

Ka'ena, O'ahu's First Shield Volcano!



Ka'ena Point today,
photo courtesy of Warren Iseke

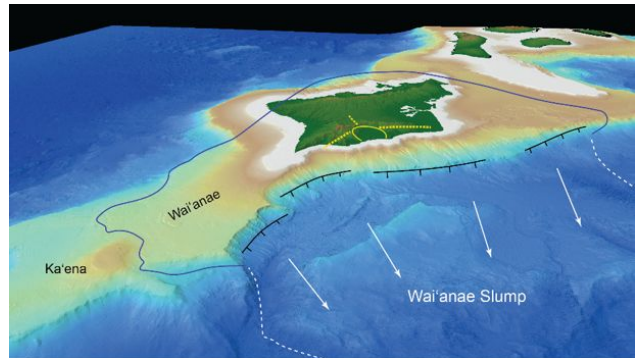
“EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!” A catch phrase from decades past used to sell newspapers on downtown Honolulu streets. The idea was that passersby couldn't possibly be up to date unless they grabbed hold of the latest news release. That concept still applies today.

It's old news that the island of O'ahu was formed by 2 gigantic shield volcanoes. Old news indeed!

Right off the press, the latest reports speak of a third volcano, unknown until recent time. Updates are certain to follow.

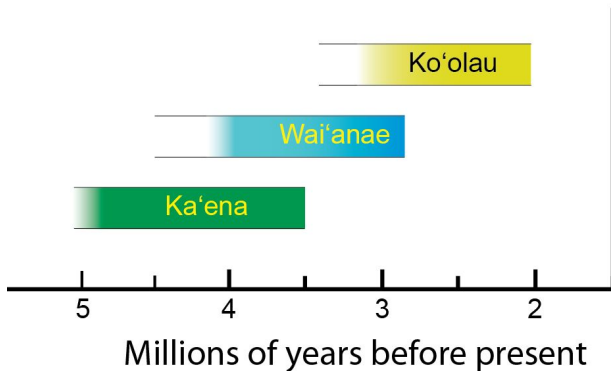
Just as Kīlauea's explosive, fiery surprise of 2018 opened our eyes to new, exciting, and scary eruptions on the island of Hawai'i, now evidence has surfaced that paints a new picture of the geologic history of the island of O'ahu. The news just keeps rolling in!

For the longest time, scientists and students alike understood that the Wai'anae mountain range was the older of 2 shields that together created the island of O'ahu – the younger being the Ko'olau range. Based upon scientific understanding, students were taught how Wai'anae emerged from the ocean to form its own island, followed by a separate island when Ko'olau appeared. Over time – it was taught – lava continued to pour out, and the 2 islands merged into one. Lessons were neatly packaged and well understood – all based upon the best scientific knowledge of the time.



But now a twist has been added. There's more to the story!

