

James H. Kuhau Kaiwi, “MOOLELO O KA LAHUI KANAKA I KAPAIA MENEHUNE, O KAUAI,” Transcribed and translated by Tiele-Lauren Doudt, Niumalu: *Mālama Hulē‘ia*, 2021. Original publication by Thomas George Thrum, “STORY OF THE RACE OF PEOPLE CALLED THE MENEHUNES, OF KAUAI (A HAWAIIAN TRADITION),” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 29, no. 2 (June 1920): 70–75.

He Wahi Ho‘olaha | A Message from the Editor

In 2015, a non-profit organization named Mālama Hulē‘ia was founded in Niumalu, Kaua‘i with the intent to remove invasive red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) from the Hulē‘ia watershed. In doing so, this project revealed for the first time in decades, the breadth and expanse of ‘Alekoko Fishpond,¹ a 600-year-old *loko kuapā* built alongside Hulē‘ia River.² The long-awaited reveal of this historic community food infrastructure, with 26-acres of mangrove removal being completed in 2019, has sparked significant interest and investment among Kaua‘i’s local community, as well as beyond. The increased demand for community outreach and educational programming has allowed for the fishpond’s esteemed histories to be brought back again once into the light.

An example of such a narrative that has withstood the hands of time arrives from the original works of James H. Kuhau Kaiwi Esq., a distinguished community figure and *kupa* of Niumalu in the late 19th century.³ Kaiwi’s works were later translated into English and published without his recognition as the original author within Thomas George Thrum’s, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1920). Upon further investigations, Thrum’s translations presented several significant misinterpretations.⁴ As an educational advocate for Hawaiian language, it was deemed necessary to revisit Kaiwi’s original works describing the role of Menehune in the creation of ‘Alekoko’s Fishpond. This transcription project was undertaken with the intention to simplify access to Hawaiian language resources to enhance the educational experience at ‘Alekoko Fishpond. Any discrepancies or inaccuracies are entirely of my own.

Na ke aheahe Ala‘oli ke aloha,



Tiele-Lauren Doudt
Luna Ho‘oponopono

¹ This 40-acre fishpond is also known as Alakoko Fishpond or the Menehune Fishpond.

² *Loko kuapā*, being one of six notable styles of Hawaiian fishponds, are distinguished by an artificial rock wall which allows for the concentration of native aquatic species in brackish water areas.

³ *kupa*: (nvi) Citizen, native; well-acquainted (Pukui & Elbert); Kaiwi served as a Judge for the Līhu‘e district of Kaua‘i during Hawai‘i’s Territorial Period and was also a Reverend for the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (Kaiwi 1909; Kauliluaikēanuowaiāleale 1906).

⁴ An example of a misinterpretation within Thrum’s English translation is that the Menehune are theorized to be either a negroid people belonging to Indonesia or are simple myths likened to gnomes and fairies (Thrum, 72). For additional resources on issues in Hawaiian language translation, see Nogelemeier (2003), Wong & Solis (2017), Warner (1999), Kuwada (2009), Lucas (2000), and wa Thiong’o (1986).

