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June 6, 1962.

Professor Wilhelm G. Solheim II,
Department of Anthropology,
University of Hawaii (Manoa),
Honolulu, Hawaii.

Dear Wilhelm,

I am enclosing here a final draft (in copy) of my essay
"The Turtle Rock and the Lotus Stone -- Molokai's Mysterious
Fertility Shrine."

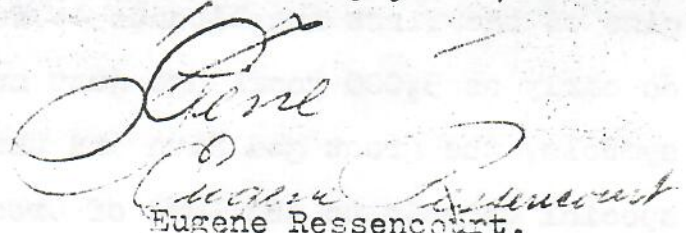
I believe I am justified in distinguishing this particular
phallic rock as "Turtle Rock" because it does seem unique in form
compared with the usual columnar phallic symbols. As you will note
in the context, I have remarked upon the several terms that have
been applied to this Molokai exemplar, explaining that Krämer was
apparently the first to designate it a "phallic" rock and that my
"rediscovered" Lotus Stone is technically a yonic symbol.

In any case, I trust you will find my treatment relatively
both informative and readable.


You might consider using it, with perhaps a few deletions, in
your periodical Asian Perspectives. It would be well, I think, to
have such a report (involving a month's research, legwork, thinking,
and writing) in print and on file in some such scholarly journal so
that interested scholars may in future have something to go on in
undertaking further investigations of the Molokai fertility shrine
and/or other pertinent material. Proper footnoting may be added,
with ~~him~~ a brief bibliography if desirable also. As you know, I
have a few suitable photographs from which selection may be made for
an apt illustration or two.

With my best regards to Professor Leonard Mason, I remain

Cordially yours,


Eugene Ressenecourt.

P.S. By the way, thanks for your tip on seeing Malia Solomon. I had
a good interview with her and also with other Hawaiians there at Ulu
Mau Hawaiian Village -- as you will read in my account.



Eugene Ressoncourt,
2909 Kalakaua Ave.,
Honolulu 15, Hawaii.

THE TURTLE ROCK AND THE LOTUS STONE

Molokai's Mysterious Fertility Shrine

By Eugene Ressoncourt

High on a lonely, windswept precipice in the land of Palaeu, cresting the Puu Lua Hills of Kalae where the Island of Molokai rises a sheer 1641 feet above its northern sea, there stands a great basaltic rock carven in the shape of a half-buried turtle -- and just down the slope from it, hidden away in deep forest, a broad, wavy stone in the exquisite form of a lotus petal. On the cliffside trail close by is a cluster of boulders bearing petroglyphs alike in design to the double trident of Siva, Hindu God of Restoration.

Together these high forsaken vestigial monuments to the golden age of Hawaiian life and culture may, more than anything else in all the Islands of Hawaii, hold the answer to the Asiatic ancestral origins of the first inhabitants -- for it is known that in far India as early as 5,000 years ago just such a combination of religious symbols, the great god Siva and the Lotus, served as an altar of special worship to the Lord of Creation. The lotus represents health, luck, beauty, fertility, divinity, resurrection, and purity. The turtle as a symbolic form seems to have spread from ancient China through the Pacific as far as Mexico, where it is a symbol of fertility and the patron of childbirth.

Lost in the soft, vague shadows of antiquity is the mysterious

inception of Hawaii's Turtle Rock and Lotus Stone, as I here choose to name them, for it is not known to us whether the early Hawaiians carved them so or found them so, carved by wind and water -- or even by the prehistoric Monchunes, as anthropologist Craighill Handy suggested years ago -- but until the coming of the missionaries, and even after, Hawaiians worshipped at this shrine as did the people of the Indus Valley so long ago at theirs. And even today a few persons will climb the steep trail to that windswept precipice on Molokai with similar intent and faith.

While relatively little has been written of this Turtle Rock and Lotus Stone, we discover in the annals of Hawaiian mythology that these curious monuments were believed to represent the most crucial hour in the history of the Hawaiian people, and the greatest crisis a race of people ever had to face -- the threat of complete extirmination, genocide, racial suicide, through its own human stupidity in a plague of jealousy which attacked every husband and wife in the land.

