

**A King's Journey to Safety**  
Mekaila Pasco  
Wahi Kūpuna Internship Program 2020

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this project is to describe the intimate relationship between Kamehameha's birth, during the ruling of Alapa'inui, and the nine traditional inoa 'āina (place names) of North Kohala. In order to showcase this relationship, I have chosen to create a story map that takes the viewer on a virtual huaka'i (trip), diving into the mo'olelo (story) of chief Nae'ole rescuing Kamehameha at birth and running him through the nine wahi pana (legendary places). This paper was also written to provide a more detailed description of the story map I created for the kaiāulu (community). During the process of gathering information for my story map, I used four methods that revealed many controversies towards this mo'olelo. However, all sources agree that Kamehameha I was taken at birth by chief Nae'ole and ran across town to safety, thanks to the kōkua (help) of the Kohala community.

## **Introduction**

During the Wahi Kūpuna Internship Program (WKIP) this past summer, ‘anakala (uncle) Fred Cachola told the famous mo‘olelo (story) of Kamehameha I. Kamehameha I, also known as Kamehameha the Great, was a fierce warrior and king who united the Hawaiian Islands. Embedded within this mo‘olelo are place names and ‘anakala Fred was kind enough to share all his ‘ike (knowledge) with me so I could learn more about each of these places. I was not only grateful for this experience to learn from him, but he also inspired me to carry out this project. I lived in Kohala all my life and never heard the meanings behind each inoa ‘āina until now. This project has allowed me to reconnect with the kūpuna (elders) and build more pilina (relationships) with my beautiful home, found on the northern tip of Hawai‘i island.

As a kama‘āina (native) of Kapa‘au, Kohala, it saddens me that I didn’t grow up fully understanding the story and that I didn’t realize how important this mo‘olelo was until I spoke with ‘anakala Fred. It highlights the values and history of where we come from and I felt that it needed to be shared with the younger generations in Kohala. I have noticed that a lot of the young kama‘āina in Kohala don’t actually know this story either and many of them say that this mo‘olelo isn’t very accessible to them because they’re not close with the kūpuna that know this story by heart. Therefore, providing kaiāulu (community) with access to an online version of this mo‘olelo is valuable, because it will [hopefully] aid the kama‘āina in becoming more ma‘a (familiar) with our history and allow for the continuation of this mo‘olelo.

During my project, I realized that it was highly essential to create a story map that explores the intimate relationship between Kamehameha’s birth and the nine traditional inoa ‘āina of Kohala. By utilizing ethnohistorical resources, interviewing Kohala kūpuna, studying oral histories, and exploring historical maps, I was able to uncover a lot of historical information about this mo‘olelo. If we provide a valuable resource for the community to easily maneuver, kama‘āina may realize how significant the mo‘olelo actually are, which will also encourage them to build more pilina with the ‘āina (land).

## **Background**

Kamehameha I, also known as the mō‘ī (king) of the Hawaiian Islands, was born in the moku (district) of North Kohala during the reign of ruling chief Alapa‘inui. There are many versions regarding the birth of Kamehameha I, in terms of where he was born, when he was born, where he was raised, who he was raised by, and who his father was (Kamakau 1992, Williams 1993, Desha 2000, Silverman 1972, Uyeoka 2013, Cachola 2020). According to Kamakau (1992:67-69), Keku‘iapoiwa, the undisputed mother of

Kamehameha I, gave birth to him on land at Kokoiki in 1736. This occurred during the month of 'Ikuwā (rainy season) and Nae'ole, a chief of Kohala, was appointed to raise her child with Kekunuiāleimoku, his younger sister, in Hālawā. Another source states that Kamehameha I was born at Kokoiki in 1758, the same year as Halley's comet, then chief Nae'ole took the child to 'Āwini where Kaha'ōpulani, the cousin of Keku'iāpoiwa, would raise him in secrecy (Williams 1993:5-15). Although both authors state different versions of the story, they agree that Keōua, the husband of Keku'iāpoiwa, was indeed the father of Kamehameha I, despite Kamakau's mention of Kahekili, a Maui chief, possibly being the father of Kamehameha I as well.

During Kamehameha's birth, many different signs of a powerful chief are highlighted in the different versions of this mo'olelo. As 'anakala Fred mentioned in an interview, Keku'iāpoiwa experienced some unusual cravings for the eye of the niuhi (man-eating shark) while hāpai (pregnant) with Kamehameha I, but the only way to consume that is by killing the niuhi, an ali'i nui (high chief) of the ocean (Uncle Fred Cachola 07/13/2020:Personal Communication). The author Desha (2000:26) even discussed in his book that there were mutterings from high chiefs of harming this unborn keiki (child) because of a genealogical chant proclaiming that this future chief is actually a prophecy child. On the night of Kamehameha's birth, tradition says that there may have been a bright and beautiful hōkū (star) in the heavens, but it was blocked by the stormy winds and rains of the 'Ikuwā season (Silverman 1972:93). The unusual cravings, the genealogical chant, the bright hōkū [Halley's Comet], and the stormy weather all occurred around the manawa (time) of Kamehameha's birth and were believed to be prominent signs that Kamehameha I was going to be a powerful ruler who would eventually unite the islands of Hawai'i.