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<p>MO‘OLELO O KA LĀHUI KĀNAKA I KAPA ‘IA MENEHUNE, O KAUA I.</p>	<p>STORY OF THE RACE OF PEOPLE CALLED THE MENEHUNE, OF KAUA I.</p>
<p>‘O ka lāhui kānaka i kapa ‘ia ka Menehune, he kanaka li‘ili‘i, ua ‘ōlelo ‘ia ma lalo iho o nā kuli o Nā-ipu-‘ālehu. Inā he ‘oia‘i‘o ia ‘ōlelo pēlā a kahiko, a laila, ua li‘ili‘i ‘i‘o nō; he ‘ano peke, a pāha‘a ma kahi ‘ōlelo ‘ana. He kino ‘ano pa‘akikī, he pu‘ipu‘i na‘e a ka lawakua; he ‘ili ‘ula‘ula, a he huluhulu ke kino, he mūkokikoki ka ihu, he mu‘omu‘o ka lae me ka pa‘a i ka huluhulu; he nunui nā maka i uhi ‘ia aku e ka hulu o ke ku‘emaka, a he pupuka a kū i ka ho‘omaka‘u nā helehelena, e hoihoi ‘ole ai ‘oe ke nānā aku iā lākou.</p>	<p>The race of people called Menehune were very small, and were said to be shorter than the knees of Nā-ipu-‘ālehu. If these words of the ancients are true, then that means that these people were indeed tiny; perhaps dwarf-like, short in stature. Yet they had strong bodies, sturdy with bulging muscles. Their skin was red, with lots of hair and snubbed-noses, and they had bulging foreheads that were covered in hair. Their large eyes were covered by their big eyebrows. They were said to be very frightening to gaze upon, something that was better off not looking at.</p>
<p>‘O ko lākou noho ‘ana aia ma nā kuahiwi o uka o Waimea lā, aia paha ma kahi e kokoke ana ia wahi i kapa ‘ia ‘o Waineki, ma laila ka ‘ike nui ‘ia ai kēia ‘ano lāhui. ‘O ka lauhulu o ka mai‘a ‘oia kā ko lākou hale, ‘o kā lākou kama‘ilio ‘ana he ‘ano nunulu e like me ka nunulu ‘ana a ka ‘ilio; ‘o kā lākou ‘aka‘aka ‘ana he nunui ka leo; he po‘e like loa kēia ma</p>	<p>They lived in the uplands of Waimea, perhaps close to the area that is called Waineki, for that is where these people were usually seen. Beneath banana leaves is indeed where they would reside, and sometimes their discussions were similar to the snarls of a dog. They would laugh very loud, which they often did while they were</p>

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<p>kā lākou mea e hana ai. He ‘ano lāhui ‘e‘epa nō kēia ma ko lākou ‘ano, kā lākou hana a me ko lākou noho ‘ana. Ko lākou ola ‘ana, ka mai‘a, ka hinana me ka ‘ōpae, ua mā‘ona nō kā ka Menehune inā ‘akahi a ‘elua mai‘a, a ‘o ka piha lima ho‘okahi ua mā‘ona ihola no ka mea ho‘okahi. ‘O ka hinana a me ka ‘ōpae nā i‘a e lawe ai kēia po‘e, no ka nui maoli o kēia ‘ano lāhui kanaka; pēlā i hiki ai iā lākou ke hana i kekahi hana nui, i ho‘okahi nō pō a ao, ua pa‘a a pau ia hana i ka hana ‘ia.</p>	<p>working. They were very peculiar people, in the way that they worked and in the way that they lived. Their livelihoods were based on mai‘a [banana], hinana [baby ‘o‘opu fish] and ‘ōpae [shrimp]. They were usually full after the first or second mai‘a, so about one handful would be enough per person. The hinana and ‘ōpae were the fishes that were preferred by most of these people, and that is often how they were paid for accomplishing their great feats. A project of theirs could be completed within a single night.</p>
<p>‘O ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikī-a-Ola, mauka o ka muliwai o Waimea, na kēia lāhui Menehune i hana ia ‘auwai, i ‘eli a i nini i ka pōhaku a pa‘a, a penei kā lākou hana ‘ana. I ka pō paha ‘o Akua i hana ai lākou i ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikī-a-Ola, a pa‘a nō i ka pō ho‘okahi. Ua ‘ōlelo ‘ia, ua kū laina lākou mai luna aku nei o ke po‘owai o ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikī-a-Ola a hiki i lalo o Polihale, a ma luna o ka lima o kēlā a me kēia Menehune pākahi i halihali ‘ia mai ai ka pōhaku mai kēia lō‘ihi mai ‘ane‘ane paha e piha nā mile he ‘elima a ‘eono paha, eia na‘e, ua pa‘a nā ‘auwai, ua komo ka wai a e kahe ana i ke kakahiaka ‘ana a‘e i hana ‘ia ai ua ‘auwai</p>	<p>It was this race of Menehune that built the Kikī-a-Ola ditch, located uplands of the Waimea estuary. They dug and fenced the line of stones until it was completed. It is said that Kikī-a-Ola ditch was constructed within a single night beneath the Akua moon. It is said that they stood in a line from the po‘owai [main water inlet] of Kikī-a-Ola ditch all the way until Polihale, and the stones were hand-passed by Menehune over five to six miles. But when the ditch was completed, water was able to enter and flowed the next morning at this place that is now called the Kikī-a-Ola ditch. When the chief</p>