In this modern day and age of ours when there are birth-control movements the world over because the races of man seem to increase so rapidly as to threaten the food supply, and when in our own prosperous country of food surpluses so many husbands and wives are at loggerheads that the divorce rate steadily rises, the old Hawaiian legend of Nanahoa and Kawahuna, who were turned into a rock and into a stone because of jealousy, may well give us pause.

The legend has been perhaps best recorded by the old Hawaiian newspaper Kuokoa (June 12, 1924) in a report by W.J. Coelho entitled "Hani Ka Aina Hoopulapula o Molokai." My interpretation is as follows.

Once upon a time there was a man named Nanahoa and his wife named Kawahuna who lived on that high and lonely crest of Puu Lua. And one

day there appeared suddenly on the scene "a peculiar but beautiful woman" who had climbed the hill to make offerings to the gods. Kawahuna noticed her husband staring at this beautiful woman -- and in a fit of jealousy, she seized the woman by the hair and grappled with her. And Manahoa, feeling affronted, slapped his wife so hard as to send her flat on her back a few yards down the steep hill.

All of this affronted the gods in turn -- and Manahoa was transformed into the turtle-shaped rock where he stood, while Kawahuna was transformed into the lotus-shaped stone where she lay.

It occurred so very, very long ago ^{the petrified} that Manahoa and Kawahuna were already there transfixed at the time the goddess Pele and her consort Kamapuna came along and were involved in their own personal jealousy feud. Because Kamapuna chased after the pretty ^{Earth} Girls, Pele flirted with the handsome Earth men. And here began a battle of the sexes that was to spread throughout the earthbound population of all Hawaii and grow into total war between all the men and all the women. Bitterness was so intense on both sides that the begetting of children ceased entirely -- and the race began gradually to die off without replenishing itself.

At last, however, the remaining chiefs held council and asked their kahunas to appeal to the ^{higher} Gods for a solution. And the answer came in the form of a revelation: if the women would go and make supplication and offering to the Rock which was the spirit of Manahoa, and the men in kind to the Stone which was the spirit of Kawahuna -- the first man and wife to quarrel over jealousy, and who had become lifeless because of it -- new life would be restored again and again to Hawaii and its people, and the race would be saved from total extermination.

Thus, then, arose the custom of pilgrimage to the mecca of

fertility, there high above the northern sea of the Island of Molokai.

Before he recorded the legend, Coelho and his party inspected both the Rock and the Stone; and he obtained his story from old Hawaiians of that vicinity. His, though, is the only story about that historic and legendary shrine which I have been able to find in any newspaper or magazine to date -- except for a scientific report by a Dr. Augustin Krämer in the German magazine Globus in 1898.

A complex of mystery, tabu, fear, confusion, and silence clings tenaciously about the shrine and even the very mention of it. Some say the site is haunted, some that the entire island of Molokai is haunted, and believe it to this day. One of my informants remarked that Coelho did not die a natural death: that he met with an accident. Another, when during my own investigation I suddenly developed an inexplicable stomach ache which lasted for several days, brought to my attention an old story about Molokai's Poison God. And one Molokai resident told me she feels a strange presence when she visits the site, and that it frightens her; her mother has cautioned her not to go up there any more.

But obviously a number of bolder visitors have been to the site since the turn of the century, for some have left their names or initials scratched on the Rock -- an indiscretion lamented by the Bishop Museum as early as 1902. As for that, though, the Division of State Parks of Hawaii has prepared a declaration worded: "WARNING -- It is rumored that persons who have defaced this rock have become barren. Such action also breaks Regulation 1 and is subject to punishment provided by law."

What promises today to make the site an item of popular

historical and cultural interest is Hawaii's burgeoning tourist industry, which is beginning to remember "Molokai the Forgotten Island" for its own particular fascination and charm. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau does have markers set up, along the island's principal roads, to indicate the presence of historical and cultural sites, as well as natural wonders, in each such vicinity -- and there is one indicating the existence of the Rock in the Palaeu Park, which spreads out westward of the road leading to the Kalaupapa Cliffs lookout, but the Rock is a mile in and I have suggested to the HVB another marker that would tell visitors just where to look. The Division of State Parks has it on their agenda for reinvestigation, proper maintenance, and full protective care. The Hawaii Historical Society is pricking up its ears, and there is the possibility of setting up a memorial plaque at this nearly forgotten fertility shrine.

