



OUR AHUPUA'A

STUDENT READING - EXTENDED ACTIVITY

The Battle of The Owls

Not far from Pūowaina, now known as Punchbowl Crater, a man named Kapo'i lived the simple life of a farmer. Kapo'i lived in a small grass *hale* (home) just below Pūowaina. Kapo'i's *hale* was old, tattered and in disrepair. One day, during the rainy season when fishing was poor, Kapo'i had no fish to eat. So he went to the Kewalo wetlands to search for bird eggs to eat.

Kapo'i eventually found a *pueo* (owl) nest with seven eggs. Gathering all seven eggs, he returned home to clean and wrap them for cooking. As Kapo'i began to wrap the eggs to be placed in the earthen oven, he heard a great voice from above calling, "Kapo'i, return my eggs."

"But I have no fish to eat, and they are my dinner," he replied.

"Those are my eggs, return them to me!" cried the voice from above.

"But I have already wrapped them to cook," spoke Kapo'i.

"You are heartless if you do not give me back my eggs, Kapo'i," said the *pueo* as it circled Kapo'i's house.

"How many eggs belong to you?" asked Kapo'i.

"All seven eggs are mine," replied the owl.

"Well come down and get them," said Kapo'i to the *pueo*.

Kapo'i went to bed hungry, but the *pueo* never forgot Kapo'i's good deed. The *pueo* became a god of Kapo'i. To honor his god, Kapo'i built a *heiau* and dedicated it to the *pueo*.

Many days later, the highest chief of O'ahu, Kākuhihewa, who was living in Waikīkī at the time, heard about the *heiau* that Kapo'i had built. The chief became angry. It was considered an act of rebellion for a commoner to build a *heiau* before one was built for the high chief. Death was the penalty. Kākuhihewa ordered his warriors to bring Kapo'i to the *heiau* Kūpalaha in Waikīkī to be sacrificed.

Tied up and locked away, Kapo'i remembered his friend, the *pueo*. He called out to the owl for help. Chanting, Kapo'i's voice reached the heavens and the *pueo* heard him. The *pueo* took Kapo'i's plea to the king of the owls who lived in Mānoa Valley in the Waikīkī *ahupua'a*. The king of the owls, feeling bad for Kapo'i, agreed to help. He called out to all the *pueo* of Hawai'i to assist the human who was awaiting sacrifice in Waikīkī.



The owl king's command was transmitted by a *pahu* (drum). The drum was played so loudly it could be heard from the island of Kaua'i to the island of Hawai'i! The *pahu* was played until all the owls, from Hilo to Līhu'e gathered on O'ahu.

That night, the owls honored the god Kāne. Then, at daybreak they descended upon Waikīkī as the highest chiefs of the land, including Kākuhihewa prepared to sacrifice Kapo'i. As dawn came upon Waikīkī, so many owls flew overhead that they blocked out the sun. The morning was turned as dark as night.

All the warriors of the highest chiefs were gathered to fight off the *pueo*. But they were no match for the birds who swooped down and pecked at the noses and eyes of the warriors, dropping excrement (poop) onto their heads. The *pueo* continued their attack until the highest chiefs allowed Kapo'i to go free. That day was never forgotten by the people of old Hawai'i. They named the spot where the battle took place Kūkaeunahiopueo, the scaly excrement of the owls. To this day, the *pueo* is worshiped as a god.

Adapted from:

Kamakau, Samuel M. 1991. *Tales and Traditions of the People of Old: Na Mo'olelo a ka Po'e Kahiko*. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press.

Seiden, Allan. 2001. *Waikīkī*. Waipahu, HI: Island Heritage Publishing