

# CORDAGE CRAFT

## Haleakalā: How Māui Snared the Sun

### Cordage Craft Activity:

Rope plays an important role in the story of *Why Māui Snared the Sun*. In this activity you will be making cordage or rope from plant fibers.

### Materials Needed:

Fibres Lā'i, Hau, 'le'ie, 'A'a and Olonā are the traditional fibers for making cordage or rope. I have used other plant materials like Iris leaves, gladiola leaves, nettles, bark strips from alder striplings. Feel free to try other stuff too. Modern materials may include raffia, artificial sinew, and yarn.

**Cordage terms:** 'Aha—cordage used for light duty, thinner and smaller. Kaula – cordage used for heavy duty, ropes, lines, etc. The overall process is the same for everything—rope, line, lei.

*"I am Māui, son of Hina, and I am telling you to stop racing across the sky. (the sun continues to struggle) Try all you want Kalā, but my rope holds fast." - Narration from the program Why Māui Snared the Sun - 'Ōiwi TV*

### Directions:

#### Step 1: Preparation

- Start with a length that is 3 ½ times the desired finished length.
- If the fibers you are using are not long enough, no worries, there is a means to add to the length, although it might not be as strong.

#### Step 2: Grip Both Sides

- To start, fold the length of fiber in half to get two lengths. Stagger the ends a little if you anticipate adding on. Anchor the fiber where it is folded. We usually put it around our big toe, or a doorknob or a secure cup hook.
- Gripping both sides (lengths), ONE IN EACH HAND, TWIST the fibers snugly upon itself, going in the same direction a couple of turns. Then WRAP one length OVER the other in the opposite direction. If you twist to the right, you wrap to the left. If you twist to the left, you wrap to the right.
- Remove your crossed hands from the fiber lengths and return to the sides that they started. Repeat.
- For this construction sheet, we will assume you are twisting to the right and wrapping to the left. If you are more comfortable the other direction, do it.
- Mantra: Twist in one direction, wrap over in the opposite direction. To explain simply: TWIST TO THE RIGHT, WRAP OVER TO THE LEFT
- **HELPFUL HINT:** \*to keep your 'cord' even and snug, work with keeping your fingers close to the twisting point and the area you are wrapping and twist only enough to wrap (one or two twists). This keeps the tension even in your finished product. Work with a cadence, twist and wrap, twist and wrap, twist and wrap. Check often to be sure the cord is even and snug. If it looks funny or uneven, that usually means that you are twisting each length in opposite directions. BE SURE TO TWIST BOTH LENGTHS GOING IN THE SAME DIRECTION. Or it may mean that you are not twisting both sides with even tightness.

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### Step 3: Adding on for Length

When making cordage, good crafters will make both sides of uniform thickness. There are many ways to add on for different purposes.

- Lay the new length on the working length, then twist together—when you wrap, make it tight. The new length will be totally within the old length (no end sticking out).
- Lay the new length over with end sticking out. Then twist in the overlapping part of the length leaving the end sticking out. If your end is ugly, then leave enough sticking out that you can trim it to look nice.
- Don't add new lengths to both lengths at the same spot, you will have two weaker spots in the same area. Stagger them.

### Closing:

To further understand and respect the craft you have learned, you can read and talk about the symbolism:

#### LEI SYMBOLISM

Kupe`e Wāwae— (anklets) reminder and inspiration to dance with agility Kupe`e Lima- (wristlets) reminder and inspiration to dance with grace like the movements of nature. Lei Po`o-(lei worn on the head, Po`o) reminder and inspiration to dance with the knowledge that you have gained. Lei A`i- (lei worn around the neck) reminder and inspiration to dance with our love and aloha.

### Bonus:

- Visual help from YouTube: [Make Natural Cordage in Minutes – Coalcracker Bushcraft](#). If you would like to try, using Sinew, please try this second exercise. Original sinew is made from animal gut. The sinew we use is synthetic. When purchasing, get the waxed kind, not the unwaxed kind.
- This cordage is very strong and permanent since it is not a plant material that will deteriorate, Using sinew will give your 'Aha, or small cordage for use in making Lei, to string shells, nuts and seeds, shell and wooden hooks or other tokens. It is also used to lash skin heads to drum bases.
- One source for sinew is: [www.townsend.us](http://www.townsend.us) Best budget is to get a ½ lb. 'spool' which usually sells for \$8 to \$10. You could use this cordage for stringing your Puniu (knee drum) and many other Hula and personal uses.
- Instructions-same as above (no adding on necessary, cut enough to complete your desired finish length for your project). Start your sinew cordage the same as noted above.
- **Your Mantra: TWIST-WRAP, TWIST- WRAP, REPEAT...**