At Honolulu's Ulu Mau Hawaiian Village, the permanent outdoor exposition devoted to Hawaiian craft and culture, a foot-long flat chunk of the Rock was on exhibition for awhile recently in a glass case and with an explanatory placard. Hawaiian cultural entrepreneur Malia Solomon had found this dislodged slab at the foot of the Rock on a pilgrimage she made to it three years ago, and had brought ^{the slab} ~~it~~ back to the Village to lend color to her little lectures on such things. Malia tells me that a local woman in one of the audiences came forward with her husband to declare that the Rock must surely have its magic powers as of old: the woman swore to it that fourteen years after the birth of her last child, and not having been able to produce any more children, she had made a pilgrimage to the Rock and wished for another child -- and that within three months, fertility was hers again.

Malia seriously relates also that another woman, this one a

Mainland tourist, asked to borrow the fragment slab from the case for a few moments, took it off to the side, and sat upon it while wishing for a child. Whether this is pitiful or droll, it is ^{of} interest to note that the glass case thereafter met with an accident and was smashed -- so that the innocent slab now rests inconspicuously on a shelf, unidentified among other curious rock objects.

What with the strange silence and tabu concerning it heretofore, in any case, I had already been three times to the Island of Molokai before I ever even heard of the fertility shrine. And it was only with considerable difficulty and persistence that on my recent tour of exploration I managed to get to it at all. My first attempt failed: it seemed miles that I walked in the lonely, dripping forest -- and I couldn't even find the trail. I found a path to a railed-off view of the leper settlement, far below and to the east, but not a single sign of a large rock or any trail that might lead thereto.

But eventually, although the weather was bad up there in the early spring, I made three auspicious pilgrimages to the shrine, and took a number of photographs.

Only on the second pilgrimage did I discover the hidden Lotus Stone, for its location seemed to have been forgotten years before: I found it with the assistance of Lilyan Yuen Anderson, manager of Kalae Lodge, whose children once while climbing in the forest with the Girl Scouts had come upon a broad stone slab that seemed unusual. By sliding cautiously down the steep slope, clinging to trees for safety, we found the Stone some yards away from the Rock.

That I sought out the site at all was due to a casual remark made to me by Harry Larson, long-resident manager of Libby's Maunaloa Plantation: he said it might be of interest to a writer to look for the big fertility rock somewhere up at the northern cliff edge --

and that there once had been a large stone representing woman but that no one seemed to remember where it was.

A Hawaiian oldtimer named Albert Kahinu, Molokai road superintendent, told me he knew where the Rock was; and he was kind enough to drive me up into the Palaau Park forest reserve as far as the road block and drop me there with the advice that if I walked on I would find the trail. Well, I walked for miles that morning, and from one end of the forest reserve to the other, but saw no sign of the trail.

It was just by chance that later, on the road back to town, I was hailed by Dr. Guy Heder and his assistant Dorothy who, when they heard of my fruitless search, told me they had once been to the Rock -- and decided to take me to it at once. And this time, only a hundred yards or so beyond the road block in the forest as described, I was led forthwith in among the pine-like ironwood trees and northward up the slope to the beginning of a rocky trail that rose westward through the fierce howling wind for a couple of hundred yards, along the cliff edge high above the sea, and then terminated abruptly at the side of an opening to a depressed pocket-like clearing where stood the great Rock in all its pristine glory.

If a marker were placed at just the spot where one should cut in through the ironwoods, visitors would have little difficulty in finding the trail leading to the Rock.

For the next two weeks I lodged at Kalae Lodge, a couple of miles below the forest reserve, obtaining information on the region and twice again visiting the Rock so that I might find the Stone -- and also to inspect the petroglyphs on the boulders at the height of the trail.

