

**Learning from Mo'olelo of Pu'u Hōkū'ula in Waimea**  
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## **Abstract**

By interviewing kama'āina about the area of Hōkū'ula in the ahupua'a of Lālāmilo in Kohala Hema, we learn that this Pu'u is not just a hill for recreational use or admiration, but it is a wahi pana, a place with a pulse, a heartbeat, a legendary place with many mo'olelo associated with it and the surrounding area. By collecting different mo'olelo from different type of kama'āina and reading mo'olelo from the earlier histories of Hawai'i, we begin to uncover traditional place names of natural features in the area, we start remembering their purpose and functions, and begin to better understand the history of this landscape over time. In sharing this 'ike and mana'o from kama'āina in the form of a website, we can begin to build a deeper sense of pilina between kānaka and 'āina. Documenting these mo'olelo helps us remember and reflect on these places and their importance; we start to understand the fullest potential of this landscape, how these places could sustainably provide for us, and the fullest potential of these resources.

## **Introduction**

Today, Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula is known as “Busterbrown” and is used as pasture land for cattle. Hōkū‘ula is also known in the community of Waimea as a place for hiking, taking pictures and of course the Paniolo traditions of Waimea still being practiced on Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula today. Growing up in Waimea I always admired the beauty of the Pu‘u on Kohala mountain. Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula was always a big hill that stood tall next to Pu‘u Owaowaka. Pomai Bertelmann says when driving home from Kona or Kawaihae, Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula is an indication of home. To that I agree because when I drive home from Kona my favorite thing to do is admire those Pu‘u. I grew up hearing stories of when my parents and grandparents were children. They always remembered Hōkū‘ula as pasture, they would walk up to the top of Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula and slide down with cardboard. It wasn’t until my 5th grade year, when I returned to Waimea and went to Kanu o Ka ‘Āina Charter school, that my teacher, Auntie Keōmailani Case, a kama‘āina of Waimea, started to teach us the names of these pu‘u. The more I learned, the more I fell in love with my home; a place that I already loved so much.

I chose to focus on the mo‘olelo of Hōkū‘ula and the surrounding area of Waimea because there are no recorded stories or information that are easily accessible to people on how people properly interacted with this wahi pana. I believe a part of building a strong relationship with a place is much like building a strong relationship with a person. Yes, we spend physical time with that place, but we also learn about their past in order to understand how to best tend to them in their present and future. I want to show people that there is a way to understand land through mo‘olelo. Another reason why I chose to focus on mo‘olelo is because a lot of people from the Waimea community know about this place and its profound beauty but don’t know the traditional names that can teach us so much about this place.

Lastly, I choose to focus on the area of Hōkū‘ula for the sense of remembering. To remember not just the place names and the stories of the past but also remembering how to interact with the wahi kūpuna of Waimea. The tradition of remembering could also help in the sense of remembering how Waimea could produce for its own community in the past and how we can improve now for a more productive and sustainable future.

With this understanding of the importance of place, my research project focuses on the many stories of Pu‘u Hōkū‘ula and histories in different periods of time. By interviewing Kama‘āina about the area of Hōkū‘ula in the Ahupua‘a of Lālāmilo, we learn that this Pu‘u is not just a hill to admire but it is a wahi pana, a place with a pulse, a heartbeat, a place with many mo‘olelo associated with it and the surrounding area. In the re-telling of these old and recent mo‘olelo in the form of a website we can begin to recover the natural features, remember their purpose and functions, better understand the history of this landscape over time, and more importantly begin to help create and build a deeper connection or a sense of pilina between Kānaka and ‘Āina in order to begin making our own stories of place.

## **Background**

On the island of Hawai‘i within the moku of Kohala is the ahupua‘a of Lālāmilo and the Pu‘u of Hōkū‘ula. Lālāmilo is an ahupua‘a that includes various ‘ili ‘āina, wahi pana, and streams like Waikōloa and Kohakohau. Neighboring ahupua‘a of Lālāmilo include ‘Ouli to the north and Waikōloa to the south. This ahupua‘a is historically known for its famous fishing ground at Puakō and its field system up ma uka. The Lālāmilo landscape is typically dry. What was once a thriving field system is now pastureland.

