

[ MOKUMANAMANA (NECKER) ISLAND ]

2009

# 'We were in a time warp'

*Two scientists recall a visit to a pristine cultural haven in the Northwestern Islands*

BY HELEN ALTONN  
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**A**FTER LIVING 18 days on a remote island in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Kekuewa Kikiloi is reveling in the "incredible" experience and still nursing sore feet from the rugged volcanic terrain.

"There is definitely a little bit of mystery and suspense" about Mokumanamana (Necker) island in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, said the University of Hawaii graduate student in anthropology.

Kikiloi and Anan Raymond, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional archaeologist based in Portland, Ore., were dropped off on Mokumanamana by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research ship Hi'ialakai during a monthlong marine and archaeological expedition.

The ship returned to Honolulu on Sept. 6, but Kikiloi said he is still recovering from the "feat" of living in a remote environment with no fresh water or trees about 460 miles northwest of Honolulu.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEKUEWA KIKILOI

**An unfinished human stone carving is seen at Mokumanamana, an uninhabited island about 460 miles northwest of Honolulu. A trowel is in the picture for scale.**

He described the expedition at a news conference yesterday in Honolulu with Raymond speaking from Chicago by teleconference.

The monument has been nominated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site.

Kikiloi said he has been to the monument nine times and four times to Mokumanamana, second in the northwest chain after

Nihoa. He and Raymond studied 34 heiau (religious structures) on the 46-acre island.

It was the longest archaeological research project ever conducted there. Kikiloi said the island's "archaeological record as a whole" was the most significant discovery.

"There are few cases in Hawaii where you can see an intact cultural landscape" with nearly 100 percent native plants and animals," he said.

The scientists found more than 30 craters from bombings and shrapnel fragments next to heiau sites but are not sure who caused the damage. Nonetheless, Kikiloi said, "The landscape is uncompromised by human development. It is incredible ... invigorating to go there."

Even so, he said, they were "counting the days" until the ship picked them up. "We were in a time warp."

"How did they do it?" Kikiloi asked, regarding the island's early inhabitants. "We can barely do it today, and we have all this technology. How did they get water? These people were stronger than we ever thought."

He said Mokumanamana has "some of the most interesting archaeology in Hawaii, if not the Pacific."





Kekuewa Kikiloi photos

Researchers spent 18 days doing an archaeological survey of the 46-acre Mokumanamana island.

# Ancient objects found on remote Mokumanamana

BY AUDREY McAVOY  
Associated Press

Researchers on a rare expedition to a now uninhabited rocky outpost north of the main Hawaiian islands found a partially finished human stone carving and the remnants of what may be a craftsman's workshop.



Kikiloi

crop in 85 years.

University of Hawai'i anthropology doctoral student Kekuewa Kikiloi spent 18 days on the 46-acre island along with Anan Raymond, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service archaeologist.

The inhospitable island lacks fresh water, trees that would provide cover, and is continually buffeted by wind. It's frequented by



seabirds, but is otherwise desolate save for the ruins of ancient heiau, or shrines, that line the top of a ridge running along the spine of the is-



See a video and more photos from the expedition to Mokumanamana at

[HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM](http://HONOLULUADVERTISER.COM)

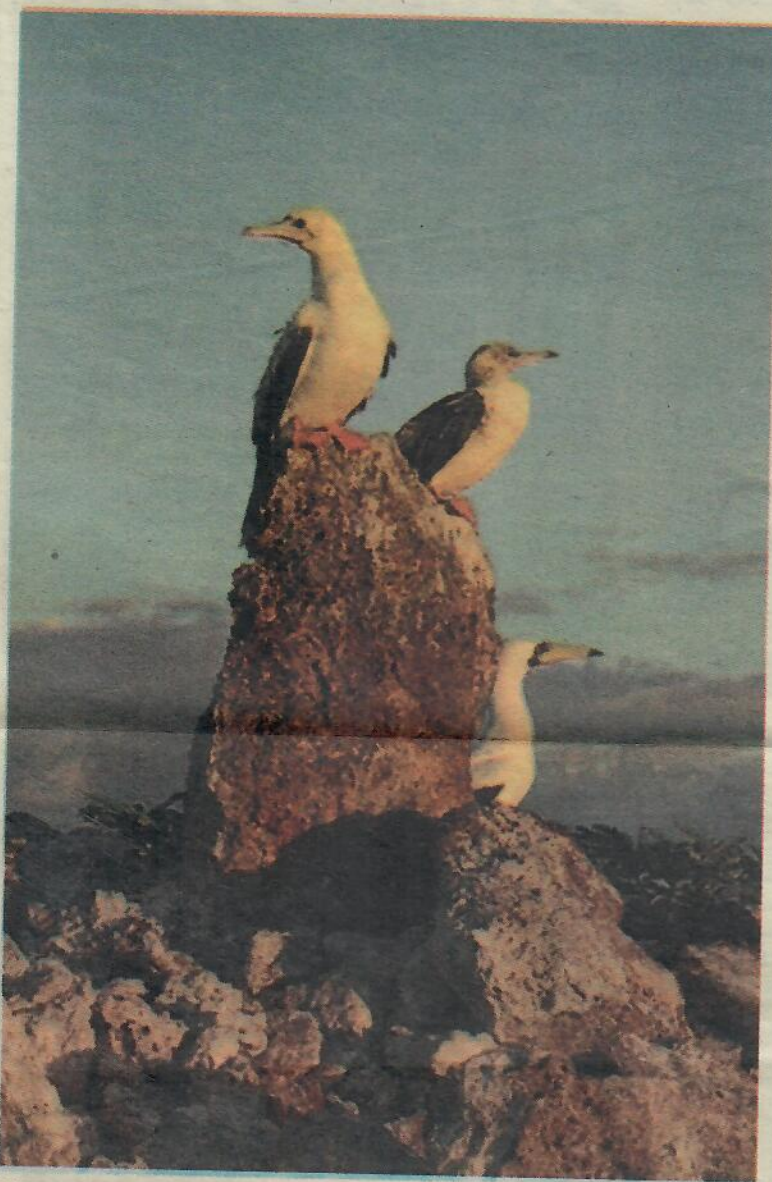
land.

"It's somewhat of an archaeological mystery as to how people survived on this island in the past and constructed these huge monuments," Kikiloi said yesterday.

The newly discovered carving resembles other stone figures found on Mokumanamana during a trip to the island sponsored by Hawai'i's provisional government shortly after the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893.

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**Birds sit on upright temple structures during sunrise on Moku-manamana island.**

It was an "awesome" experience, both as an anthropology student and native Hawaiian because of the religious significance of the heiau, Kikiloi said. How the people survived and constructed large monuments remains a puzzle, he said. Only three agricultural terraces were found, and the source of the stone for the structures is unknown.

Raymond said the island is a dangerous place to walk around because the 15 million-year-old volcanic rock crumbles easily with the weight of feet or a hand. And thousands of birds cover the island.

"Where you would like to put your hand or foot has seabird chicks. You have to move very slowly. It is extremely rugged. You have to travel on all fours in many locations."

The heiau has upright structures along the crest of the island, perhaps oriented to astronomical phenomena, the scientists said. Kikiloi said there are similar upright structures on Hawaii's mountain peaks.

Stone images have been collected from the island, most of which are in the Bishop Museum and some in the British Museum, he said.