When I returned to Honolulu, I sought to obtain all scientific and other information available on Molokai's historical treasure of

a monument to fertility. But here again I drew a blank at first. The newspaper files were of no help. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau had heard of it, but knew nothing more -- and was indeed grateful for what information I myself could provide, especially as to suggestions concerning the road marker they had in the vicinity of the shrine. The Bishop Museum had heard of it too but did not hold forth the hope of much information on the subject, though I would be at liberty to dig for it in their library. The Hawaiian Room of the Library of Hawaii seemed less acquainted still. The University of Hawaii knew it was there, but little more of it. And I could but muse that either the power of tabu had raised a veil of silence, even in such quarters, or the fertility shrine had become a thing forgotten as Molokai had become an island forgotten.

However, with my original persistence, and by showing my photographs, I managed to revive interest and recreate enthusiasm, in the quarters concerned, to the extent that with the help of Museum and Library staffers I was able to dig up some thousands of words written by much earlier investigators of the shrine -- and to unravel some of the mystery of it.

After I had put in a good many days of research and had pulled available knowledge together into logical sequence and order, I was received with open arms by certain interested parties who had only partial information. Mr. Gene Renard of the State Parks office stayed two hours after closing time discussing the shrine with me, for he had ahead of him the task of making it a genuine State Parks monument but with little accurate information thus far to go on. Dr. Leonard Mason, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Hawaii, received me very cordially, looked at my photographs, and had me talk with Professor Wilhelm, expert on southeast Asia and its

link with Polynesia; having known my former mentor in anthropology at the University of Chicago, Solheim seemed quite interested in my interpretation of the Molokai fertility shrine.

The references are scattered, there is no bibliography, and no one has written any kind of report on that Molokai shrine for many years. Save for the briefest mention by Honolulu Advertiser columnist Bob Krauss, who in March of 1961 called it "one of Molokai's startling historic sites," the last published reference to it was in 1949 and consisted of less than a dozen lines in George P. Cooke's book A Ranch Story of Molokai -- with what appears to be a photograph taken of the Rock by William T. Brigham sixty years before. If it is the same one, that ^{Brigham} photograph, originally published in Bishop Museum Memoirs in 1902, is the only photograph of the Rock I have seen in any publication at all -- although the Surfside Camera Shop in Waikiki is selling a souvenir "Thinking-of-You" card reproducing a photo of it taken by Jack Christenson in 1961.

The strange thing about the old Brigham photo (and the one in Cooke's book) is that the Rock, while clearly the rock in mind, seems to be in an entirely different place, in some barren land, for there is no forest shown and no sign of a single tree. I finally determined, in the course of my research, that the entire hill, although originally covered with forest, was denuded and bare for perhaps a century, and then fully reforested by the Territorial Board of Agriculture and Forestry in 1939 -- and that Palaeu Park was established by the Board in 1953 to protect the shrine.

The Bishop Museum does have in its files two photographs of the Rock, taken in 1951 by Dr. Kenneth Emery, which show a background of full forest -- as in my 1962 photos -- and, in contrast, two photographs taken in 1909 by John F.G. Stokes of the entire hill at a

distance, altogether bare of trees but silhouetting the Rock against the sky at the summit. One of the latter shows also the long, thin outline of an ancient tobogganing slide running down the south side of the hill. Likewise on file are ten photographic negatives of views taken of the Rock in 1920 by Dean Lake, and these too show a background bare of trees.

Save for Dr. Emory's 1951 pilgrimage, all scholarly investigations of the shrine seem to have been made between the 1870's and the 1930's during the period of denudation when it was not only easy of location but could be seen from several miles away. The entire area was studied and many other traces of an ancient Hawaiian culture there — the toboggan slide, a heiau, and other telltale rock objects — led investigators to place great significance upon all of this. It was during this period of easy access that Fernander, Brigham, Kramer, Judd, Cartwright, Stokes, Cooke, and Craighill Handy made their observations. Since then the new forest has veiled both the site and the subject.

But even then observers found a reticence in native residents who might have told them more, and Stokes wrote: "I must refer to the phase of concealment of the subject which is found pronounced today . . . Even in ancient days, it was not for open worship, since Kamakau states, 'It has been explained to me by Hawaiians that there are two reasons for concealment of information from foreigners. One is the reserve created by early missionary condemnation of ancient practices, and the fear of foreigners' ridicule; and the second, that certain knowledge was "sacred" and never revealed except to the initiated.'"