### *Definition of Lālāmilo*

When breaking down the word Lālāmilo we can see that Lālā means branch, limb, member as in society, extension, etc., and Milo is a native Hawaiian tree. Milo also has a few other translations that deal with twisting and curling. In breaking down parts of the name, Lālāmilo means branch of Milo, Limb of Milo, Extension of Milo, Curling Limb or Twisted Extension (Ulukau).

### *Mo'olelo of the Name Lālāmilo*

When looking at place names in the ahupua'a of Lālāmilo and comparing them to ka'ao kahiko we find that there are no mo'olelo known today to tell us how these places received their names but in mo'olelo of this place there are references to people who had these names. One example is the ka'ao of Puakō and Lālāmilo.

When Puakō and her 'ohana moved to Kekahawai'ole (north Kona) from Puna, Puakō along with her sister, 'Anaeho'omalū, were seeking husbands but only those who could provide for them their favorite fish to eat. As the girl's parents settled at what is now known as Nā Pu'u (Pu'u Anahulu & Pu'u Wa'awa'a), 'Anaeho'omalū and Puakō continued north towards Kohala. As they traveled along the coast, the first sister, 'Anaeho'omalū comes across and meets her husband Naipukalaulani, a chief of the area. After their marriage the couple made their home in what is now known as 'Anaeho'omalū. Puakō continues along the coast, towards Kawaihae in search of her husband. While traveling on the ala kahakai, Puakō comes across a lady who invites her in to eat. This lady's name is Ne'ula. When conversing with Ne'ula, Puakō tells her of her travels and her search for a husband that can catch her favorite i'a, the he'e. When Ne'ula heard this she knew of just the right person, her son Lālāmilo who was a skilled fisherman.

After the marriage of Puakō and Lālāmilo settled at what is now known as Puakō in the ahupua'a of Lālāmilo. Although the ka'ao does not specify that the places indeed were named after these people, it is safe to conjecture that the genealogy of these ali'i to these places lives on through the names of the wahi pana

Attached to the story of Puakō and Lālāmilo is the heart stirring story of Kamiki and Maka'iole, the brothers who were olohe in all types of games. In the story, they are told by their grandmother to visit their ancestress, Lanimaomao (also wahi pana in Waimea). When arriving in Waimea and visiting Lanimaomao, she tests them by wrapping them in her net called Ku'uku'u. The test was to get out of the net. Eventually, because of Kamiki's swiftness, the two-escape giving her the confidence that they are able to continue their journey. After they escape her net, she gives them their separate kuleana. Sending Kamiki to Waipio to fetch the 'awalena of Luanu'u the ghost king and sending Maka'iole to fetch the water at Kawaihuakāne on Mauna Kea with the 'awa bowl called Hōkū'ula. Just like Puakō and Lālāmilo, we can infer that the hill, Hōkū'ula, is named after this kānoa. Pu'u Hōkū'ula does however have a crater at the top that does look like a kānoa ('awa bowl).

### *Definition of Hōkū'ula*

In looking at the name Hōkū'ula there are two words; Hōkū, meaning star, and 'Ula, meaning red (Ulukau). When putting both words together the meaning turns into a red star, Hōkū'ula. Hōkū'ula is also a star within the ke kā 'o Makali'i star line.

### *Mo'olelo of the name Hōkū'ula*

There are many mo'olelo associated with this wahi from long ago. Although the most common and accessible mo'olelo about this place is written by foreign Caucasians who were folklorists and journalists, the stories that are now the easiest to find about the area of Hōkū'ula are stories like the "Legend of Pupukea" and the battle of Hōkū'ula. Although this is a great story, there are many ka'ao or mo'olelo from Waimea that reference Pu'u Hōkū'ula or even just the name Hōkū'ula in general. There are ka'ao like Wao and Makuakuamana explaining Hōkū'ula is where Wao, the rainbow goddess, resides.