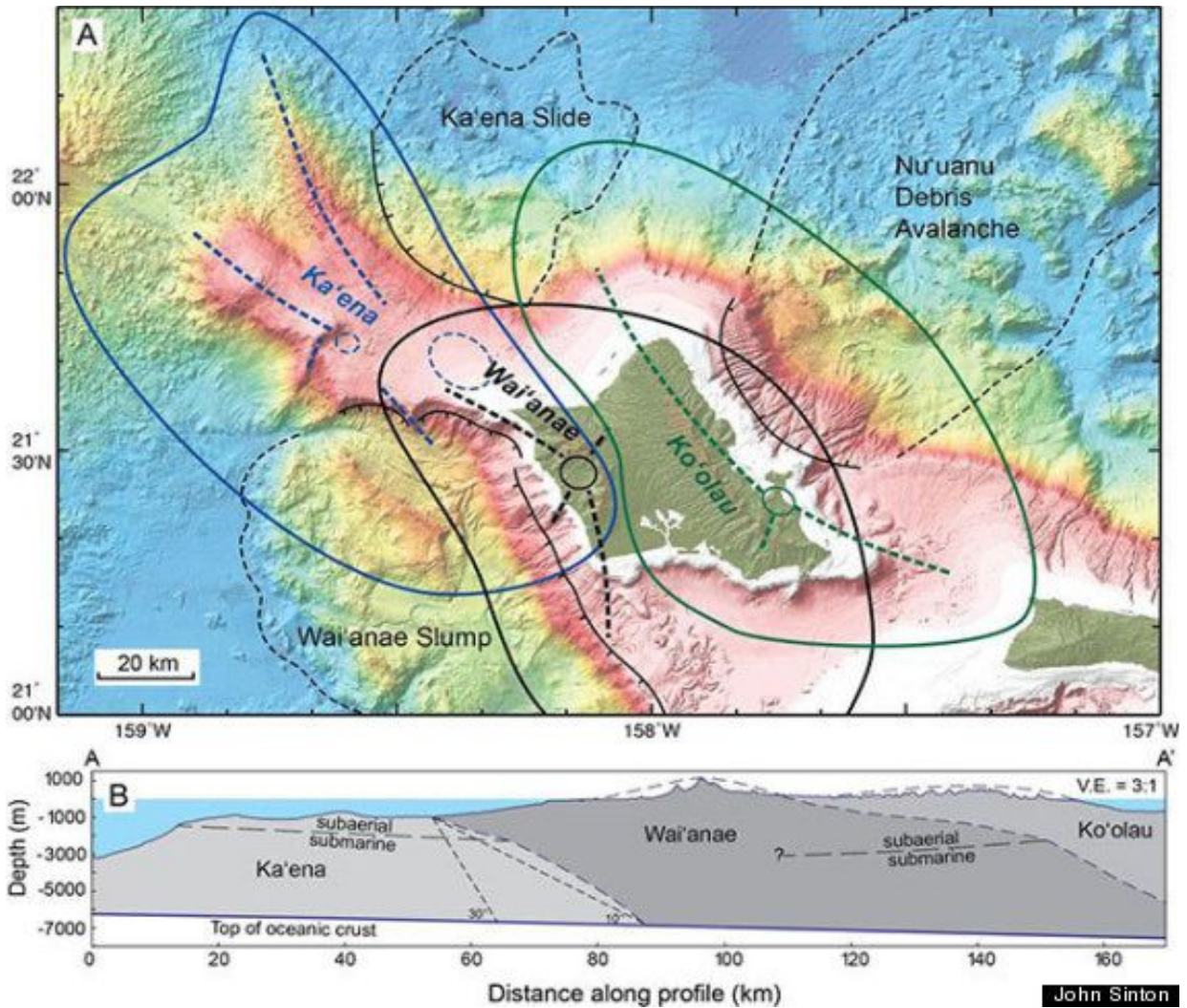
Age of O'ahu volcanoes



Long before Wai'anae and Ko'olau became significant parts of O'ahu, the great shield of Ka'ena slowly built but remained submerged for much of its life. When it finally appeared and when it sank again into its watery home, no one knows. But it became the firm foundation from which Wai'anae and Ko'olau later erupted.

And while we previously wondered why Wai'anae erupted so distant from its closest neighbor, Kaua'i, we find that mystery solved. Ka'ena formed between the two! And the mass of the island that we once thought belonged to Wai'anae was a mistaken assumption. Almost half of the material that we believed was Wai'anae actually belongs to Ka'ena!

3 shields of O'ahu showing gigantic landslide areas



So, 62 miles northwest of Ka'ena Point – home to native seabirds, turtles, and coastal native plants – lie the sunken remnants of a lost piece of history – a shield that once rose more than 3,000 feet above sea level – the height reached today by Ko'olau.

It would have been impressive to be able to see O'ahu in all its glory – 3 stupendous massive shields on display – perhaps hard to imagine after lifetimes of viewing the island through incorrect lenses.

Who knows what other surprises await our discovery? Life is filled with mystery – some just beneath our feet!