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## Our Honolulu



BOB KRAUSS

# Canoe joins tradition, technology

**LAHAINA, Maui** — The newest addition to Hawaii's fleet of double-hulled voyaging canoes is three-quarters finished in a shed on the Lahaina waterfront.

The Mo'okiha O Piilani will be the biggest such canoe in Hawaii and probably the most controversial in the Pacific.

What's controversial about it is a fusion of Polynesian tradition and modern technology in a way that blurs the distinctions between the two.

For example, this canoe asks the question: Is it in the old Hawaiian tradition of conservation to hew a canoe from logs when logs are in critically short supply?

"Today you cannot waste 80 percent of a log to make a canoe," said Keole Sequeira, the canoe builder. "That takes too much out of the environment.

"The Hawaiians took a log and carved away everything that wasn't a canoe. We're taking a space and filling it with a canoe built of modern materials. I'm trying to combine the best of Hawaiian design with modern technology."

Sequeira makes another controversial comparison between what's traditional and what's modern.

Hawai'iloa, built on Oahu of traditional wood logs, was funded as one activity under a \$3 million federal grant to preserve Hawaiian culture.

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The Mo'okiha O Piilani will cost only \$200,000 in modern currency. It will be built of space-age materials, but most of the cost will come in traditional currency — at least 10,000 volunteer man-hours.

That doesn't count half again as much in contributions of volunteer help to put on benefit luaus and other fund-raisers.

Sequeira can even tell you how much traditional currency is worth. He said he built the smaller Mo'olele in 1975 for \$11,000 in cash and volunteer help. Today the canoe is appraised at \$120,000.

The whole concept of Mo'okiha O Piilani seems to be a new way of looking at the ancient art of canoe voyaging. Or is it the other way around, looking at today through the eyes of old Polynesia?

Mo'okiha O Piilani will be the first voyaging canoe with jet propulsion engines. The engines run on diesel fuel that will give the vessel a range under motor power of about 500 miles.

So what's Polynesian about that? The ancients used paddles for auxiliary power.

Sequeira points out that Hokule'a carries an outboard motor for safety when sailing among the treacherous South Seas reefs and that Hawaii's voyaging canoes never go out without escort boats.

"Inboard engines are safer than outboards," he said. "Our canoe will be so safe we won't need an escort boat."

There will be state-of-the-art satellite navigation gear on board and a desalination plant that can make 160 gallons of fresh water a day.

At what point does the Mo'okiha O Piilani stop being a Polynesian voyaging canoe and become a modern yacht? That what the controversy will be about. More important, will she sail?