was selected by the governor as a harbor for his new emporium, entirely overlooking the fact that it opened directly to the windward.<sup>22</sup>

To defend Lihu‘e as the unidentified place of Jarves’ description, Damon excuses a few inconsistencies: “He does not, it is true, give the name *Lihue*, which among Hawaiians of the district he was not likely to have heard.”<sup>23</sup> But some had indeed heard the name Lihu‘e by the time Jarves passed through the area. In 1840, the same year that Jarves visited, a group of naturalists with the United States Exploring Expedition, led by Charles Wilkes, also toured the area. They did use the name “Lihui,” along with crediting missionary Dr. Thomas Lafon for the activity there.<sup>24</sup> The explorers never mentioned Kaikioewa:

At noon they reached Lihui, a settlement lately undertaken by the Rev. Mr. Lafon, for the purpose of inducing the natives to remove from the sea-coast, thus abandoning their poor lands to cultivate the rich plains above. Mr. Lafon has the charge of the mission district lying between those of Koloa and Waioli. This district was a short time ago formed out of the other two.

The principal village is Nawiliwili, ten miles east of Koloa. This district contains about forty square miles, being twenty miles long by two broad. The soil is rich: it produces sugar-cane, taro, sweet-potatoes,



Charles Wilkes (1798–1877) entered the United States Navy in 1818. Between 1838 and 1842 he took command of America's first government-financed, overseas, scientific expedition. Wilkes's report of the voyage was incorporated in an atlas and five volumes of observations about Hawai'i and other regions around the Pacific. From his *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*, Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845, frontispiece by T. Sully, R. W. Dodson SC.

beans, &c. The only market is that of Koloa. The cane suffers somewhat from the high winds on the plains.

Mr. and Mrs. Lafon are very industrious with their large school, to which some of the children come a distance of five miles. Our gentlemen were much pleased with what they saw, and were satisfied that good would be effected by their manner of treating the natives.

The temperature of Lihui has much the same range as that of Koloa,

and the climate is pleasant: the trade-winds sweep over it uninterruptedly, and sufficient rain falls to keep the vegetation green throughout the year.

As yet there is little appearance of increase in industry, or improvement in the dwellings of the natives. There are no more than about seventy pupils in this district, who are taught by natives. There are two houses of worship, and about forty communicants. No decrease is apparent in the population within a few years.<sup>25</sup>

The Wilkes expedition explorers were not the only ones to link Lafon to Lihu‘e. On February 14, 1840, Edward Johnson wrote from Waioli Mission Station at Hanalei to missionary Samuel Castle on O‘ahu that Dr. Lafon was “forming a Church about 10 miles this side of Kōloa,” adding that Lafon “& family are now spending a few weeks there.”<sup>26</sup> Lafon’s specific location—and the first reference to Lihu‘e found among missionary writings—appeared less than a month later. In a March 12, 1840 letter, Peter Gulick wrote Castle from his station at Kōloa: “Messrs. Alex’r Johnson & Tinker are assisting Dr. L. [Lafon] in a protracted meeting at Lihue in the vicinity of Hanamāulu.” When Lafon requested building materials from his O‘ahu suppliers in 1841, he asked that they be sent “to Nawiliwili direct,” the nearest landing to Lihu‘e.<sup>27</sup> An April 1842 communication from John Stetson to E. O. Hall again used the place name: “Doc. Lafon’s house at Lihue was destroyed by fire.”<sup>28</sup> The first Hawaiian language newspaper reference discovered had been published nine months earlier, in August 1841, when *Ka Nonanona* reported that Lihue contained six schools, with six teachers and 281 students.<sup>29</sup>

No similar references recognized Kaikioewa in relation to Lihu‘e. Rather, contemporaries specifically connected his activities to Hanamā‘ulu. One such was William Hooper, the point man for the Ladd & Co. sugar plantation at Kōloa. Hooper filled many lonely hours by writing to his Honolulu associates about affairs at the plantation and beyond. In 1837 and 1838 he communicated with some frequency about Kaikioewa’s cane growing at Kōloa and his burgeoning “Plantation at Waiiawa [Wahiawa, the *ahupua‘a* between Kalāheo and Hanapēpē],” where Kaikioewa was trying to build a mill. Hooper placed the governor at Hanamā‘ulu more than once. On November 28, 1838 he wrote that he hoped to involve Kaikioewa in a bridge project at Kōloa: “My object in getting the Gov<sup>r</sup> to do this job was in part to get him off

of the notion of building a wharf at Hana Moulu (near Kepaa) which would be an oppressive & useless work.” On December 11 he again complained, “The foolish old Gov. now thinks of building a wharf at Hana Moulu, to entice ships there.”<sup>30</sup>

