

Ku'i Moloka'i

Aia i Moloka'i ku'u 'iwa
I ka la'i wale o Kalaupapa

Hula Ku'i Moloka'i

In Moloka'i is my 'iwa bird champion
In the calm of Kalaupapa

E pāpā 'ōlelo kāua
'Oiai ka mana'o i 'ane'i

Let us converse together
While the thought desire is here.

'O ke kū a Mokuho'oniki
He 'iniki welawela kā iala

There stands Mokuho'oniki islet
It can give a burning pinch

A la'a ko kū i ke a'u
Ka i'a lele ma ka moana

Now you are jabbed by the swordfish
The fish that leaps in the sea

'Akahi au a 'ike maka
I nei mea maika'i he aloha

At last I am feeling
This fine thing called love

Ha'ina 'ia mai ka puana
Aia i Moloka'i ku'u 'iwa

This is the end of my chant
Of my 'iwa bird, the champion of Moloka'i

He ku'i Moloka'i

A hula ku'i for Moloka'i
(Translation by Glenn Paul Silva)

This famous oli is a Hula Ku'i Moloka'i, a type of vigorous fast-paced hula that has Moloka'i origins. It was performed and chanted by athletes as a taunt.⁸ The strong physical gestures of this form of hula possibly reflects the island's fame for its games and sport competitions. During such events even the evenings were opportunities for riddle & word games; in fact, the area above the cliffs overlooking Kalaupapa, Na'iwa, was a renowned assembly-place for such gaming. There are 4 articles in **Ka Nupepa Kuokoa** (1921) detailing this reputation.⁹ Many contestants gathered from the north shore, and clambered up the cliffs above Kalaupapa (in an effort to gain good luck) to attend the sporting events.¹⁰ Helen Robert's *Ancient Hawaiian Music* has a notated transcription of the chant as performed by one of her native informants.¹¹ The poetic reference of the 'iwa bird represents an individual who is very attractive.



Kalaupapa (Robert Mondoy, 2009)

Mokuho'oniki Islet and Kanahā Rock as viewed
from Pu'uohōkū Ranchlands, west of Hālawā.
A lot of seabirds nest there, including 'iwa.
(Robert Mondoy, 2011)

