Kumu dispute one man's belief that hula was birthed on Molokai

By Catherine Kekoa Enomoto

Star-Bulletin

N the eve of a Friendly Isle dance festival, less-than-friendly debate has erupted on event's theme.

Hula teachers and Hawaiiana experts are questioning the validity of the title of tomorrow's "Molo-- A Celebration ka'i ka Hula Piko of the Birth of Hula on Molokai.'

The inaugural celebration unfolds from 10 a.m. to sunset at Kapu'aiwa Coconut Grove near Kaunakakai.

Performers include Halau Hula Kukuna'okala and kumu hula John Kaimikaua; Halau Hula 'o Moloka'i and kumu Rachel Kamakana; Moana's Hula Halau and ku-mu Moana Dudoit; and Na Wahine Makamae 'o Moloka'i and kumu

Loretta Ritte. Although the festival is based on Kaimikaua's "contemporary tradition" that Molokai is the birthplace and center of the hula, the 32-year-old kumu disdains involve-ment in any disagreement about

the theme's validity

"I am not interested in an article to prove or disprove the traditions that were handed down to me," said Kaimikaua, an Oahu native whose halau specializes in animal hula. "What I am doing is for the good and benefit of the Hawaiian people, to enlighten them. I am not really looking to put up my creden-tials. To me those things are very

sacred, handed down from pre-Western times. I want to maintain an integrity that is not spoken of." Kaimikaua said that when he was about 14 years old he met Kawahinekapuheleikapokane, a 92-year-old Aiea woman who is now deceased. She gave him 15 chants and a hula genealogy going

back 101/2 centuries.

"You count 100 years for every two names on this genealogy," Kaimikaua said, "and it goes back to about 900 A.D.

"That genealogy taught me of Laka. If anyone has a true hula genealogy, their names link into one of my names because hula came from one source. I have not met anyone who has a hula geneal-ogy that goes back to pre-Western

times - yet.' When newspaper reporter Lori Matsukawa asked to see the documents in 1976, Matsukawa reported, "Kaimikaua said he could not show anyone the sheets, as it showed 'disrespect' for the person

who taught them to him." Kaimikaua's references to "Moloka'i ka hula piko — Moloka'i, the center of the dance" began appearing in magazines, newspapers and books a dozen years ago. Ku-mu hula Noenoelani Zuttermeister frets each time the media repeat

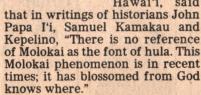
Kaimikaua's reference. "Everybody is entitled to an opinion. But when he states his opinion, he has given no proof up to this point," said Zuttermeister, a University of Hawaii hula teacher

and daughter of revered hula maven Kau'i Zuttermeister.

"There comes a time when we as teachers don't even want to be a part of it. But if we don't stand up and say what we believe to be true, years down the line our children and our children's children will think it is the truth, because

in 1991 it was being accepted by everyone — and that's the sad part.'

Other kumu hula and Hawaiiana scholars refute Kaimikaua's position. John Kaha'i Topolinski, kumu hula of Ka Pa Hula Hawai'i, said



John

Kaimikaua

Kumu hula Wayne Chang, who is assistant admissions director of the Kamehameha Schools, said, "I personally think he is filling some of the blanks. But that's how you become a scholar and an authority: You get enough people to listen and believe.

Carol Silva was not so lenient: "I am not a great supporter of John Kaimikaua. He is a half charlatan in my books. I kind of resent that he comes out of the woods with these things that have not been known to be true — I'm being very candid.

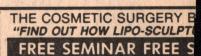
Silva said her background embraces many years of researching

records and resources. An archivist and chief of the records-managemant branch of the state Archives Division, and a ty of Hawaii College of Continuing Education and Community Service, Silva spoke as an individiual.

John Charlot, former University of Hawaii religion teacher who invited Kaimikaua to speak at UH, tempered the debate by noting that Polynesians have a pluralistic culture.

"In Polynesian culture, there are many traditions, and Polynesians argue among themselves about which traditions are good or not,' he said.

Chang called the controversy healthy. "It sure is stimulating the hula world to look at it and say, 'Now what?' They have to look at their traditions and make their own judgment."



Meet Dr. Barry Miller, Surgeon/Direc and find out how he's changed the f Tuesday, May 14, 7:30 p.m., Ala Mo

"Best Thai

Celebrate Mot Award Winnii

Keo's

at King Street 1486 South King Street Phone: 947-9988 Dinner nitely from 5:00pm

> Keo's 625 Kapahi Phone 737-Dinner nite



CAPTURE ALL THE ACTION ON QUALITY AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES FROM SONY