Charlotte Knapp also places Kaikioewa at Hanamā‘ulu. After she and her husband, Horton Owen Knapp, toured Kaua‘i with a few other missionaries, she implied that Kaikioewa kept a house there. She wrote in her journal that on the night of March 1, 1839, “we dined at Hanamaulu and left Mr. Bishop and family there with the Governor.” Two mornings later, after visiting Mr. Hooper and eating with Dr. Lafon at Kōloa, the party “set out for Hanamaulu, the place of our sailing.” Knapp described the day:

We had a pleasant ride, arrived there about noon, found Mr. Bishop and family had gone into the country to see the beauties of nature



Hanamā‘ulu Bay was surrounded by canefields in 1924. At left is the wharf built by Lihue Plantation after the company bought 300 acres at Ahukini, on the southeast side of the bay, in 1866. Despite early criticism of Kaikioewa’s plans for a wharf at Hanamā‘ulu, the plantation utilized Ahukini for storage and shipping until Nāwiliwili Harbor was opened in 1930 as the deepwater port of Kaua‘i. Hawai‘i State Archives.

there. Then returned in the afternoon and about dark we went on board the brig *Harieta*.<sup>31</sup>

Ignoring other evidence, Damon continued to justify Lihu‘e as the place described by Jarves:

He locates the settlement somewhat nearer Wailua than would now be done by the modern road; but there can be no shadow of doubt as to the identity of the place, for we know that the old governor made a new home, called Lihue, in the ahupuaa of Nawiliwili above the bay on the site of the present county seat. More than one such settlement on the way from Koloa to Wailua he assuredly never could have built.<sup>32</sup>

Hanamā‘ulu is, of course, “somewhat nearer Wailua” than Lihu‘e. While logic dictates that Kaikioewa would not have built “more than one such settlement on the way from Koloa to Wailua,” it’s abundantly clear we *don’t* know that he established Lihu‘e above Nawiliwili Bay. Rather, accounts during that historical era placed Kaikioewa around Hanamā‘ulu Bay and Lafon at Lihu‘e above Nāwiliwili Bay.

#### A PRE-EXISTING LĪHU‘E PLACE NAME ON KAUA‘I?

On page 905, nearly at the end of the two-volume *Koamalu*, Damon hedged her insistence that Kaikioewa named Lihu‘e. She did reiterate: “Its name was of his adoption.” But then, significantly, she added the caveat that Grove Farm plantation owner George Norton Wilcox thought Lihu‘e possibly derived “from some obscure place name of the Nawiliwili region itself.”

Ethel Damon had conducted many informal interviews with Wilcox between 1921 and 1932. Wilcox’s brother Sam sometimes joined the conversation. Occasionally, family friend and Lihu‘e *kama‘āina* [native born] Mary Dorothea Rice Isenberg, known as Dora, did so as well. Buried in the typed notes of those interviews is an entry for September 24, 1930, in which Damon recorded G. N. Wilcox’s belief that Nāwiliwili landing and bay were once a section of an ‘*okana*, or large land division, known anciently as Hulē‘ia. That section included the “subdivision containing [the] present Lihue [Plantation] lands near [the] mill.”<sup>33</sup> Wilcox commented that, had the sugar plantation followed a common practice of naming its company after the district





Nāwiliwili Stream forms the boundary between the Nāwiliwili and Kalapaki *ahupua'a*. The Lihue Plantation mill was erected in 1851 at the edge of the stream in Nāwiliwili *ahupua'a*; the town grew up on the opposite side, in the *ahupua'a* of Kalapaki. Photo by J.J. Williams, 1887. Courtesy of Grove Farm Museum.

where it was located, “Lihue should have been Huleia but took [its] name from [the] mill site.” In other words, Wilcox suggested that the Lihue place name *already existed* along the Nāwiliwili stream in ancient Hulē‘ia at the boundary between the Nāwiliwili and Kalapaki *ahupua'a*, where Peirce & Company had constructed the original mill in 1851.