All of these mo'olelo bring life to Hōkū'ula, making this place a wahi pana, a place with a rhythm, a pulse. These places are important because they continue to nourish us, provide and protect us. When we remember these stories and continue to make mo'olelo on 'āina for ourselves, and continue to malama 'āina we are able to keep these places living.

### **Methods**

Methods For this project, I used three methods: (1) Ethnohistorical documents about Hōkū'ula and Lālāmilo, (2) Ethnographic interviews with kama'āina, (3) Website for sharing information.

#### *Ethnohistorical documents*

One of the main sources I used was a report titled, *He mo'olelo 'āina: A Cultural Study of the Pu'u o 'Umi Natural Area Reserve and Kohala-Hāmākua mountain lands, District of Kohala and Hāmākua, island of Hawai'i* that told me about how much food the area of Hōkū'ula could produce in ancient times. In my project also looked at historical maps and place names using online repositories such as Ulukau, Papakilo and DAGS.

#### *Interviews*

I also conducted community interviews with kama'āina from Waimea who spent all of their lives here, especially in the area of Hōkū'ula. When visiting aunty Ku'ulei Keakealani, someone who is known for collecting mo'olelo in Waimea, I asked her about people with different perspectives that I should interview and so she gave me a list of potential people. I chose to interview 6 kama'āina from Waimea based who have physically spent time around Hōkū'ula or spent time trying to understand the significance of this 'āina. From here I created a list of questions to ask them, many of which centered around their experiences growing up in the area.

Everyone who spends time on 'āina, spends time with 'āina differently. Whether it's hunting, gathering, kilo, conservation or even for recreational use. This is why we all have a different relationship and perception of 'āina. For example Kana'ina Case is a hunter who has been gathering from Kohala Mountains since his childhood. I asked him questions particularly relating to how he navigated this mountain. His answers always lead to using Pu'u like Hōkū'ula as landmarks, so that he along with his siblings wouldn't get lost in the forest.

I also interviewed his sister, Keōmailani Case, who practices kilo, the study of environment and weather. Two people who came from the same family, yet, both of them view this place in two different perspectives. During my interviews with them I recorded the conversation we had, of course with their permissions. After transcribing and publishing my website, I returned to the narrators that I interviewed and worked with them to approve their transcriptions.

Table 1. List of Interviewees for this project

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Born and Raised</b>	<b>Currently resides</b>	<b>Affiliation to 'āina</b>
Barbra Phillips	Aug 6, 2020	1987, Waikii, Hawaii	Keoniki, Waimea, HI	Kupuna/ Kama'āina Memories of Waimea/ Pu'u/ Lālāmilo
Deadrea (Lindsey) Bertelmann	Jul 27, 2020 (Interviewed)	Honokaa, HI Waimea, HI	Puukapu, Waimea, HI	Kama'āina/ Kupuna Memories of Hōkū'ula/ Waimea
Keanali'iomanae	Aug 3, 2020	Honokaa, HI Waimea, HI	Waimea, HI	Kama'āina/ Practitioner
Keōmainlani Case	Aug 6, 2020	Hilo, Hawaii July 5, 1980	Waimea, HI	
Kamuela Plunket	Aug 2, 2020 (sched)		Waimea, HI	
Kana'ina Case	Aug 3, 2020 5:30pm		Waimea, HI	
Ku'ulei Keakealani	Aug 3, 2020		Waimea, HI	
Pōmai Bertelmann	Aug 4, 2020 ( sched)		Waimea, HI	Kama'āina of Waimea Mo'olelo Teacher

*Website*

Finally, with all of the 'ike shared with from the interviews I developed a website to share these different perspectives of this area of Hōkū'ula. When creating my website, I used Wix as my platform; I chose wix because it wasn't as complex as using other platforms to create a website. I created my

website in about a week or two and I will continue to add and improve my website in the future. The way that I organized the information on my website was similar to how I wrote my paper.