I know of no photograph of the Lotus Stone other than those I took myself. Lotus Stone is my own designation of the stone into which Coelhe tells us the woman Kawahuna was turned and which Holokai

folk today simply call "The Women Stone."

The Bishop Museum does have on file a 1909 photograph by Stokes of a large grooved boulder regarding which someone, not Stokes, had pencilled in below the print: "Kawahuna Stone." I discovered, however, that in the negative file Stokes's own caption for that photograph is "Kawaakaluli (which could mean "Seagoing Canoe"). I do not believe it has any connection with the stone Coelho referred to, which would seem to have been broad and rather flat -- and which has been identified from my photos by Peter Apana, a native Hawaiian of Molokai, and by part-Hawaiian Lydia Nelson, a former resident of Molokai, both of whom know the Stone when the hill was bare of forest and who said it was just where I said it was, some few yards downhill from the Rock. Lydia remarked, in fact, that the shadow of the Rock used to lie right across the Stone at a certain time of day.

Peter and Lydia are now at Ulu Mau Hawaiian Village, where other Hawaiians looked at my photos of the Stone and discussed it in Hawaiian -- calling it "Ka Pohaku-a-Wahine," The Women Stone.

Turtle Rock is likewise my own naming of what Molokai folk call "The Man Stone," but in 1909 anthropologist Stokes had the same impression: ". . . much the appearance of the head and anterior portion of a turtle." In 1878 Fernander described it as "shaped like a high-backed chair." In 1839 Brigham adopted the Hawaiian term Kaulunahoa, which could mean "Wanahoa Ledge" -- or else "Wanahoa Rising," for the Rock also resembles a man rising out of the grave.

The Hawaii Visitors Bureau marker along the road designates the Rock officially with a term of Greek derivation and with a similar Hawaiian term: "Phallic Rock" and "Kaulunahoa." "Phallic" is an anthropological term describing the religious symbolism of fertility in man, as found in old architectural forms adorning temples in the

Orient and cathedrals in the Occident -- as well as in the simpler sculpture of Africa and of Polynesia.

It was the visiting German anthropologist Krämer who first designated Molokai's fertility Rock with the pair of terms "phallic" and "kauleonanahoa"; this was in 1898, and since then the local anthropologists have followed suit. A still earlier visiting German scientist named Eduard Arning had applied the Greek term to smaller stone objects of like symbolism which he found on the neighboring Island of Maui in 1884, receiving information on them from King Kalakaua himself. In early days such stone objects were in vogue throughout Hawaii, as well as in other areas of Polynesia, though none is known to have been so grand and significant as the great turtle-shaped one on Molokai. Commonly they had the shape of columns, pillars, shafts -- and they bespoke a common symbolism, that of fertility in man -- whereas the particular shaping in the form of the turtle, ancient patron of childbirth, would seem to add a further significance to the Molokai fertility shrine and to explain the attributing to it of special powers.

Krämer said he obtained the Hawaiian term "Ka ule o Nanahoa," as he transcribed it, from an old native who told him of a god Nanahoa and his goddess, and that a king of Molokai was supposed to have had the Rock specially built as a monument to Nanahoa. From another old native came a reference to "a strange people to whom this site owes its origin," and to an old legend centered about Nanahoa and his goddess, wrote Krämer, ". . . but further he would or could say nothing."

The anthropological term describing the religious symbolism of fertility in women is "yonic" -- and this comes not from Greece but from India, for it is in India and Tibet that fertility in women is venerated along with fertility in man.

Descriptively, Turtle Rock and Lotus Stone would seem the most realistic designation for Molokai's fertility shrine. Technically, however, we may refer to it as a "phallic rock and yonic stone" combination -- particularly, again, as this yonic stone is indeed lotus-shaped like ^{some} yonic symbols in India.

In An Account of the Polynesian Race -- Its Origins and Migrations -- and the Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I, Abraham Fornander devoted many pages to tracing a cultural and historical bond with ancient India. "The emblem of Siva, in Hindu mythology," he noted, "is the double trident." And in commenting on the Molokai fertility Rock, he wrote: "On the east side of this, and near to, stands another large stone, marked with a double trident (卐) in two places."