#### DAMON’S SOURCE FOR THE KAIKIOEWA CLAIM

With so much evidence against her assertion that Kaikioewa named Lihue, why would Damon continue to defend it throughout *Koamalu*? The answer may lie in an accident of timing—the Wilcox revelation occurred three weeks after *Koamalu* was finished and its preface (dated September 3, 1930) was written—and in the Kaikioewa attribution’s provenance. It was supplied by “Miss Lucy Peabody, a Hawaiian of rank revered by us all, and one deeply learned in the lore of her native country.”<sup>34</sup>

While the ties connecting Lucy Kaopauli Kalanikiekie Peabody (1840–1928) to Kaua‘i were not strong, they did exist. Her great aunt, Elizabeth Peke Davis, married Humehume, the son of Kaumualii, who had led the Kaua‘i revolt at Wahiawa in 1824. The couple was transported to O‘ahu after the uprising failed, and Humehume died there two years later, leaving Davis a widow at twenty-three. Peabody herself was prominent among the entourage that accompanied Queen Emma on the latter’s well documented sojourn to Kaua‘i in 1871, shortly after the queen inherited the Lāwa‘i *ahupua‘a* from her uncle, James Kanehoa Young, and his third wife, Kinoni.

Something induced Peabody to send the note to Thrum when she learned about his upcoming article in the 1905 *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual*, but the basis for her comment is obscure. It is certainly possible that she was in possession of some now forgotten slice of knowledge, though supporting materials for the claim have not been found in Peabody collections housed at the Bishop Museum or the Hawai‘i State Archives. Her attribution appears to be unrecorded in either missionary accounts or early planter communications of the period, both so otherwise dense with chatter about their own and Kaikioewa’s comings and goings. Neither have writings to substantiate the claim surfaced in works of nineteenth century Hawaiian scholars, David Malo (ca. 1793–1853), John Papa Ii (1800–1853), and Samuel Kamakau (1815–1876), all of whose lives overlapped with Kaikioewa. The Kaikioewa-Līhu‘e connection, if it existed, appears to have been undocumented until Thrum’s notation in the twentieth century, more than sixty-five years after such a naming would have been possible.

No matter how established the Peabody pedigree, it’s difficult to overlook the shortcomings of eyewitness accounts and oral histories; the fallibility of memories is well established in this age of print. A close-to-home example of how imperfect recall can change family stories over time is provided by Lucy Peabody’s niece and close companion, Lucy Kalanikumaiikiekie Davis Henriques. Perhaps still curious about the Kaikioewa-named-Līhu‘e assertion, Damon interviewed her after *Koamalu* was published. During their conversation Henriques expanded on the Kaikioewa claim, crediting him with naming the Līhu‘e on Hawai‘i island as well as on Kaua‘i. Lucy Peabody herself had made no such declaration in her 1904 message to Thomas Thrum.<sup>35</sup>



## THE TRANSLATION OF LĪHU‘E

Today, the meaning of Līhu‘e is commonly written as “goose flesh” or “cold chill.”<sup>36</sup> So it may be, though more than one person has suggested that it may once have meant something different on Kaua‘i, since the description doesn’t match that location in the way it does the O‘ahu and Hawai‘i sites. In Thomas Thrum’s March 16, 1929 response to Damon’s query about the translation of the name, he penned a disclaimer: “As to the significance of the meaning of Lihue (goose flesh) I must leave you on the field to ascertain. The late Wm. H. Rice could not do better than furnish this definition, omitted by both Andrews and Parker.”<sup>37</sup>

Mary Pukui and Samuel Elbert, whose now standard *Hawaiian Dictionary* first appeared in 1957, begin an introductory section, “On Translating into Hawaiian,” with a caution. Because “Hawaiian has more words with multiple meanings than almost any other language,” they warned, that complexity could lead a neophyte to false assumptions and unintended consequences: “*He ala ʻehu aku kēnā*. ‘A misty pathway, that!’”<sup>38</sup> Hawaiian language teachers voice related cautions about defining one word by picking and choosing among the meanings of its component parts.

*The Hawaiian Dictionary* does not contain an entry for a single word *līhu‘e*, though it does include several definitions for the two words *lī* and *hu‘e*:

LĪ: Chills; to have chills; to tremble with cold; shuddery feeling of horror. Lace, as of shoes; to lace or tie. To hang, gird; to furl or reef, as a sail. A prefix to many kinds of seaweeds.

HU‘E: To remove, lift off, uncover, expose; to unload as a ship; to open, as an oven; to exhume, push, force, prod; to wash out, as flood waters; to reveal.

Lexicographers understand that words and their meanings can change over time. Some words disappear from use while new words are added. Ninety years before the Pukui and Elbert dictionary, when the Reverend Lorrin Andrews published *A Dictionary of the Hawaiian Language* in 1865, he included several other definitions *in addition* to the Pukui and Elbert definitions above:

LI: To see; to observe. To fear; to be afraid; to shrink back with dread.

