

Tom Pōhaku Stone

Keahiokekai

Papa hōlua i hana ‘ia me ke kauila, ka ‘ohe a me kekahi mau mā‘awe kūlohelohe

Ma mua o ka hō‘ea ‘ana mai o nā mikionali ‘Eulopa, pā‘ani ‘ia ka he‘e hōlua e nā ali‘i, ke kūlana alaka‘i o ka po‘e Hawai‘i. He‘e kekahi kanaka me kona po‘o i mua a iho ma kekahi ihona ma luna o ka hōlua i hana ‘ia me ka lā‘au pa‘a ‘ōiwi a ho‘opa‘a ‘ia i nā kāma‘a loa kaulike. ‘O ka papa hōlua, he ‘umikūmālua kapua‘i ka lō‘ihi a he ‘eono wale nō na‘e ‘īniha ka laulā. Ua hiki i nā kanaka he‘e hōlua ke pi‘i i ke kanaono mile o ka hola ma ka wikiwiki loa.

Ma Kona nei, pōmaika‘i mākou i ka loa‘a ‘ana o kekahi ala he‘e hōlua nui i mālama ‘ia ma ka Pae ‘Āina ma Keauhou. Hana ‘ia ke ala he‘e hōlua i nā pōhaku i uhi ‘ia i ka lepo a me ka mau‘u ‘ohe i mea e loa‘a ai he ihona mania i ho‘opahe‘e ‘ia i ka ‘aila kukui. ‘O ke ala he‘e hōlua ma Keauhou, he ihona mai ka ho‘okahi kaukani ‘ekolu haneli kapua‘i, mai ka piko o kekahi pu‘u a hiki i ka‘e alanui. I kēia wā na‘e, kū kēia ala he‘e hōlua ma ke Alanui ‘o Kaleiopapa, a kuhi nā kālaihonua he ‘ehā kaukani kapua‘i ka lō‘ihi ma mua a ua iho nā he‘e hōlua i ka hono o Keauhou. (National Park Service Website)

“He pā‘ani ho‘okūkū ka he‘e hōlua, eia na‘e, he mau pilina pili ‘uhane kona i ka Hawai‘i. ‘A‘ole na‘e i makemake nā mikionali Pelekania, he hana lapuwale ia i ko lākou mana‘o a ua pāpā ‘ia ka he‘e hōlua. ‘O ka he‘e hōlua hope i palapala ‘ia, aia nō i ka makahiki 1825. A laila, ua loa‘a mai ke kumu he‘e nalu a ha‘awina ku‘una ma ke Kulanui o Hawai‘i ma Mānoa. Ua hō‘ea mai ‘o Tom Pōhaku Stone, he kama no ka mokupuni ‘o Hawai‘i. Ke ho‘ōla hou nei ‘o ia i kekahi pā‘ani he ‘elua kaukani makahiki kona kahiko a ua hu‘e mai me kanalima a ‘oi ala he‘e hōlua kūlohelohe a hana ‘ia paha e nā kānaka.” (National Geographic)

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Papa hōlua (sled) made of kauila, 'ohe and natural fibers

Before the European missionaries arrived, he'e hōlua, or Hawaiian lava sledding, was a sport practiced by the Ali'i, the Hawaiian ruling class. It involved a man hurling himself headfirst down a slope on a narrow sled made of native hardwood attached to parallel runners. The papa hōlua, or sledding platform, was generally 12 feet long but only six inches wide. The sledders could reach speeds of 60 miles per hour.

Here in Kona, we are fortunate to have one of the largest and best preserved hōlua slides in the Pae 'Āina at Keauhou. A hōlua slide was made of rocks that were covered in fresh dirt and reeds making a slick, sloping surface which was then lubricated with kukui oil. The Keauhou Hōlua Slide snakes downward for 1,300 feet, from the top of a hill onto the edge of a modern street. Although the slide now ends at Kaleiopapa Street, archeologists estimate it once spanned 4,000 feet and probably deposited the riders into Keauhou Bay. (National Park Service website)

“He'e holua was a competitive sport but it also holds religious meaning for Hawaiians. The British missionaries didn't like it, however, and seeing it as a frivolous waste of time, prohibited its practice. The last documented he'e hōlua was in 1825. That is, of course, until surfer and cultural studies lecturer at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Tom Pōhaku Stone, a Hawai'i Island native, came along. He's reviving the 2,000 year old sport and has uncovered more than 50 man-made and naturally occurring courses.” (National Geographic)