



FISHING AROUND WITH TECHNOLOGY

STUDENT READING 4

HE MO'OLELO O KŪ'ULA, HINA ME 'AI'AI

When folks ask what moved us as Hawaiian people to travel so widely throughout the Pacific Ocean, the answer that our *kūpuna* (elders) give us is simple: "We followed the fish all over the pond." There are many *'ohana* (family) traditions among us who "followed the fish," which teach and perpetuate the skill and knowledge of fishing. Some of these traditions are uniquely regional as in the case of Uhumāka'ika'i and Puniakai'a, the Mōkapu boy who captured the parent of all fish. Other *'ohana* traditions are more broadly shared as in the story of Kū'ula, Hina, and their son, 'Ai'ai. Throughout the pae 'āina o Hawai'i Nei (Hawaiian archipelago) perhaps none is quite so famous.

According to one Maui tradition, Kū'ula and Hina lived in the district of Hāna in a place called Leho'ula. Kū'ula built the first Hawaiian fishpond (*loko i'a*) near his home and kept it filled with fish. The abundance of that *loko i'a* quickly drew the attention of Kamohoali'i, the local chief. In time, he appointed Kū'ula as head of royal fisheries. The truth is, Kū'ula and Hina were *kupua* (demigods possessing supernatural powers) who could take the form of fish and lead them to and from the *loko i'a*.

It was during this time of prosperity for both families of Kū'ula and the *ali'i* Kamohoali'i that Hina gave birth to a son named 'Ai'ai. He too was gifted like his father and could draw and influence fish. One day when 'Ai'ai had grown older, he used his father's magic fishhook to capture and kill a giant eel from Moloka'i. But the eel turned out to be the *'aumakua* (guardian) of an evil *kahuna* (priest). From that day, the *kahuna* worked diligently to poison the thoughts of Kamohoali'i toward Kū'ula and his family.

Finally, the mind of the *ali'i* was so darkened that he ordered the home of Kū'ula to be burned to the ground with the whole family inside. Kū'ula, Hina, and their son 'Ai'ai were lashed tightly about the wrists and feet and the command came

to light the fire. But as the torches neared the *hale* (house) the cords that held them suddenly fell to the ground! Both Kū'ula and Hina took spirit form and led all the fish in the area away. Their bodies were found in the ashes of the *hale*. But 'Ai'ai got away, finding refuge in a cave. His body was not found amid the fiery remains.

When things had cooled down 'Ai'ai went back for the *pōhaku* (stone) his father had called "pōhakumuone." He set it up near the bay at Hāna and the fish returned. 'Ai'ai continued to set up similar *pōhaku kū'ula kai* (fishing shrines) around the island of Maui and at Hakioawa on Kaho'olawe. In this way, he perpetuated the memory of his parents so that they receive honor throughout the pae 'āina o Hawai'i Nei. Fishers still leave a small *awa* (milkfish) and a piece of *kapa* (tapa) at the *kū'ula kai* even to this day.



A Kū stone representing Kū'ula kai, the god of fishing, is usually placed on the eastern side of the fishpond wall.