

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Amoe Giugni, 87, former lau hala weaver

*"At that time we got water from the rain to drink. To wash clothes we got water from ma kai here at Waiku'i and Waiku'a'ala. Those are the names of places my parents went to wash clothes. They dried the clothes on the pāhoehoe lava. The people from ma uka would go up further ma uka to springs, fresh water to drink."*

Amoe Giugni, Hawaiian-Chinese, was born in Kahaluu, North Kona, Hawaii in 1894. Her father owned a store and tailoring business; her mother wove and sold lau hala products. As a child, Amoe learned about fishing, lau hala weaving, and other Hawaiian practices.

Today, at the age of 87, she continues to reside in Kahaluu.

Tape No. 9-82-1-81 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Amoe Giugni (AG)

January 13, 1981

Kahalu'u, Kona, Hawai'i

BY: Ray Kalā Enos (RE)

[Note: Interview conducted in Hawaiian. Translation done by Ray Kalā Enos.]

RE: This is an interview with Amoe Giugni at her home in Kahalu'u, Kona, Hawai'i. Today is January 13, 1981. Where are you from?

AG: From here in Kona, Kahalu'u. I was born here in Kahalu'u.

RE: What year were you born?

AG: Eighteen ninety-four.

RE: Who were your parents?

AG: Kipola was my mother and Akamu, Lee Sam was my father. Hawaiians called him Akamu. Before there were many Pākē.

RE: Where is your mother from?

AG: From here in Kona.

RE: And your father, where is he from?

AG: He was from China.

RE: In what year did he come here?

AG: I don't know.

RE: Why did he come here?

AG: He probably came to plant rice or sugar in Kaua'i. I don't know.

RE: He first came to . . .

- AG: To Kaua'i. And from Kaua'i to Hawai'i.
- RE: Do you know who your grandparents were?
- AG: My grandparents were Kuenekū and Ha'o, my grandmother. There were two sisters, Mahana and Kamahana, they were sisters to Kuenekū.
- RE: Where were they from?
- AG: From here. Mahana married Lono. He was a minister at Kaumakapili. That was a long time ago.
- RE: So you were born here. Were you raised here also?
- AG: Yes, by my grandparent.
- RE: So you were raised by your grandparent?
- AG: Yes.
- RE: Who raised you? Was it Mahana?
- AG: No, Ha'o. She was Kuenekū's wife, my grandmother.
- RE: What were houses like at that time?
- AG: They were grass houses.
- RE: So you lived in a grass house?
- AG: Yes. At that time, families were buried behind, in the yard.
- RE: Did you have any brothers or sisters?
- AG: Well there were three of us. Me, Mrs. Kanahele, and Kūlia.
- RE: Were you the oldest?
- AG: Yes, I was the oldest and Kūlia was the youngest.
- RE: Where did you go to school?
- AG: In Keauhou.
- RE: Until what year?
- AG: I forgot. That's many years ago. (Until about sixth grade.)
- RE: Were you raised with the Hawaiian language?
- AG: My mother and grandparents just spoke Hawaiian. My father was a Pākē but he spoke Hawaiian. Before, there were many Hawaiians.

RE: How did you learn English?

AG: By going to school. And now there aren't anymore Hawaiians, only haole.

RE: So most of the people in Kahalu'u were Hawaiians?

AG: Yes Hawaiians, only Hawaiians.

RE: Do you remember what the schools were like?

AG: The children didn't know. When I was young, when we go to school we got 'ulu and cook it. When it was time for lunch, it would be done. We picked coffee that fell and took it to the store and got five cents and a loaf of bread.

RE: So you worked when you were young?

AG: Yes, picked coffee to help my parents, on leased coffee land ma uka. After school I picked coffee. And we picked the ones that fell and took it to the store to sell. It was five cents per can--oil can, and we sold it and got a loaf of bread. That was lunch.

RE: What was your father's occupation?

AG: He was a tailor for those that wanted pants and palaka [shirts]. That's what he did.

RE: Before, you said he had a store?

AG: My parents leased land from Bishop [Estate] and we went ma uka and built a house and store for his work as a tailor. Workers were hired, to pick coffee.

RE: Did you work for him?

AG: Yes, after school us kids worked, picked coffee, and [worked] in the store while he was sewing clothes. At that time there were many Hawaiians. He made our clothes too.

RE: What sort of things were sold?

AG: Various things. Sugar, cracker, flour. My father made bread and mea'ono [lit., delicious thing, a dessert, a pastry].

RE: Where and how did he get his goods?

AG: From Hackfeld [in Kailua]. When I was young a car would come by and bring the flour and sugar from Hackfeld. The boat would come in at Keauhou and we would take it to go to Honolulu.

RE: So you lived in Kahalu'u from that time until now?