HU-E: To look slyly [*sic*] at a thing; to glance with the eye. To steal; to take secretly what is another’s; a thief. To dig; to throw out dirt, as in digging a pit. A gourd; a water calabash.<sup>39</sup>

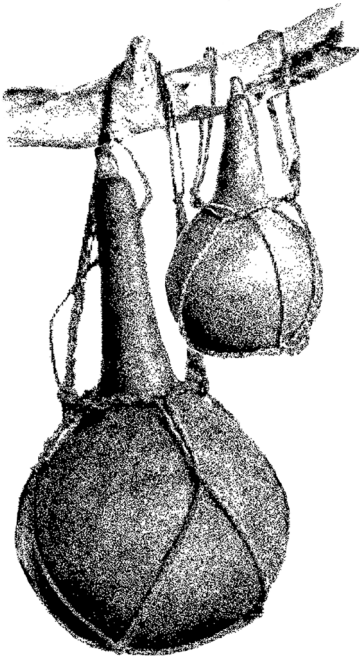
Even more remote meanings might once have existed. Etymologists sometimes look to Aotearoa [New Zealand] for basic elements in Hawaiian words and their cognates. The *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* includes several:

RI (with no L sound in the Maori language, R is suggested): to shut out with a screen. Angry. A sacred mark set up to prevent people from passing.

HUE, HUHUE: To be quick, speedy.

HUE: A gourd . . . Hawaiian—hue, a gourd; a water calabash.<sup>40</sup>

With so many definitions for the two words, the possibility certainly exists that different meanings, and even different pronunciations,



Both the meanings of the various islands’ Lihues and their corresponding pronunciations and spellings may once have differed, much as O‘ahu’s Wahiawā and Kaua‘i’s Wahiawa still do today. Lorrin Andrews included “gourd; a water calabash” among his translations for “hu-e” in his 1865 dictionary; the Pukui and Elbert opus lists that definition under “hue,” without a diacritical. Courtesy of the author.

may once have been attached to the various Lihues on Kaua‘i, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, and Maui,<sup>41</sup> and that there remains much to learn about the mysteries of Lihu‘e.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

Lihu‘e is the most prominent town on Kaua‘i, home to the island’s premier airport and immediately inland of its port at Nāwiliwili. Lihu‘e is the seat of governmental affairs and the setting for Kaua‘i’s largest concentration of professional and human resources, health services, and retail activity. A century ago Lihu‘e was already considered the crossroads of the island, but a century before that, no such future was apparent. Where lie its roots? In Hawai‘i, one looks to the name as a way to puzzle out the place.

Westerners tend to label broad landscape features with identifiable names, perhaps equating size with significance. Hawaiians adhered to no such constraints. Damon herself recognized that in ancient times “every stone on the island had its meaning, every trail had its name.”<sup>42</sup> The importance of place—and place names—in the Hawaiian culture is hard to overstate. Within a name are embedded hints about the location itself, whether it describes physical characteristics or events that occurred there. As Carlos Andrade, a professor of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i, has explained, a place name is like a personal name. “When people pronounce it wrong, it rankles. When they deliberately change it, it erases you from the world.”<sup>43</sup> Hawaiian scholars and lexicologists are working to retrieve, restore, and protect what names they can. In the case of the Puna district on Kaua‘i, where Victoria Kamamalu’s Mahele awards included thousands of acres, the possibility is very real that names previously existing but undocumented are lost. An obscure Kaua‘i site once known as Līhu‘e could easily fit into that category.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Koamalu*’s overlooked subtitle, “A Story of Pioneers on Kauai and of What They Built in That Island Garden,” is a faithful description of the focus of Damon’s study. Dora Isenberg commissioned Ethel Damon to write *Koamalu* as “a tribute to her parents, her grandparents, and her husband” (all of whom had ties to Lihue Plantation),



Mary Dorothea Rice Isenberg (1862–1949) was born in Lihue to Hannah Maria Rice (1842–1867) and Paul Heinrich Friedrich Carl Isenberg (1837–1903). Her grandfather, William Harrison Rice, had left missionary teaching for his health and moved to Lihue in 1854 with his wife, Mary Sophia Hyde, and their children to become manager of Peirce and Company (Lihue Plantation). Dora’s father immigrated to Kaua‘i from Germany in 1858 and rose to recognition as one of the leaders of the Hawaiian sugar industry and a member of the Kingdom’s House of Nobles. Dora was known for her deep interest in nature, her efforts to beautify Lihue, and her enduring philanthropy. Courtesy of Kaua‘i Historical Society.