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<p>nei ‘o Kikī-a-Ola. Hau‘oli ke ali‘i nāna i ho‘olalelale i ua lāhui kānaka Menehune nei i ka lohe a ‘ikemaka ‘ana i ka pa‘a o ua ‘auwai ‘o Kikī-a-Ola, a ola nō ho‘i nā maka‘āinana e noho ana ma Paliuli, a hala loa mai i kai i ke komo ‘ana o ka wai, a ulu nā pu‘epu‘e o nā lo‘i kalo a nā kānaka, a mana‘o a‘e ke ola.</p>	<p>who had encouraged the Menehune to build the ditch had heard that the project had been completed, he was overjoyed. The commoners who were living at Paliuli had freshwater, and so they could live and thrive off of the mounds within their lo‘i kalo [taro patches].</p>
<p>‘O ka pa‘a nō o ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikī-a-Ola. Mai ke hana ‘ia ‘ana a ka Menehune i kēia lā, ‘a‘ohe mea nāna wāwahi a‘e i kēia pa‘a o ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikīaola, he ‘ano ho‘okalakupua nō ka hana a kēia ‘ano kānaka li‘ili‘i. I ka pa‘a ‘ana o ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikīaola, ua hiki ‘ole e lawe ua lāhui Menehune nei i ka mea ‘ai ‘ole e ola ai lākou, no laila, i ka hiki ‘ole ‘ana e ola lākou ke noho aku no Waimea, ke ‘u‘uku a ke ‘emi maila ke kū ‘ana o ka hinana iā Waimea, ua lohe ‘ia aia he mau keiki ali‘i nō ke huli ma Puna, Kaua‘i, e noho ana i ke awāwa o ka muliwai o Kīpū mauka, a ‘o Niumalu makai. E noho ana he kaikunāne, ‘o ‘Alekokoko a me ke kaikuahine, ‘o Kalālālehua, he mau ali‘i u‘i kēia o nā helehelena, ho‘oholo like lāua e ‘ūhana i mau loko i‘a pākahi na lāua. I ka ne‘e ‘ana mai o ka Menehune e hana i kēia mau loko i‘a a kēia</p>	<p>And that is how Kikī-a-Ola ditch was created. To this day, nothing has been able to destroy Kikī-a-Ola ditch. The feats of these small people are wondrous indeed. When the ditch was finished, the Menehune were not able to eat enough food to sustain themselves. The amount of hinana were decreasing in the river, so they could no longer make a substantial living in Waimea. They had heard that if they were to search in the Puna district of Kaua‘i, that there are two royal children who were living in the valley along the rivermouth, with Kīpū on the mountain side and Niumalu on the ocean side. The siblings lived there together as brother and sister, the brother named ‘Alekokoko and the sister named Kalālālehua. Their chiefly features were quite beautiful, and it was for them whom the</p>