I chose to name my website Hā'upu Mau. Hā'upu means to recall or to remember, and mau means to continue. In the re-telling of these old and recent mo'olelo we can continue to remember different characteristics of these wahi kupuna. We can begin to uncover the natural features that surround it, remember their purpose and functions, how to better understand the history of this landscape over time, and more importantly, begin to help create/build a deeper connection or a sense of pilina between Kānaka and 'Āina. This is important because when hearing and analyzing mo'olelo about wahi pana we can begin to reflect on these places and start to understand the fullest potential of this landscape.

## **Analysis**

Over the course of 3 weeks I was able to interview eight people in the Waimea community. In these interviews, along with the background questions, I also asked five general questions, and most, if not all of these questions were specific to Pu'u Hōkū'ula or Waimea. After introducing the interviewee I go ahead and ask my questions, which are all mostly answered from my background questions, but my first general question is "If the kama'āina had any personal stories or stories that were handed down from their parents and grandparents of Hōkū'ula?" Most of the people I talked to said they slid down Hōkū'ula with cardboard.

The second question asked was "If this story has taught you a lesson?" and all the kama'āina that I interviewed said "yes, there are lessons in these stories. Such lessons included wind directions, and the effects of these places on weather. Other lessons include how to use our environment as navigational tools, and how to remember the stories of our ancestors through the names of places.

My third question was having to do with "What are some changes that you've noticed overtime amongst the Natural Features that surround the area?" Everyone I interviewed always remembered Pu'u Hōkū'ula as pasture land.

Lastly, I asked three questions having to do with connection or building pilina to place. The first question was "Do you think spending time on land physically strengthens the connection you make with aina?" and two "Do you think knowing and understanding the history of a place is important in the way you connect?" The answers that were given when asked these questions were all the same in the sense that everyone said yes to both but different in the way they went about explaining themselves.

My last question was "do you believe a place can tell a story?" Personally, I do believe in the fact that places are able to tell us stories. Hearing different perspectives on this was my goal because I don't think everyone necessarily understands that if we consistently, consciously observe our places, as people, we begin to understand this place and also begin to understand the necessary needs of this place. Kana'ina Case reminds us of this when he shared how he listens to the land when he is in the Kohala forest.

## *Personal Discoveries*

During my interviewing process I was able to see a glimpse of Waimea in the past, I did not only learn new things about Pu'u Hōkū'ula, but I learned new things about all of Waimea and even my own family. When talking about mo'olelo I am reminded by Pōmai Bertelmann that,

“If we don't also tell our stories, then your children will be looking at stories that happened 200 years ago and it may not be applicable to them anymore, or it may be. But if we're recording your Papa stories, your grandma's stories, your auntie and your uncle stories, your dad's stories, your stories, then it's valuable to the guys in the future.”

In the beginning of my project I wanted to focus and educate people on ka'ao kahiko in order to help people understand places like Hōkū'ula better. After talking with more people it became clear that the stories that our family holds in place are just as important as those stories from long ago. It's more important to know and understand both stories from wā kahiko and more recent times because when we make the connection between both times in the same place. We are able to learn the valuable lessons or have a deeper understanding of that knowledge.

### *Uses of Hōkū'ula*

While interviewing aunty Keōmailani Case, I was told a geographical mo'olelo of Hōkū'ula. I learned that Hōkū'ula along with many of the pu'u in Waimea are wind diverters. That is why Waimea isn't as windy as other places in Kohala. The Pu'u along Na Pali Kapu o nā Ali'i are all wind blockers for the wind coming in from 'Alenuihāhā channel. This is also where pu'u Hōkū'ula resides and the pu'u on the edge of Waipio valley divert the winds coming in between the saddle of Kohala and Mauna Kea.

Aunty Keomailani also told me as children they would use Hōkū'ula as a landmark, she said,

“If we were ever in the forest, we'd just look for Hōkū'ula and knew that we were on the South Eastern side of Hōkū'ula and just knew where our home was. It was kind of that training from our parents of using the pu'us to mark kind of where your homestead is.”