according to a 1932 review of the book published in a Hawaiian Historical Society annual report.<sup>44</sup> It judged *Koamalu* “a fine and substantial contribution to the printed literature of Hawaiian history.” Most would still agree with the appraisal. However, charming as the quaint, florid descriptions of her island Eden may be, and vivid as its images of times past remain, Damon has created challenges for the dedicated

researchers who have followed. Verification of some of her statements can be a daunting task, because she chose to omit comprehensive references from the book. Sadly, she and Isenberg also destroyed most source materials after *Koamalu's* publication, declaring in its preface that the book itself was intended as the “permanent setting for many of the family letters and much of the family history.”

If Ethel Damon knew more than she wrote about the origins of the name Lihu'e, that truth has vanished with the records. A researcher is left to puzzle out the pieces. Whether the name Lihu'e was born on Kaua'i, who may actually have labeled that spot, and how the word accurately translates, may forever be lost to the mists of time.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Opinions vary on whether or when diacritical markings should be added to Hawaiian place and personal names. I have followed the recommendation of my Hawaiian language teacher, the late Ilei Beniamina. She advised that diacriticals be added to place names but not used with personal names unless the marks were bestowed by the subject's parents or added by the individual him- or herself.
- <sup>2</sup> Ethel Damon, *Koamalu: A Story of Pioneers on Kauai and of What They Built in That Island Garden* (Honolulu: privately printed, 1931).
- <sup>3</sup> C. S. Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1970 [1830]) 125–6.
- <sup>4</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1992) 350.
- <sup>5</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 189, 206, 263–64, 351.
- <sup>6</sup> Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-one Years in the Sandwich Islands* (Hartford: Hezekiah Huntington, 1849) 71.
- <sup>7</sup> Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands*, 246–247; Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-one Years*, 237–8.
- <sup>8</sup> “Lohe iho nei makou, ua make o Aberahama Kaikioewa ma Koloa i Kauai i ka la 10 o Aperila nei, i ka hora 6 o ke kakahiaka.” [We hear here, Abraham Kaikioewa died at Kōloa Kauai on April 10, at 6:00 am.] *Ke Kumu Hawaii*, vol. 4, no. 24, April 24, 1839: 95; Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 346.
- <sup>9</sup> David H. Tuggle and M. J. Tomonari-Tuggle, *Synthesis of Cultural Resource Studies of the 'Ewa Plain*, prepared for Belt Collins Hawaii (Honolulu: International Archaeological Research Institute, Inc., 1997) 30.
- <sup>10</sup> Elspeth P. Sterling and Catherine C. Summers, compilers, *Sites of Oahu* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1978) 136 and 140; “Kukaniloko Birthstones State Historic Site,” <<http://www.hawaiistateparks.org/parks/oahu/kukaniloko.cfm>>, accessed October 1, 2011.