'Anakala Fred also mentioned in another interview that there were six generations of civil war and a high chief of Kohala was always involved, yet not successful in the end (Uncle Fred Cachola 07/13/2020: Personal Communication). Once the Kohala chiefs heard about Kamehameha's prophecy, they finally had a chance at making peace and securing the islands. The kaiāulu of Kohala knew chief Nae'ole's plan and even assisted him along the way with nourishment and/or a place to hide. They dedicated their lives to save Kamehameha I, regardless of the consequences.

Nae'ole, a well-known chief in Kohala, rescued Kamehameha I at birth and ran him to safety, where he was secretly raised by Nae'ole and another wahine (woman) in a secure location. The nine inoa 'āina referenced in the mo'olelo were significant to Nae'ole's journey and played a vital role in the safety of Kamehameha I. In the Kohala I Ka Unupa'a report, it reveals the journey of Nae'ole running Kamehameha I from Kokoiki to 'Āwini in order to save the future king (Uyeoka et al. 2013:200-201).

There are more than nine places and/or names found in this mo'olelo, but the nine wahi pana listed were the most significant parts of the story: Kokoiki, Hō'ea, Hāwī, Honomaka'u, Kapa'au, Halā'ula, Hālawa, Makapala, and 'Āwini. According to 'anakala Fred, each of these nine inoa 'āina have their own distinction of describing an event (Uncle Fred Cachola 07/21/2020:Personal Communication). They each have a purpose for being named in the mo'olelo and every place has its own background, discussing what happened and why each place is called that inoa (name).

## **Methods**

To document and share about the nine inoa 'āina and this important mo'olelo, I used four methods to gather information for my research project. After collecting the information, I constructed a story map highlighting the data. The first method was utilizing ethnohistorical resources through online databases associated with local organizations, in order to establish a basic foundation for my project. The second method was interviewing kūpuna from Kohala to get a better understanding of the relationship between the mo'olelo and the nine inoa 'āina. The third method was studying oral histories told from the perspectives of kūpuna who had traditional mo'olelo passed down in their 'ohana (family), with the intent of making connections between similar stories. The fourth method was exploring historical maps online to pinpoint the location of a place and/or ahupua'a (land division) named in the mo'olelo as well as to visualize a version of my own story map.

In order to showcase this mo'olelo, I created a story map titled "A King's Journey to Safety", that takes the viewer on a virtual huaka'i of chief Nae'ole rescuing Kamehameha and running him through the various wahi pana from Kokoiki to 'Āwini. Although there are more than nine place names found in this mo'olelo, the places I highlighted include: Kokoiki, Hō'ea, Hāwī, Honomaka'u, Kapa'au, Halā'ula, Hālawa, Makapala, and 'Āwini. Since each of these places have their own distinction of describing an event, I broke down each name by literal or figurative translations and provided the meaning of that name to highlight the importance of those places and what happened there.

## **Analysis**

By utilizing ethnohistorical resources, I realized that there are different records of Kamehameha's birth story. There are so many similar versions regarding the birth of Kamehameha, but they all differentiate in specifically where he was born, when he was born, where he was raised, who he was raised by, and who his father was. It's important to acknowledge all aspects of this event in history because we are unaware of which are

accurate and which are not. Although there are differences among these resources, they all still align with Nae'ole being the kahu (guardian) of Kamehameha I, who took him at birth and ran him across town to safety.

When I interviewed kūpuna from Kohala, I discovered the most logical and common story of Nae'ole's journey. According to the kūpuna, Kamehameha I was born on the wa'a (canoe) because Keku'iapoiwa, his mother, was on her way back from Maui and she finished her birth at Kapākai in Kokoiki, Kohala. It is said that Kahekili, a Maui chief, was indeed the father of Kamehameha I and that the child was born during the rule of Alapa'inui around 1736. They also shared that Nae'ole and a close wahine of his, did raise Kamehameha in 'Āwini valley until he was five years old, much like other versions have noted as well. It is important to emphasize and share the version that kūpuna have because they are of that place and background.

Studying oral histories revealed new connections and pieces of information not mentioned in most public resources. Many historians know of Halley's comet appearing around the same time as Kamehameha's birth in 1758 and in Hawaiian traditional mo'olelo, there was a "white rainbow" mentioned. When I looked into the ethnohistorical resources, I only came across one other source that mentioned this "white rainbow," not knowing that the author was actually referring to Halley's comet. It is important to know this because there is still controversy about Kamehameha's birth date and some researchers linked the mo'olelo of a "white rainbow" to Halley's comet that was seen on the night of Kamehameha's birth.

Exploring historical maps showed me the different wahi pana related to those nine inoa 'āina in North Kohala. It was hard locating historical photographs of these places at first, so I started looking for more broad pictures pertaining to Kohala. In the process, I decided to turn to historical maps with the intent of highlighting and/or showing the places I was talking about. It is important to provide not only photographs, but also maps of these places so readers can visualize the environment I am referring to.