Such petroglyphs look to be line drawings of human figures, yet to carry a marked symbolism. A.F. Judd's article "Rock Carvings of Hawaii -- Some Possible Traces of Pre-Historic Hawaiians," in Thrum's Hawaiian Almanac of 1904, illustrates with sketches the petroglyphs found on seven of the boulders near the Rock in 1901. Krämer likewise provided sketches of several, ^{in 1898} noting that one particular boulder had fallen down against another and that a person had to snake his way along the ground under it to see the inscriptions -- just what I myself did sixty-four years later. In Cooke's book on Molokai there is an actual photograph of a portion of one of the said boulders showing four petroglyphs clearly, among them a figure remindful of Fornander's reference to a double trident.

As to Fornander's theory, Stokes and other early anthropologists seemed to go along with it. In my interview with Dr. Kenneth Emory the other day, however, the Bishop Museum's eminent anthropologist expressed the opinion that it might be incautious to assume that

cultural memories and skills should live through some 5,000 years and be carried on in gradual migrations through southeast Asia and from island to island across the Pacific -- but he suggested that the early Hawaiians and other Polynesians could have thought up similar ideas and skills on their own.

Admiring my photograph of the Lotus Stone, he led me to a collection room adjoining his office, searched among some artifacts, and drew out for me a small oval stone that had been carved as a yonic symbol, to represent fertility in woman, which he said had been picked up from the ground near the Rock. In the early part of this century a number of such stones were found there. The story goes that these had served as offerings to the Rock: Hawaiian women would prepare the little stones, wet them with a certain liquid, and carry them up to the shrine. While these stones themselves were obviously hand-engraved, Emory questions that the Rock may have been carved by human hands to any special form such as a turtle, a chair, or what-have-you -- he suggests that the early Hawaiians may have simply found it as it was and worshipped as a work of nature, and the same with regard to my wavy Lotus Stone.

On the other hand, it must be keenly remarked that the early anthropologist Krämer reported the Rock to be "clearly hand-sculptured" -- and that four years later Brigham, then director of the Bishop Museum, wrote: "It has been carved to a great extent, but how much the natural conformation of the rock contributed to its present form cannot be told." And Stokes, who himself believed the Rock to be "a natural formation," conceded to "some artificial work . . . i.e. a slight hammering on the blunt ridge underneath the head, where the latter joined the neck."

The University's Professor Mason, as a friendly parting shot,

smiled at me: "You might be perpetuating a myth!"

"Well . . . I'll perpetuate it subtly!" I smiled back.

What I have tried to do is explore the myth for what it has to offer and to present such available facts as may suggest a logical concept of the matter.

Perhaps my rediscovery of the Lotus Stone, the stone of Coelho's Hawaiian legend, whether it be carved by hand or carved by nature, does lend some support to Fernander's original theory of a cultural bond with India where the lotus is woman who is the counterpart of man and where the two ideas are worshipped as one.

If such worship is here tabu today and if that eerie windwept precipice on Molokai is somehow haunted -- not so much by the ghosts of ancient Hawaiians as by other ghosts perhaps -- they were not always so. I am not one to make light of the parapsychology of superstition, but this I would say: Make friends with the friendly spirits of Nanahoa and Kawahuna, for they mean you good not evil. As I remarked to my little Molokai friend who said she felt a "presence" there: Think good not evil -- and no spirit will do you harm.

Tabus and myths and legends notwithstanding, the Turtle Rock and the Lotus Stone will probably soon be on the agenda of many visitors to Molokai, in any case, for they are there as undeniable reminders of ideas which once carried great prestige with the folk of the Islands of Hawaii -- and such reminders preserved in so imperishable a form are high on the scale of things which make a people and a land immortal through the ages.



THE TURTLE ROCK: This great basaltic rock carved in the shape of a half-buried turtle and cresting the Puu Lua Hills of Molokai, 1,441 feet above the sea, is said by legend to be the man Wanahoa, turned to stone and to represent fertility in man. Note a resemblance also to a man rising out of the grave. Hawaiian women in ancient times made offerings to the Rock and asked that it grant them a child. It is still believed to have this mysterious magical power. This photo is a view from the northwest, near the cliff also. Posing on the rock is Philip Garten, former Broadway producer.

Photo by
EUGENE RESSINCOURT

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Ancient Phallic Rock on Island of Molokai, Hawaii