

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA



PRESS RELEASE

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Unveiling the Secrets of a Mystery Island

Imagine spending nearly three weeks on a remote, rugged and wind-swept island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. That's exactly what a Honolulu-based researcher and an archaeologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did on the most recent NOAA research mission to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. University of Hawaii anthropology doctoral student, Kekuewa Kikiloi and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Archaeologist, Anan Raymond completed the longest archaeological research project ever held on Mokumanamana (or Necker Island). Their survey and documentation of cultural resources is the most extensive in more than 85 years. In 1923 and 1924 two Bishop Museum archaeologists recorded the architectural components and details of 34 heiau (sacred Hawaiian worship) sites that were built across the 46-acre island. This expedition uncovered variations between the 1920s research and their own. For instance plan view/profile maps of heiau demonstrated considerable differences at nearly one third of the sites compared to original drawings of representational maps included in the book, *“Archaeology of Nihoa and Necker.”*

Mokumanamana is categorized by Pacific Anthropology as a mystery island, because when the first Europeans rediscovered it, it had no inhabitants but did have evidence of prior human occupation. Part of Kikiloi's and Raymond's work is to uncover the mysteries of who lived on the island, when, and for how long. They gathered geological source material to try and determine whether basalt artifacts from Mokumanamana were made locally or brought to the island. Those artifacts are now in the collection of Bishop Museum. The researchers also noted the impacts of modern day humans. They report half of the archaeological sites were impacted by bombing to varying degrees at some point. They located more than 30 bomb craters and fragments of shrapnel adjacent to heiau sites.

Perhaps their most exciting discovery occurred on the 12th day of the research stay. At a workshop site they found a rare, “Necker Island Stone Image.” A collection of these rare stone images were first rediscovered in 1894 by the Annexation Party of the Provisional Government, as well as on later trips. Kikiloi and Raymond also uncovered two appendages (legs) of stone images at different sites. They say preliminary analysis suggests the stone images were made on the island and that many heiau, not just one, had images on them. The results of this latest research will be added to an already large body of knowledge about the cultural features of Mokumanamana and will help to create a 20 year-long preservation plan for cultural sites on Mokumanamana.

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations.

Three co-trustees – the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i – joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place, which is now being considered for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For more information, please visit

www.papahanaumokuakea.gov

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