



## STUDENT READING

### The Legend of Mānaiakalani and Mokuola

In Hilo Bay, on the island of Hawai'i, there is a cay (or small island) known as Mokuola, or "island of life." Mokuola was considered a *pu'uhonua*. As with all *pu'uhonua*, Mokuola is *wahi pana* (sacred place). Here, defeated warriors and other *po'e* could seek peace, safety, and refuge. This legend describes how Mokuola came to be.

Māui, the Hawaiian demigod, possessed Kamakaunuiamaui, a great, magic fishhook. Because this *makau* was so special and powerful, Māui would never show it to anyone, including his family. Māui also had a magic *wa'a* that could carry him from *moku* to *moku* with only two strokes of his *hoe*.

One day, as he was watching a *wa'a* leave for a neighbor island, Māui felt sorry for his people; for they did not hold the magic that he had. So, he decided that the islands should be joined together to make it much easier for the *po'e* to travel from *moku* to *moku*.

He called together the *ali'i* and other people and told them that he would need their help in order to achieve this wondrous feat. In the meeting, he warned all that would come to *kōkua* that they must never look back until all of the islands were connected and *pa'a*.

On the appointed day, Māui fastened the magic *makau* into the island of Māui and the *kāne* paddled and pulled as hard as they possibly could!

The islands began to move, getting closer and closer with the men's strong strokes.

Just as the island of Māui was about to connect to Hawai'i Island,

an *ali'i* (whom many believe to be Māui's own brother) glanced back from where the island had been pulled.



This action shattered the spell Māui had cast with Kamakaunuiamaui! All of the islands slid back into their original positions, except the small piece attached directly to Māui's magic hook.

This piece landed in Hilo Bay and is now known as Mokuola. To this day, some people of Hāna, Māui, claim the island belongs to the island of Māui! If you travel to this *wahi pana*, you can even see the spot where Kamakaunuiamaui was attached. To see the magic hook itself, look to the sky in the starline of Mānaiakalani on a summer night.



### VOCABULARY

*pu'uhonua*.— place of refuge, asylum, place of peace and safety

*wahi pana* — sacred place, celebrated place

*po'e* — people

*makau* — fishhook

*'ohana kuleana*— caretakers, people responsible

*wa'a* — canoe; *pahi* is the old word from Kalani's land of origin

*moku* — island

*ali'i* — chief

*kōkua* — to help

*pa'a* — firm, solid, fixed, secure

*kāne* — male, men

### KEY EVENTS AND FACTS REGARDING MOKUOLA

- 1790-1 Maka O Kū Heiau is built at the same time as Pu'ukoholā. From a spot where the Naniloa Hotel is, lookouts could see any war canoes rounding Auwili or Pepe'ekeo points.
- 1897 - Isaac Kekihiokala Keli'ipio is appointed *'ohana kuleana* of Mokuola by the territorial legislature. Keli'ipio *'ohana* resides on Mokuola until 1930.
- 1920 - Military uses Mokuola as a recreational site; building a jumping tower and a slide on sacred Mokuola rock, the namesake of the island.
- 1930 - Isaac Kekihiokala Keli'ipio passes; wife Mary becomes caretaker.
- 1932 - Grandmother Mary's house is erected on the mainland near the edge of the present Hilo Hawaiian Hotel. Family lives there until 1946 tsunami.
- 1947 - Mary Keli'ipio retires. Paul Keli'ipio, her son assumes caretaker duties.
- May 23, 1960 - A tsunami generated off South America devastates Mokuola, Waiakea, and much of Hilo town. County decides NOT to rebuild caretaker's cottage; Keli'ipio family relocates to Keaukaha.

### READING RESPONSE

1. Why was Mokuola a *wahi pana*?
2. Why do some people from the island of Maui believe that Mokuola belongs to their island?
3. How have human uses of Mokuola changed from 1790 to the present?

### REFERENCES

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