Creating a story map was achievable after I created a timeline and outline, including all the versions told as well as the multiple resources I got them from. It is important to have structure for my story map and to include information from different sources because it gives my research more flexibility in telling this mo'olelo. Overall, the mechanics and details of this story map was confusing at first, but the more I explored my project, the easier it became to share this mo'olelo.

## Conclusion

I was interested in the mo'olelo of Kamehameha because I've heard it many times, but in different ways. Thus, I wanted to explore all the possible versions of this mo'olelo and how each version captures the overall essence of chief Nae'ole rescuing Kamehameha I. By learning about this mo'olelo through 'anakala Fred, I was able to focus my project on the nine inoa 'āina that were the most prominent places mentioned within the mo'olelo.

In order to learn more about these nine inoa 'āina, I had to utilize ethnohistorical resources, interview Kohala kūpuna, study oral histories, and explore historical maps. To share this information with the kaiāulu, I created a user-friendly story map that includes my purpose, some background on Kamehameha I, each of the inoa 'āina, and how this project came to be. What I have learned from this process is that the details of this mo'olelo differ depending on the version, which made it a bit difficult to weave this story map together. However, exploring some of these nine inoa 'āina in person, helped me tie my project together in the end.

I hope that my project and story map will serve as a useful resource for my community and the future generations to come. Although I am extremely proud of the work I have completed, I still believe that there were some limitations to my research. Some of the limitations of this project included the length of our program only being five weeks long and not being able to explore all of these places in person, due to the COVID-19 situation. If I could continue this work in the future, I think there would be many ways to expand this research. Some ways to further this research include looking deeper into each inoa 'āina or adding the other inoa 'āina found in Kohala onto my story map.

This project will act as a reminder to the Kohala community that their town has a lot of mo'olelo worth telling and those stories will always somehow connect back to the places they visit every day. To view my story map of "A King's Journey to Safety," please visit: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=9cccb8b3721b449ea4bca705388c6720>.

## Reflection

The last four weeks have been the most challenging, yet amazing manawa I have experienced in a long time. 'Ae (yes), I would constantly get frustrated when my internet would cut in and out in the afternoon because it would slow down my computer and I wouldn't be able to hear the guest speakers. However, the greatest highlight was the amount of guest speakers we had because I got to meet kanaka (Hawaiians) from all over the pae 'āina (islands) and kūkākūkā (talk) with them. I also enjoyed my time with our kumu (teachers), mentors, and the other haumāna (students). I really can't choose one specific experience because I felt like every day was filled with so much 'ike and fun.

I learned a lot of new skills that I hope to apply in the future, even after I leave this program. Skills ranging from researching my mo'okū'auhau (genealogy), exploring Māhele documents, participating in 'āina field methods, and performing specific protocols before interviewing a kūpuna from the community. Not to mention the incredible amount of pilina I built with Kohala and the mo'olelo attached to this sacred place. My project has opened doors for me to experience the in-depth history of Kohala and I am so hau'oli (happy) that I have a chance to give a makana (gift) back to the community I grew up in. I feel so ho'omaika'i (grateful) to have had the opportunity of being a part of this program, to have met such solid kanaka in the different fields, and to listen to all the haumana or kumu kūkākūkā about their struggles, their accomplishments, and their life.

I have always been passionate about Hawaiian culture and for some reason I always felt like I was missing out on something. I took so many early college courses of Hawaiian studies and language in high school, hoping I would fill that aching hole in my pu'uwai (heart). Throughout the last couple of years, I kept stumbling upon new opportunities and a lot of intimate kāhea (call). This program and its people have inspired me to pursue a degree in Hawaiian studies, despite my lack of skill to 'ōlelo Hawai'i (speak Hawaiian). I know this is long overdue and I always made up excuses to not pay attention to my na'au (guts), but I am so ha'aheo (proud) to finally answer my kūpuna, my 'aumakua (ancestors), and my akua (gods). This might sound a little overstated, but I strongly believe that the Wahi Kūpuna Internship Program led me to my destiny, and I am so thankful for that push in the right direction. Mahalo nui loa.

## References Cited

Cachola, Fred

2000 Interview by Mekaila Pasco. Zoom, 13 and 21, July 2020.

Desha, Stephen Langhern

2000 *Kamehameha and His Warrior Kekūhaupi'o*. First edition. Frances N. Frazier, translator. Kamehameha Schools Press, Honolulu.

Kamakau, Samuel Manaiakalani

1992 *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*. Originally published 1961. Kamehameha Schools Press, Honolulu.

Silverman, Jane L.

1972 The Young Paiea, 1967. *Hawaiian Journal of History* Vol. 6:91-106.

Uyeoka, Kelley

2013 Kohala I Ka Unupa'a. Ethnohistorical Study Report. Kamehameha Schools, Land Assets Division.

Williams, Julie Stewart

1993 *Kamehameha the Great*. Originally published 1992. Kamehameha Schools Press, Honolulu.