- <sup>11</sup> <<http://www.hawaiiistateparks.org/parks/oahu/kukanilo.cfm>>.
- <sup>12</sup> Abraham Fornander, *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-lore*, Memoirs of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, vol. 5 (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1918–1919) 274 fn. A 1929 Hawaii Territory Survey map, reprinted in Jon Chinen, *The Great Mahele* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1958) 2, identifies Wai‘anae Uka as being part of Wahiawā at that time.
- <sup>13</sup> Sterling and Summers, *Sites of Oahu*, 138–139.
- <sup>14</sup> William Foster, compiler, *Decisions at Chambers by Single Justices of the Supreme Court of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Company, 1889) 4 and 206; W. D. Alexander, “A Brief History of Land Titles in the Hawaiian Kingdom,” *Hawaiian Journal of Law & Politics* vol. 2 (summer 2006) 178.
- <sup>15</sup> John Papa Ii, *Fragments of Hawaiian History* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1963) 69.
- <sup>16</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 285–286.
- <sup>17</sup> Thomas S. Dye and Elaine H. R. Jourdane, *Archaeological Assessment for the Proposed T-Mobile West Hickam-Iroquois point Cell Site No. HI 186P, 6376 Ibis Avenue, Pu‘uloa, ‘Ewa, O‘ahu Island, TMK:(1)9-1-001:034 por*, prepared for Clayton Group Services, Inc. (Honolulu: 2006) 4.
- <sup>18</sup> Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992) 58 and 112; Dye and Jourdane, *Archaeological Assessment*, 206.
- <sup>19</sup> Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 124, 233, 235; *Buke Kakau Paa no ka mahele aina i Hooholoia iwaena o Kamehameha III a me Na Lii a me Na Konohiki ana Hale Hii Honolulu Ianuari 1848*, AH, 29.
- <sup>20</sup> Dorothy B. Barrère, compiler, *The King’s Mahele: The Awardees and Their Lands* (Hilo, HI: private printing, 1994) 312–315.
- <sup>21</sup> Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 261; Moises Kekuaiwa land claims: <<http://ulukau.org/cgi-bin/vicki?e=d-ovicki-00-1-0-010-4—text—0-11-1haw-Zz-1—20-about—010-131-0010escapewin-00&a=d&c=vicki&cl=CL2.5&d=Co7714B-K>>.
- <sup>22</sup> Damon, *Koamalu*, 403–404. James J. Jarves, *Scenes and Scenery in the Sandwich Islands, and a Trip through Central America: being observations from my notebook during the years 1837–1842* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1843) 146.
- <sup>23</sup> Damon, *Koamalu*, 403.
- <sup>24</sup> Thanks to Andrew Bushnell for pointing out clues in the second paragraph that by the time the Lafons began their ministry in the area, sugarcane was evident, though it is unclear whether “the plains” where it was growing were at “Lihui” or elsewhere in the district. The mystery is greater as there is no mention of a mill, which would have necessarily been situated nearby if the cane was planted commercially.
- <sup>25</sup> Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, vol. IV* (Philadelphia: printed by C. Sherman, 1850) 67–68.
- <sup>26</sup> Edward Johnson, Elsie Wilcox Collected Papers, Kaua‘i Historical Society archives, typescript copies of letters in HMCS collection.
- <sup>27</sup> Letter, August 9, 1841, Thomas Lafon to Messrs. Chamberlain and Castle, Elsie

- Wilcox Collected Papers, Kaua'i Historical Society archives, typescript copies of letters in HMCS collection.
- <sup>28</sup> John Stetson, Elsie Wilcox Collected Papers, Kaua'i Historical Society archives, typescript copies of letters in HMCS collection.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ka Nonanona*, August 17, 1841, 15. Thanks to John Clark for his assistance.
- <sup>30</sup> William Hooper, Elsie Wilcox Collected Papers, Kaua'i Historical Society archives, typescript copies of letters to Ladd & Co., Honolulu, presented to KHS by Arthur C. Alexander, 1935.
- <sup>31</sup> Charlotte C. Knapp, Journal, Book II, 1839. Elsie Wilcox Collected Papers, Kaua'i Historical Society archives, typescript copies of letters in HMCS collection.
- <sup>32</sup> Damon, *Koamalu*, 403.
- <sup>33</sup> "Ethel Damon's interviews with G. N. Wilcox," typewritten manuscript, Grove Farm archives, 21.
- <sup>34</sup> Damon, *Koamalu*, 402.
- <sup>35</sup> Ethel Damon, "Miscellaneous Notes on Kauai History," Kaua'i Historical Society archives.
- <sup>36</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, Samuel H. Elbert, Esther T. Mookini, *Place Names of Hawaii* (Honolulu: U Hawaii P, 1974) 132.
- <sup>37</sup> Kaua'i Historical Society archives.
- <sup>38</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert. *Hawaiian Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986) 204 and 85.
- <sup>39</sup> Lorrin Andrews, *A Dictionary of the Hawaiian Language, to Which Is Appended an English-Hawaiian Vocabulary and a Chronological Table of Remarkable Events*, with an introduction to the new edition by Noenoe K. Silva and Albert J. Schutz, (Waipahu, HI: Island Heritage Publishing, 2003 [1865]) 339 and 215. That dictionary quadrupled the entries in his initial "Vocabulary" published in 1836.
- <sup>40</sup> Edward Tregear, *The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*. (Christchurch, N.Z.: Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, 1897), 412 and 90.
- <sup>41</sup> The *Mahele Award Book*, Volume 9:78, describes claimant I. Kahula's lands *mauka* of the Seamen's Chapel on Maui as comprising two 'ili, "Lihue and Kuai-manini."
- <sup>42</sup> Damon, *Koamalu*, 385.
- <sup>43</sup> Personal correspondence, October 10 2011.
- <sup>44</sup> *Fortieth Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society for the Year 1931*, (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint Co., 1978) 38-40.