This small guitar-like instrument was developed in Hawai'i by Portuguese immigrants based on a combination of traditional Madeiran stringed instruments - the rajão and machete. Legend has it that local musicians developed a lively fast-finger playing style that inspired a new name for the diminutive newcomer. Less than a decade after its arrival, the instrument came to be affectionately called the jumping flea. 'Uku translates to "flea" and lele translates to "jumping".

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