AG: Well, I was born here and went to school. And then the store was built up ma uka. My parents wanted to go to Honolulu so they sold the house to a Kepani. Then we went to Honolulu. We stayed there for a number of years. At first we sold our Kahalu'u ma uka lease. We went to live with my aunty, the younger sister of my mother. We lived with them for a month picking coffee and then went to Honolulu. When my younger sister died because she was sick, I moved back to take care of her. That was 1954. Before that I used to come to Kona once in a while for visit and pick coffee.

RE: What year did you go to Honolulu?

AG: I don't know. I think I was 16 years old then.

RE: And your sister died in 1955?

AG: Yes, and I've been living here ever since.

RE: What did you do in Honolulu then?

AG: We lived near Ka'iulani School in Pālama. I helped my father. I sold food to the children.

RE: He had a store there?

AG: Yes.

RE: What were things that you did for fun when you were young?

AG: Play music, 'ukulele.

RE: Did you dance?

AG: Children just played around.

RE: Do you remember any games, Hawaiian games?

AG: I don't know any. We children just helped our parents, pick coffee and things like that.

RE: Can you describe your old house?

AG: I forgot.

RE: But it was a grass house?

AG: Yes.

RE: What was the food like?

AG: Here, this place belonged to the king and sections of land were given. The beach was for fishermen. And ma uka for people to plant taro, and make poi. They would come down with poi and fishermen would go up with fish.

- RE: So you fished?
- AG: Yes, and I'd gather pipipi, 'opihi, whatever we could get.
- RE: You said there were many fishermen in those days?
- AG: Yes, only Hawaiians. There was a lot of fish then.
- RE: What kinds of fish were there?
- AG: Manini, kole, palani, pualu, weke, uouoa.
- RE: What methods of fishing were used?
- AG: Gill net, sometimes they'd go on the canoe. We would light the fire when we saw them coming in, so we could pūlehu fish.
- RE: What other ways?
- AG: We would also throw net, spear fish.
- RE: Can you explain 'upena ku'u [gill net]?
- AG: What I remember is, the people go and lay the net and the people would come and slap the water. The fish would get scared and swim into the net. There was a lot of fish right out front here.
- RE: How did you cook these fish?
- AG: Mostly pūlehu, kupa [as stew or soup]. At that time we got water from the rain to drink. To wash clothes we got water from ma kai here at Waiku'i and Waiku'a'ala. Those are the names of places my parents went to, to wash clothes. They dried the clothes on the pāhoehoe lava. The people from ma uka would go up further ma uka to springs, fresh water to drink.
- RE: How did you get around before?
- AG: We went by walking. Sometimes my parents raised pigs and went to the mountains on a donkey not a horse. We would go make food for the pigs with the pānini [cactus].
- RE: Did you raise anything else like chickens, perhaps?
- AG: Yes.
- RE: Did you plant things?
- AG: Yes, cabbage, sometimes sweet potato. We would boil that.
- RE: So most of the people here were Hawaiians?

- AG: Yes, most of them were but now there's not very many.
- RE: You said your father spoke Hawaiian. Did he keep any of his Chinese customs that you remember?
- AG: No.
- RE: Did he speak Chinese?
- AG: No, only Hawaiian. So we only spoke Hawaiian.
- RE: When you were young what did you want to do when you got older?
- AG: Kids those days didn't know. They just did kid things. When I got older I did weaving hats and mats, that's what my mother did.
- RE: Your mother taught you?
- AG: Yes, she taught us kids. I made hats. When McKenzie came bringing tourists I would sell them hats and other things I made.
- RE: What were the prices?
- AG: Cheap. Not like now. Maybe four dollars for a hat.
- RE: Did your mother sell her hats and mats?
- AG: Yes, that was her job.
- RE: How much were mats then?
- AG: Cheap. Many Hawaiians made mats. Lau hala was cheap. Now there isn't that much.
- RE: Did you make lau hala things from them until now?
- AG: Yes but my eyes are weak. It's been two or three years since I've stopped.
- RE: What year did you meet your husband?
- AG: My first husband was Pākē in Honolulu. My next husband worked at Pearl Harbor. When he returned there and got pension we came here to Kona. When I came back to take care of my sister. He didn't have a job but his pension was enough to live on. Food prices were cheap then.
- RE: Do you remember what the prices were?
- AG: I forgot but they were cheap. He stopped working.
- RE: Do you remember what parties were like then?

AG: The table was on the floor. The mats were set down with ti leaves. Fish, poi, raw fish, pūlehu fish, whatever seafood was available, wana, opihi, pig.

RE: How was it prepared?

AG: The pig was kāluaed. Outside of the house, 'awa was pounded on rock.

RE: How was it ['awa] prepared to drink?