Pu'u Hōkū'ula might just look like a grassy hill but this pu'u probably saved them from getting lost. Aunty Keōmailani along with her siblings grew up roaming Kohala mountain and used pu'u like Hōkū'ula as a resource in order to return home. She says that their family sees Hōkū'ula as the protector of that side of town. If we really want to be kōnaka about creating mo'olelo we can see pu'u Hōkū'ula as a kia'i of Waimea and its people.

Surrounding Hōkū'ula are many other pu'u. Some people know these collections of pu'u as “Nā pali kapu o nā ali'i”. Just like the pu'u to the north of Hōkū'ula it was once a rich forest. On the northwest side of Pu'u Hōkū'ula there is a stream whose name is Kohakohau. This stream flows right alongside Hōkū'ula and it joins another river called Keanoiomano that leads all the way to the beach of Waiulaula. Keanoiomano is one of the only rivers that flows to the west coastline from Waimea.

During my interviews I asked each person if they always remembered Hōkū'ula being pasture, they all said yes. Even when asking my grandmother and aunty Barbra Phillips, the two oldest people I interviewed, if they always remember Hōkū'ula being pasture. They both say yes. This place of Hōkū'ula is now used as pastureland for cattle. People in the community also usually hike up Hōkū'ula. When looking at mo'olelo and different archeology reports we can see that this land can do more than grow cattle.

Before this program I had no idea how the land in Waimea was used in wā kahiko. I always just assumed that Waimea was just categorized as Wao Nahele. After doing research I found that kōnaka used Waimea as farming land. When talking to 'anakala Kamuela Plunket, I was told that Waimea was like Puanui. Waimea had a field system on the slope of Kohala mountain coming into Waimea.



By the time it came more to Hōkū'ula this type of agriculture was categorized as agroforestry. I could imagine that previous to agriculture this place was wao nahele/ akua.

While traveling in the forest I could imagine that our kūpuna had resources to navigate their way out of the thick forest. Uncle Kanaina Case and his siblings spent many of their free time exploring and gathering from Kohala forest uncle Kanaina and his sister, aunty Keomailani talk about them using pu'u like Hōkū'ula to find their way home. Aunty Keomailani states,

"If we were ever in the forest, we'd just look for Hōkū'ula and knew that we were on the South Eastern side of Hōkū'ula and just knew where our home was." Uncle Kanainas also showed how attuned to place he was through the many stories he shared during his interview.

Aunty Keomailani also shared with me about Hōkū'ula being a buffer, she stated,

"...my family always told us that the pu'u are kind of our wind protection zone. So not only are we in the funnel between Kohala and Mauna Kea, but the pu'u would kind of buffer some of the wind and backdraft that's coming off of the hillside. So, because we're so close to the base of Kohala, the pu'us, especially Hōkū'ula is like a buffer. So, wind on Kohala mountain circulates like at certain times of the year, it'll go clockwise. And the other parts of the year, like during Lono time, it'll go counterclockwise. So Hōkū'ula, in the stormy season of Lono will kind of counter that and it'll help divert some of the wind and storm. So, we always grew up with knowing Hōkū'ula as like the bigger protector of the area where we live."

Another tradition that continued until the time of my great-grandfather, was the tradition of lawai'a manu. Keanali'i said,

"I noticed firsthand from my papa Kimo, our papa Kimo and his older brother, uncle Charlie. Yeah, he told me that, that was something that they did when they were young, was lawai'a manu. And basically you had a pole and you had aho or an aholoa, you had a pohaku kapilimanu that was like your sinker or a weight and then you had a hook and maunu. And you would cast the line and wait for the Kolea to come and swallow the line. Then that's how you caught your manu."

