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The Temple on the Hill of the Whale

By Gayle Olson

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Pu'ukohola Heiau, located on the northwestern coast of the Island of Hawaii, represents one of the last major sacred structures built in Hawaii before traditional life was forever changed by outside influences.

Kamehameha constructed the temple in 1790–1791, he had been successful in conquering Maui, Lanai and Molokai. At this time he had not yet claimed full possession to his home island of Hawaii. His cousin Keoua Kuahu'ula remained his chief rival. While Kamehameha was on Molokai he learned that his cousin was invading his territory on the Island of Hawaii. His aunt was sent to consult the prophet Kapoukahi, for guidance as what could be done to overcome Kamehameha's rival, Kuahu'ula, the prophet told her that Kamehameha would conquer all of the islands if he built a heiau dedicated to the family war god, Kuka'ilimoku atop Pu'ukohola, at Kawaihae.

According to the prophecy, rigid guidelines in the construction of the temple needed to be employed to please Ku, the war god. Kapoukahi served as the royal architect to ensure the guidelines were followed to perfection. For nearly a year Kamehameha toiled alongside thousands of men as they worked on the huge stone structure. The heiau was to be built of water-worn lava rock, it is believed the stones were transported from the seaside valley of Pololu. A human chain, of about 20 miles long was formed and the rocks were transported hand to hand to the top of Pu'ukohola.

When other rival chiefs learned of the ongoing construction, they decided to attack Kamehameha while his warriors were occupied building the temple. The invasion could be successful in either of two ways: it would eliminate Kamehameha and the threat of his army to rival chiefs, or interfere with the specific rituals required to build the temple, displeasing the god Ku. The chiefs of Maui, Lanai, and Molokai reconquered their islands then joined forces with the chiefs of Kauai and Oahu. They sailed to attack Kamehameha, who in turn counterattacked, routed the invading armies and resumed work on the temple.

The heiau was completed during the summer of 1791. Kamehameha invited his cousin Keoua Kuahu'ula to the dedication ceremonies. Kuahu'ula knew he would be facing his demise, yet came

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willingly. There was a scuffle when Keoua arrived, he was slain with almost all of his companions. The body of Keoua was carried up to the top of the temple and offered as a sacrifice to Ku.

Keoua Kuahu'ula's death ended all opposition on the island of Hawaii, and the prophecy began to come true. By 1810, Kamehameha the Great, through conquest and treaties was the King of all Hawaii.

Related Internet Resources:

<http://aloha.150m.com/puukohola.htm>

Internet content developer and author since 1995.

Sea monster, mermaid or whale tale?

By Sylvie Leochko

Through the centuries, whales have been a source of fear, mystery, literacy, history and even mythology. Either way, humans have always been curious to learn more about these gigantic cetaceans.

For years, mainly because of their size, sailors and explorers were terrified by them, preferring to sail close to home until they felt the need to discover the world and its treasures...the need to become rich and famous.

So to people on land, they either became known as sea monsters or mermaids. The purpose of such tales was for making the sailors' adventures more interesting to others.

Mythology even created mermaids as being these female creatures luring sailors to their death by using magical songs. As for literacy, Moby Dick took care of that as it was mainly based on a whale tale made up by whalers.

Another whale tale concerns the narwhal, this white whale with a long tooth that reminds people of a sword. They made that shy and gentle marine mammal fierce. After Moby Dick, the sperm whale ended up with a bad reputation.

Since then, we learn a lot about whales: their intelligence, their physiology, their songs and language, their habitat, their feeding habits and so much more. The sea monsters and mermaids from the past became these peaceful giants that only wish to live their life without being bothered.

My name is Sylvie Leochko. The reason that I wish to share some information about whales is based on my curiosity and respect for these beautiful cetaceans. If you wish to learn more about whales, I invite you to visit this site:



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