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<p>mau keiki ali‘i o Niumalu i ‘ike ‘ia a‘e nei ma mua.</p>	<p>fishponds were built. The Menehune marched to build these fishponds for the royal children of Niumalu, as described above.</p>
<p>I ka hana ‘ia ‘ana o ka loko i‘a a ua mau keiki ali‘i nei, hana ‘ia nō ho‘i kā ke kaikunāne ma kekahi ‘ao‘ao mai o ka muliwai o Niumalu, e ho‘olimalima ‘ia nei i ka Pākē, a hana ‘ia nō ho‘i ka loko i‘a a ke kaikuahine ma ka ‘ao‘ao ‘o Kīpū, ka mea kupanaha ‘ea, pa‘a ke kuapā i nini ‘ia me ka pōhaku ka loko i‘a ho‘i a ke kaikuāne, ‘o ‘Alekoko, a pa‘a ‘ole ho‘i ka loko i‘a a ke kaikuahine, ‘o Kalālālehua.</p>	<p>When the fishponds for the royal children were being built, the brothers’ was built on the river mouth of Niumalu, which is now currently leased by the Chinese, and the sisters’ was built on the Kīpū side, but something very strange was that the kuapā [fishpond wall] belonging to the brother ‘Alekoko was completed, but the same could not be said for the fishpond belonging to Kalālālehua.</p>
<p>I ka ‘ōlelo ‘ia, ho‘okahi nō pō i hana ‘ia ai kēia loko i‘a, ‘o ka pōhaku i hahau a nini ‘ia ai kēia mau loko i‘a, mai lalo mai ia o kahakai ‘o Makali‘i, me he lā he mile me hapa mai Niumalu mai, a i ‘ōlelo ‘ia he ‘elua paha mile a ‘oi aku ka mamao o ka pōhaku o kēia mau loko i‘a i ki‘i ‘ia ai. E like nō me ka hana ‘ia ‘ana o ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikīaola, i ka pō a pa‘a, pēlā nō kēia loko i‘a i hana ‘ia, pa‘a ka loko o ke kaikunāne a pa‘a ‘ole ho‘i ka loko i‘a a ke kaikuahine, ao ‘ē kā, pau ka Menehune i ka ho‘i i uka o kuahiwi, no ka mea, he lāhui ‘e‘epa loa kēia i ka puka</p>	<p>It is said that his fishpond was built in a single night, and that the rocks that were laid for both of the fishponds came from the sea below of Makali‘i, which is perhaps a mile or so away from Niumalu, but is also said that the distance away could be two miles or longer. Just like the construction of the Kikī-a-Ola ditch, the fishpond belonging to the brother was completed in a single night, but the sisters’ was never completed - for when daylight came - all of the Menehune had returned to the uplands, since they were so ugly to</p>

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<p>ka lā, he wahi iki wale nō koe a puni nō ho’i ka loko i’a a ke kaikuahine ao ‘ē, lele a’e kā ia Menehune, a lele a’e a pēlā a pau loa nā Menehune i ka lele, a ao nō ho’i. ‘Ike ke kaikuahine ‘a’ole i pa’a kāna loko i’a, kaumaha loa ‘o ia a ‘ūwē no ka pa’a ‘ole ‘ana o kāna loko i’a, a hau’oli ho’i ke kaikunāne i ka pa’a ‘ana o ka loko i’a, ‘o ia ‘o ‘Alekokoko. ‘O ka pōhaku i nini ‘ia ai kā ke kaikuahine eia nō ia ke pa’a nei i loko o ka muliwai a hiki i kēia lā.</p>	<p>gaze upon in the light. There was only a small portion remaining to complete the fishpond belonging to the sister, but daybreak arrived and the Menehune departed. The sister saw that her fishpond was not completed and began to cry, but the brother ‘Alekokoko was very happy that his was completed. The rocks that were stacked for the sister are still located within the rivermouth to this day.</p>
<p>‘O kēia mau keiki ali’i, ‘o ia ‘o ‘Alekokoko, ke kaikunāne, a me Kalālālehua, ke kaikuahine, aia nō he wahi awāwa e pili ana ma ka muliwai, ‘o ia kahi i hānau ‘ia ai kēia mau keiki ali’i; na ke ānuenuē e pi’o mau ana ma ia wahi a hiki nō i kēia lā. Ua ‘ike a kama’āina nā kānaka o kēia wahi ke pi’o ānuenuē ma ua wahi awāwa nei, e ‘ōlelo ana lākou nō ua mau ali’i nei, me ka ‘ōlelo ‘ia, “he mau ali’i u’i kā kēia.”</p>	<p>As for these royal children, ‘Alekokoko and Kalālālehua, they were born in a valley along the same rivermouth, in the area where the rainbow continues to be seen arching today. The people of this place that are familiar with this area where the rainbow arches would often say, “here indeed are the beautiful chiefs.”</p>
<p>Ma ka ‘ōlelo a kama’āina o kēia awāwa ‘o Niumalu, he ‘ano kupua nō kēia mau keiki, ‘o ke kaikuahine e loli ana i mo’o i kahi wā, a ‘o ke</p>	<p>According to the people who were from Niumalu, these children were thought of as sometimes being supernatural. Sometimes the</p>