Now Hōkū'ula is owned or leased by Parker Ranch and all those who I have interviewed told me that they always remember Parker Ranch leasing the land that Hōkū'ula sits on. Aunty Ku'ulei Keakealani tells her stories of her younger days and states,

"My experiences there on Hōkū'ula, Owaowaka was riding horse. Right? Cause Parker Ranch had pipi there. Driving pipi to what is the Hōkū'ula pen right around the turn down there." She was also one of the teenagers at that time that would go swimming at Kohakohau. Another person who spent time up on the slopes of pu'u Hōkū'ula and all above, Pu'u Pelu, is Pomai Bertelmann she states that "I was one of a few people who are able to spend time, go up through our Halekea gate and ride up Hōkū'ula,"

Her job at Halekea allowed her to interact and connect to that area through riding horses.

## *Pilina 'Āina*

When asking all of my interviewees about pilina to 'āina, all of them agreed that being on 'āina physically is the best way to connect to aina and really get to know aina. Although I loved everyone's mana'o, one of my favorite answers came from uncle Kana'ina Case, who said,

“I mean, to me, you cannot connect with a place more, if you've walked, you've rode it, you swam it. You physically are there on it. You will feel a connection more than if you flew over it. If you read about it. Like I said, in this town, we knew where you could harvest this, that, and we did when you were little. We knew all the little spots to go pick stuff. I swear, the more you give the place respect, the more it shows what it has, the more you go out and look and you just openly mindly look, it'll show what it has. If you go in there specifically looking for some certain thing, you not gonna find it, it reveals what its bound to when it wants. And the more you connect to it, the more you tune into where to look, that's kind of how I feel.”

This answer meant a lot to me because it shows me how much uncle Kana'ina listened and observed in order to connect better with place. Uncle Kana'ina said that they knew exactly where to go in order to find a certain type of plant or fruit and that was because he spent years exploring and listening to the story that Hōkū'ula and Waimea were telling him at that time.

## **Conclusion/ Mana'o**

What does this 'ike mean to me? All of this 'ike gives me new perspectives on this place and in the sense gives me a deeper connection to place. I learned a lot about this place from other people through my interviews, I didn't know half of the things I learned during the time of Wahi kupuna. I also hope through this work, I am able to influence and educate people about their hometown of Waimea and even people just visiting this place. I hope that my work will add perspective instead of change perspective. I would rather people see something from a different angle then from one perspective and hopefully my website or information gathered adds to other perspectives.

I chose to interview kama'āina of Waimea and create a website because I thought it was important to gather stories of a place for future generations but also gather information from these stories that were collected. I feel like most people don't necessarily know how to properly and appropriately interact with wahi pana and wahi kupuna. This information is important because when we read and go over it, this information can show us how to remember how to interact with this place, remember different place names and also understand these places better. Throughout this process I learned a lot about Hōkū'ula and Waimea in general and this interviewing process helped me strengthen pilina between myself and my home and myself and other members of my family.

## **Next Steps**

This project can always continue because there are always stories to be collected. I want to make a locked page where you need to sign in to have access to more sensitive information. I also want to expand my website and collect information about different places surrounding Waimea. My goal is to have a website that Waimea people can access and learn about all of the different wahi pana in Waimea. If someone else ever wants to continue this project the thing to do would be to record your family's stories, your grandparents and what they can remember from their parents etc.

## **Reflection**

These past 4 weeks have been interesting. Learning through a screen was new to me and I didn't know how to feel about it at first. Luckily our kumu made it easy and comfortable for us for the first couple days. I was also concerned about how to make pilina to people through a screen because it's not something I've really done before. My biggest challenge during this program was probably being on the computer all the time because I'm someone who prefers to be outside. Although it was a struggle, I do appreciate some of the time spent on the computer because this is when I got to strengthen my research skills. That's also something I have to say mahalo to our Kumu for, for providing us with the resources and the necessary steps to understand how to correctly search through archives and different websites.

During this program I realized that archeology and ethnology is just another form of Kilo 'Āina. By asking the right questions and continuously being a conscious observer, a place will begin to unfold its own story and I believe that archeology is about listening to what that place is trying to tell you. Talk everything that surrounds into consideration in order to recognize the big picture.