AG: Outside it was pounded on the rock and then water was added and then put into a bowl. The pānini and the 'uala [sweet potato] were made into drinks. They were fermented.

Clothes were washed on the pāhoehoe.

RE: What was used as soap?

AG: I don't know but later we got a powder for soap.

RE: Were lū'aus like they are today?

AG: Yes.

RE: Wasn't the food any different?

AG: No. It's the same. Poi is the most important thing. We'd go to school and come home and have poi. Then, food was cheap and there was a lot. That was the main thing. The 'uala too.

RE: So after you got married you lived here?

AG: First in Honolulu and then here when my sister was sick.

RE: In this house?

AG: Yes, this was her [AG's sister's] house. Her husband built it.

RE: So you've been here ever since?

AG: When I came for my sister, she was living in Keālia with her husband Willy Thompson. Her first husband was a Kepani. He was a teacher.

RE: Do you remember your first teacher at Keauhou?

AG: He was DeCoit, a Portuguese man.

RE: While the two of you were living here in Kona, what did you do?

AG: I made hats. My husband did work around the house.

- RE: You were pretty famous for weaving. Did you go around and show your work?
- AG: People came to the house. Also, I went to make hats and leis.
- RE: Were you in the same organization?
- AG: Yes, Ka'ahumanu Society. Sometimes I would go help at this art shop in Hōlualoa, make hats, lei; help with other things.
- RE: Do you remember any prominent people in Kona from before?
- AG: No, we didn't go all over. Mostly we stayed at home.
- RE: So your main job was to go fishing and help your parents?
- AG: We'd go with friends and family to go fishing.
- RE: Do you remember the arrival of the various ethnic groups here?
- AG: Yes, the Pākē and the Kepani.
- RE: How was it living together with them?
- AG: Good. Living together and talking together. The Filipino, too.
- RE: You went fishing right out here?
- AG: Yes right here. We'd go fishing and gather pipipi.
- RE: Do you remember something like the volcano flow or something bad for the people of Kona?
- AG: No, those days we didn't have a car or horse.
- RE: Do you remember something good in your life in Kona?
- AG: Yes I'm thankful until today. I never thought I'd see these new things. Before we had a grass house. But in those days there was lots of food. If you went to someone's house the first thing that they would say is come and eat. Poi was the main thing.
- RE: Do you remember any stories about this place?
- AG: No, I don't.
- RE: Do you go to church?
- AG: Yes, over there when I was young. You know where that road goes up. We went to Helani for church. And Kawaimaka Kalaiwa'a was the minister, the father of 'Ale Kalaiwa'a.

RE: Was that Catholic?

AG: No, Protestant.

RE: What was the name of the church?

AG: Helani Kai. There was also a Helani Uka.

RE: And you spoke Hawaiian at church?

AG: Yes, only Hawaiian.

RE: Do you remember any activities that you did with the church? Like on holidays or special occasions?

AG: We read. The minister read the Bible and explained it.

RE: What were the names of springs out here?

AG: Waikū'a'ala, the one where we washed clothes. The spring out here. The one over there by the Catholic church is called Waiku'i.

RE: Do you remember the other place names around here?

AG: No, I only know around here. Waiku'i and Waikū'a'ala, when we would go get water to wash dishes with brackish water. For fresh water, that was saved for drinking.

RE: Where is the fresh water from?

AG: We would catch the water at the house.

RE: You didn't have any springs?

AG: No, none over here. The springs all ma uka. Sometimes we'd go up ma uka to get fresh water.

RE: When you think back on the old days, what are your thoughts about living in Kona?

AG: I think about how there was so much aloha then.

RE: What do you think of the recent digging that has been going on in Kona?

AG: We around here went to Kealakehe School to listen to see if it's okay or not.

RE: The newspaper says these are really old bones.

AG: I don't know exactly where but probably ma uka of here where the bones were found. It was started by some kids who went and were just being kolohe. Just like here if we die and the land is sold to haole or Japanese and they start digging then they find bones of those who passed on.

RE: What do you think about Kona nowadays?

AG: It's kind of different. Not like before. Now it's different.

RE: Is that good or bad?

AG: Before was good living.

RE: What do you think about Kona and the future?

AG: I have no idea.

RE: What do you think should be done for the good of Kona?

AG: Now we can't help. We don't have a voice. Like this place that's being dug up back here. We went to listen at Kealakehe. Some people agree, some disagree. We in Kahalu'u didn't want it. When I went I saw them digging up the street. It's useless. We don't have a voice. We're not listened to. We had 800 names and weren't listened to.

RE: Before, who were the leaders of this area?

AG: I don't know. We didn't need any before. Before, there weren't machines to dig up the kiawe or guava trees. It was done by hand. They went with an axe.

END OF INTERVIEW

**A SOCIAL HISTORY  
OF KONA**

**Volume I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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