

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 1977 Update- National Historic Landmark  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **Mo'okini Heiau (and Kamehameha I Birthplace)**

AND/OR COMMON **Mo'okini Heiau (and Kokoiki)**

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT **2**

VICINITY OF

**'Upolu airport**

**Kohala District**

STATE

**Hawaii**

CODE

**15**

COUNTY

**Hawaii**

CODE

**5000-001**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

**State of Hawaii**

**Mr. Susumo Ono, State Historic Pres-  
 ervation Officer**

STREET & NUMBER

**Dept. of Land & Natural Resources**

CITY, TOWN

**P.O. Box 621**

STATE

**Honolulu, Hawaii 96809**

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

**State Tax Office**

or

**State Tax Office**

STREET & NUMBER

**75 Aupuni**

**425 Queen St.**

CITY, TOWN

**Hilo, HI 96720**

STATE

**Honolulu, HI 96813**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

**National Survey of Historic Sites & Buildings, Theme XVI, HI Aboriginal Culture**

DATE

**1962**

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
 SURVEY RECORDS

**National Survey of Historic Sites, National Park Service, USDI**

CITY, TOWN

**Washington**

STATE

**D. C.**

**Designated Natl. Historic Landmark by Secretary of Interior 12/29/62**

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mo'okini Heiau: This masonry structure is an irregular parallelogram in plan, about 267 feet (81 meters) on the west side; 250 feet (76 m) on the east side; 135 feet (41 m) on the north side; and 112 feet (34 m) on the south. This ancient Hawaiian temple features an open paved stone court that is enclosed on four sides by stone walls, which in 1977 vary in height from about seven feet (2 meters) to 14 feet (4m). The original walls may have been as high as 20 feet (6 meters). The walls are of basalt boulders; stacked and without mortar; with bases as thick as ten feet (almost 3 meters). The enclosing walls have tapered sides, both exterior and interior. Hawaiian oral tradition says that the boulders were passed hand to hand from Niuli'i, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) distant for the construction, possibly involving as many as 15,000 men standing in line. The ground-level entrance, wide enough to pass one person at a time, is in the middle of the west wall. Inside and across the northerly end is a raised stone platform, ~~three~~ or four stones high, which once held images, fires, the altar and perhaps wooden towers. Detached stone platforms, one or two stones high, are scattered within the courtyard and once held thatched temple buildings. Non-native grasses now grow between the courtyard stones and obscure the walking surface. Some of the paving stones have been removed.

On the ground outside the north end, perhaps 25 yards (22 meters) from the wall, is the named stone Papa-nui-o-leka, on which human flesh was separated from bones after the body had been used for sacrifice; and another named stone, moved there from the shore for safekeeping. In the fields east of the temple may be the named stone Pōhaku-holehole-kanaka (stone for stripping human flesh), although this stone may have been moved and be the same stone as Papa-nui-o-leka. The area surrounding the heiau was used for decades for sugar cane cultivation, most recently for mechanical planting and harvesting. In 1977 the land is used for grazing cattle and is fenced.

Kamehameha Birth Site: About 2,000 feet (610 meters) west of Mo'okini Heiau and near the ocean is the birthplace of Kamehameha the Great. At the time of his birth, ca. 1753, the site was occupied by one of the thatched housing complexes of Alapa'i-nui-a-Kauaua, ruling chief of the Island of Hawai'i. The birth itself took place late at night within ~~one~~ one of the large thatched houses reserved for royal women. The named stone Pōhaku-hānau-ali'i may have been his mother's couch inside the house. Alapa'i's housing complex would have included a number of thatched houses as well as the canoe landing "harbor" along the shore. The complex, with "harbor" was called by the place name of Kapakai, within the larger Hawaiian land division (an ahupua'a) called Kokoiki.

The named stone was one of several large (3-4 feet diameter) waterworn basalt boulders in a scattered group on the level site in the 1960's. Sugar cane was cultivated for decades on all four sides of the site, but the site, including the stones, was untouched, unplowed and uncultivated. Sometime in 1974, the group of stones including Pōhaku-hānau-ali'i was stolen by unknown persons and means, much to the consternation of the local Hawaiian community. In 1977 the level site is overgrown with weeds, low bushes and a few stalks of volunteer sugar cane.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 10th Century/ca. 1370 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Kuamo'o Mo'okini/Pa'ao

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mo'okini Heiau: The centuries-old standing walls and enclosed courtyard of this temple mark one of the largest physical evidences of the ancient Hawaiian religion. The well-preserved walls and interior paving and platforms, built without mortar, testify to skills of ancient Hawaiian stonemasons and their ability to assemble unworked basalt rocks into massive and complex structures. Hawaiian oral literature and Western historical accounts indicate Mo'okini was the principal temple for centuries in the Big Island district of Kohala; associated with ruling chiefs and their high priests; and was of the class of temples called luakini, the highest class, and which required regular human sacrifices.