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<p>kaikunāne e kua manō ana i kahi wā. A aia ma lalo pono’ī mai nō o ua wahi awāwa nei, he lua hohonu, i kahi wā wela ka wai o kēia wahi, i kahi wā ko’eko’e ka wai. I kēlā wā paha ma mua hō’ike ‘ia ia mau mea, i kēia wā nalowale loa.</p>	<p>sister would change into a mo’o [lizard, water spirit], and the brother would appear at other times with a shark’s back. Right beneath the valley there is a deep cavern, where sometimes the water would be hot, and other times it would be cold. This was perhaps in a time much before us, for today it is no longer in existence.</p>
<p>Ma ka ‘ōlelo o ko’u mau kūpuna i make, ua lohe nō lāua i ke ‘ano o ka Menehune penei: aia lāua i uka o kēlā wahi ‘o Waineki, moe lāua ma laila, ma kahi a ka Menehune o ka wā kahiko. I ka pō ua hō’ā ‘ia, a e pu’u ahi nui pūlehu mai’a, ‘a’ole lākou i ‘ai mua i ka mai’a, e lilo mua ‘ē ‘ana i kēia po’e Menehune me ka lā’au loloa kā e kī’o’e mai ai i ka mai’a i loko o ka pu’u ahi e ‘ā’ā ‘ana. ‘A’ole nō kā ho’i o ka lī’ili’i a kana mai o kēia ‘ano lāhui, ho’omaka’ukau nō ho’i nā helehelena ke nānā aku ‘oe, a pupuka nō ho’i a ke ‘ino o nā maka, eia na’e, ‘a’ole kēia he kānaka ‘ano puni hulu a ho’āla hakakā wahi a ku’u mau kūpuna i lohe pono i ko lākou ‘ano.</p>	<p>According to my ancestors who have passed on, they had heard the stories of the Menehune like this: one day they were resting in the uplands of Waineki, close to where the Menehune used to reside. When night came, they made a fire to roast mai’a, but were never able to eat it because the Menehune would first scooped them up with long sticks from the burning fire. These people were so small that they were without comparison, and that their features were terrifying to behold, they were so very ugly to look upon, but nonetheless, these people were not covered in fur, and snarled and argued until the early mornings. My beloved ancestors justly understood what they were.</p>