Its traditional builder was a high priest named Mo'okini (perhaps Kuamo'o Mo'okini), who lived according to some accounts as early as the fifth century, but more likely the tenth, and who served and accompanied the high chief Mo'ikeha, famous for his trip and sojourn to another Polynesian island group in the South Pacific and who returned to Hawai'i to become the ruling chief of Kaua'i Island and whose numerous descendants became famous in their own rights. More reliable tradition indicates the original temple on the site was rebuilt (ca. A.D. 1370) by the high priest Pa'ao, who came from a South Pacific island group, probably the Society Islands, and who founded a lineage of priests which served the ruling chiefs of the Big Island down through Kamehameha II. After building the temple, Pa'ao lived near it and officiated in it. Pa'ao is also credited with the building of Waha'ula Heiau, Puna District, Hawai'i Island, which has a similar architecture. The name Mo'okini (meaning many lizards, or many lineages) may have been the name of the original temple and transferred by Pa'ao to the second. Pa'ao is credited with introducing innovations, such as human sacrifices, temples with enclosed walls and new rituals to the Hawaiian religion.

Mo'okini temple was last active as a war temple for Kamehameha the Great in the last two decades of the 18th century. It is said to have housed the Kamehameha family war god, Ku-ka-'ili-moku, and this feathered god transferred to Pu'ukoholā Heiau, Kawaihae, Kohala District, Hawai'i Island, in 1791, when Kamehameha the Great built this new war temple to assure his conquest of all the Hawaiian Islands. Mo'okini Heiau was one of the luakini and other state temples used regularly by Kamehameha the Great's son and heir, Liholiho, in the second decade of the 19th century. It was Liholiho, who as Kamehameha II, abolished in 1819 that part of the ancient religion that depended on such temples as Mo'okini. He ordered the destruction of the temples. The walls and platforms of Mo'okini were not destroyed. On all islands, platforms of a number of temples as important as Mo'okini were not disturbed in spite of royal orders. Mo'okini and the others had acquired a spiritual significance (mana) which protected them against human destruction, a significance which has been retained, in part, through today.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 116 (38 acres water; 78 land)

UTM REFERENCES

A	0,5	19,8	9,80	2,2	4,3	4,9,0	B	0,5	19,9	3,4,0	2,2	4,2	9,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	0,5	19,8	4,50	2,2	4,2	5,8,0	D	0,5	19,8	2,9,0	2,2	4,2	8,5,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at Point B, which is approximately 105° east of true north and approximately 500 feet from the southeast corner of Mo'okini Heiau, and proceeding approximately 250° east of true north for a distance of approximately 3,100 feet to Point C; then proceeding approximately 328° east of true north for a distance of approximately 1,000 feet to Point D, which is approximately 500 feet offshore; then proceeding approximately 50° east of true north for a distance of 3,100 feet to Point A, which lies approximately 600 feet offshore; then to the point of

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Russell A. Apple, Pacific Historian

ORGANIZATION State Director's Office, National Park Service DATE August 10, 1977

STREET & NUMBER 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 6305, Box 50165 TELEPHONE 808/546-7584

CITY OR TOWN Honolulu, Hawaii STATE Hawaii 96750

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

*Jane L. Silverman* 8/16/77

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Landmark DEC. 29, 1962  
 Designated DATE Sept 10, 1977  
 Boundary Delbert Emery

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/26/84

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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Juxtaposition of Mo'okini Heiau and Kapakai Royal Housing Complex: It was typical of ancient Hawaiian settlement patterns for a ruling chief's housing complex to be near and associated with a Luakini class heiau. This is one of the few cases in Hawai'i when the exact locations of the temple and its associated housing complex are known. Over the centuries, Kapakai as a royal housing complex served as the residence of ruling chiefs and their associates when ceremonies were conducted in Mo'okini Heiau. Nothing would have been permitted to intrude visually between these two associated areas of sacred land. Temple ceremonies lasted several nights and days. During this time, ruling chiefs and high priests would leave the temple for short periods to return to their housing complexes, still under some restrictions as to their behavior. What trails existed between the heiau and Kapakai have been plowed under in recent decades, but the sight lines between them were only blocked in recent decades by a thick field of sugar cane. The 1977 use of the area between the heiau and birthsite for cattle grazing is more compatible for each can be seen from the other.

Alapa'i probably conducted pre-war ceremonies in Mo'okini before his invasion of Maui ca. 1753. It was during this ceremonial period that Kamehameha was born in the Kapakai housing complex. Later, Kamehameha, and still later his son Liholiho, probably stayed at Kapakai while they led rituals in Mo'okini.

Thus the sightline and land between Mo'okini Heiau and the site of the Kapakai housing complex is important and included within the boundaries.

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Kamehameha Birth Site: Kamehameha the Great was the Hawaiian ruling chief who conquered rival ruling chiefs to unite by 1795 all islands but one to found the historic Kingdom of Hawaii. Kaua'i Island voluntarily joined the kingdom in 1810. The kingdom founded by Kamehameha the Great lasted through 1893 and is the political ancestor of the State of Hawai'i. Kamehameha remains the hero of Hawai'i. He is almost as well known today as he was during his lifetime of leadership. His birth-site along a rocky coast of the Island of Hawai'i was sacred through association with Polynesian royalty long before his birth ca. 1753; and remains sacred to the Hawaiian people today, more especially because Kamehameha the Great was born there.

After the death of high chief Keawe-i-kekahi-ali'i-o-ka-moku (ca. 1700, great grandfather of Kamehameha), ruling chief of the Island of Hawai'i, unsettled political conditions permitted a ruling chief from Maui Island to invade and conquer the Island of Hawai'i. Alapa'i-nui-a-kauaua became the resident ruling chief of the Big Island. With Alapa'i absent from his home island, rival high chiefs there took over and were eventually strong enough to attack Hawai'i Island. Alapa'i successfully repulsed the Maui forces from the Big Island districts of Kōna and Kohala. He then prepared to invade and reconquer his home island of Maui. The north Kohala coast was directly across the Alanuihaha channel from Maui. His invasion force of canoes and warriors occupied the coast, from south of Mahukona to Pu'uepa, within which land section Mo'okini Heiau lies. Alapa'i, with his staff chiefs and retainers, and their women, occupied his royal housing complex at Kapakai in the land of Kokoiki. In the royal party was the high chiefess Ke-ku'i-apo-iwa, wife of high chief Ka-lani-kupu-a-pa-i-ka-lani-nui-keoua, and who was due to deliver a royal child at any time.

Ke-ku'i-apo-iwa, the expectant mother, occupied the lanai of a large thatched house. Because she was about to deliver a first-born royal child, an event of importance and of religious significance, she was surrounded by guards and by high chiefs who were to witness. Due to rain and the cold, the guards and chiefs were asleep near day-break when the time came for delivery. Ke-ku'i-apo-iwa entered the house, and perhaps lying on the royal birth stone named Pōhaku-hānau-ali'i, and apparently unattended, braced her feet against the posts and purlins of the thatched wall. At the sound of the last "bearing-down" pain (*kuakoko*), a high chief outside (who perhaps was not an official witness and uninvited), parted the thatch and made a hole. As soon as the child was born and laid down on soft pieces of bark cloth (*kapa*), he reached inside, wrapped the newborn in the cloth, extracted the package through the hole and carried it away undetected. Nae'ole was the chief. He was the high chief of the Kohala district. There was much puzzlement at the child's absence when the chiefs and guards awoke after daybreak.

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This apparent kidnapping has been explained several ways. The popular explanation is that the child was taken because he was male, and a royal heir to the once-ruling family of the Island of Hawai'i. As such he posed a threat to the continued rule of Alapa'i. It was feared that a male child might have been killed by Alapa'i, his great uncle. This is apparently the imposition in recent times of the Biblical Herod story to the birth. However, the explanation offered by the native historian Kamakau was that Nae'ole wanted the honor of raising the royal child. It was customary for a royal newborn to be given at birth by the mother to a relative or close associate. Nae'ole wanted to be the one so selected and acted to insure this. There were also political advantages in raising a royal child from another family.

Alapa'i landed on Maui, found that his rival ruling chief there had just died and established friendly relations. He went on to battles on Moloka'i and O'ahu Islands. After an inconclusive campaign to unite the major islands he returned to Hawai'i to continue as its resident ruling chief.

Probably before he left Kapakai, Alapa'i appointed Nae'ole as guardian (kahu) of the newborn Kamehameha. Nae'ole's younger sister, Ke-ku-nui-a-lei-moku became the "foster mother" and probably principal wetnurse. Kamehameha grew up in the Halawa area of the Kohala District, according to Kamakau, not in Waipi'o Valley as is popularly believed. When Kamehameha was five years old, he was taken into the court of ruling chief Alapa'i to begin his training for leadership. Ke-aka, Alapa'i's wife, became his new guardian. Any ceremonies, for Hawaiian-style circumcision, or a rite of passage into manhood for Kamehameha, may well have been conducted by Alapa'i in Mo'okini Heiau.

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Apple, Russell A., The Use, Construction and Adaptation of the Hawaiian Thatched House, San Francisco, 1971, pp. 17, 34.

Fornander, Abraham, An Account of the Polynesian Race, Tokyo, 1969 (reprint of 1879 ed.), pp. 36, 53.

Ii, John Papa, Fragments of Hawaiian History, Honolulu, 1959, p. 3.

Kamakau, S. M., Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1961, pp. 66-69.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Continuation)

beginning, Point B, which lies from Point A a distance of approximately 2,200 feet at approximately  $148^{\circ}$  east of true north.