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<p>He kānaka li’ili’i ‘īo maoli nō, he po’e maka’u loa i ke ao, a inā i ka pō, ‘auwe, he hulu ‘ā’ā ia nō kēia po’e kānaka. He lōkahi loa lākou ma kā lākou mau hana ‘ano nui, he ‘ano ho’okalakupua maoli nō, nānā aku i ka ‘auwai ‘o Kikīaola a hiki mai i kēia lā, ‘a’ole he mea hiki e aa a’e e hele e wāwahi i ka pa’a i hana ‘ia e ka lāhui Menehune. I ka nānā pono ‘ana i ke ‘ano o ka pōhaku o ka nini ‘ana he nunui maoli nō; a pēlā nō me ka loko i’a o ‘Alekokoko a hiki mai i kēia lā, ‘oia pa’a nō a ka Menehune i hana ai ‘oia pa’a nō ia i kēia lā e ‘ike ‘ia nei, eia na’e, ua ulu ‘ia ‘ē ka manienie ma waho mai o ke kuapā, ‘o ia kāu pōhaku e ‘ike ‘ana, akā, ‘o ka pōhaku ma luna iho ua nalowale i ka ulu nui ‘ia o ka manienie. ‘O ka pōhaku helele’i iho i laila ‘o ia kā ka Pākē e ho’okau a’e i luna. I nā makahiki wai nui aku nei i hala, ‘a’ole i ho’opōino iki ‘ia kēia loko i’a e ka wai kahe, ua pi’i nō ka wai a a’e ma luna o kuapā, ‘a’ole na’e i hiolo iki kekahi wahi o ka loko i’a a hiki i kēia lā.</p>	<p>These people were indeed very small, and they were very afraid of daylight. The Menehune worked together in their great feats, so much so that they are often considered supernatural. For example, if you look to Kikī-a-Ola ditch today, it is not something that is so easily taken apart and disassembled. If you look closely at the types of rocks that were stacked, there were very many - which is the same with ‘Alekokoko - the work that the Menehune completed is long-lasting. Nevertheless, Mānienie grass has quickly grown on the exterior of the kuapā, but those are the same rocks, although the top layers of the rocks have disappeared due to the rampant growth of Mānienie. The crumbling rocks now above were placed by the Chinese. In past years with lots of water, the fishpond was not harmed. The water climbed until it breached the kuapā, but no part of the wall has fallen until today.</p>
<p>‘O ke kumu o ko’u mau kūpuna i lohe ai i kēia ‘ano po’e kānaka, i uka o ia wahi ‘o Waineki, a ma luna pono a’e o ke awāwa ‘o Wainiha e</p>	<p>The reason why my ancestors know so much about these people is because they often went upland of Waineki, directly above the valley</p>

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nānā pono iho ana kā i lalo. I pī’i ho’i ko’u mau kūpuna i ka ‘ohi lā’au ala, na nā alī’i, a moe i kuahiwi, a moe aku i kuahiwi, a pēlā ko lākou ‘ike ‘ana i ua wahi o ua lāhui ‘ē’epa nei, he po’ē maika’i, ‘a’ohe he hana wale mai, ma ka mea’ai kā lākou e kī’i mai ai inā e pūlehu mai’a kānaka i kuahiwi ia manawa o ke au kahiko iō kahiko loa. Ke pa’a nei kēia mau wahi a ka Menehune i hana ai, ‘oia pa’a nō ia lā ‘oia nō ia i kēia lā. Na kēia mau wahi kaulana a ka Menehune i hana ai i ‘ike ‘ia ai ka nani o ka Akua, i ka hana ‘ana i nā ‘ano kānaka o kēlā ‘ano a me kēia ‘ano, a ma nā hana na’e i ‘ike ‘ia ai ka nani o ke Akua. Ma ka ‘ōlelo a kahi po’ē he Mū’aimai’a, akā, ma ka ‘ōlelo a ko’u mau kūpuna, o ua lāhui Menehune nei nō ia.

of Wainiha. They went there to harvest wood for the chiefs, and slept in the uplands, which is how they became acquainted with this aforementioned race of people, a great people who never harmed them, who were known to roast mai’a in the mountains a long, long time ago. But when things were completed by them, they were things that lasted well into our time. These famed places of the Menehune are known by the beauty of the Akua moon, and they were completed by such a different type of people, but their work was so great that God recognizes them for it. Some people call them the Mū-‘ai-mai’a, but in the words of my ancestors, they were the Menehune.

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