

## A Lulu ka ‘Iako Pala ‘Ehu ke Oho

*An Essay by Kīhei de Silva*

*Haku mele:* Unknown.

*Our text:* Samuel Keko‘owai, *Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka I‘a o Moaula-Nui-Akea i Kaulana*, in *Nupepa Kuokoa*, February 3, 1922. Orthography and translation: Kīhei de Silva.

This chant is recorded by Samuel Keko‘owai in an early installment of his mo‘olelo of Haumea’s fish-attracting Mākālei:

Nī‘ula is a luahine descendant of Haumea. She lives with her grandson Kahinihini‘ula in Makawao, Kailua – a small valley at the back of Maunawili. She is old but feisty. When the boy returns empty-handed after three days of helping to clear limu from Kawainui Pond (fish are the appropriate reward for work of this kind), she decides to teach the konohiki a lesson. She removes the Mākālei branch from its hiding place on a gable-plate of her house and instructs the boy as follows: “This lā‘au is your kupuna wahine; hold it tight in your hand; do not cross it behind your back; do not tap it into the dirt like a cane; hold it carefully in front of you until you get to the mākāha of Kawainui. Prop it up there and face the pond. Be patient when the fish come twisting and circling your way. Wait until they stream toward you in a mass that looks like a long eel. That is when I want you to take up the branch and follow the banks of the pond and kahawai back home to our spring. The fish will come with you. When you get here, do not put the branch down; hold it gently and call me. I will take it and release you from its kapu. The rest of the work will be mine.”

Kahinihini‘ula does as he is told. The fish swarm like ‘ōpelu; they skip like pebbles over the surface of the water; they twist and circle in wili poepoe fashion; and when they finally come streaming to him “me he puhi lā,” he takes up the lā‘au and leads them home. Nī‘ula greets the boy at Hālauwai, relieves him of the Mākālei, whirls it three times around his head, and says: “You are free from the ‘footprint of the god’; sit and rest while I bring this to a close.” She then carries the branch to the water’s edge, sits with it held firmly in one hand, and offers the chant “A Lulu ka ‘Iako Pala ‘Ehu i ke Oho” to both the Mākālei and the new residents of their secret pool.<sup>1</sup>

Nī‘ula’s words, Keko‘owai tells us, are both prayer and song: “Hapai ae la oia i keia mau huaolelo kahukahu i kapaia e keia lahui he pule a he mele hoi.” As pule, it addresses Haumea in her multiple forms and asks, through the metaphor of branch and fish, for the well-being of her people: enter, enter, enter; enter, nourish, and inspire; may your descendants prevail, wave after wave of us; may we again be united, persistent, and ever-committed to the nu‘u of thought and action.<sup>2</sup>

As mele, it celebrates in lively, even humorous fashion the promise of rejuvenation at Hālauwai – all those fish packed to the la‘ola‘o bursting point in a spring-fed, upper val-

ley pool. They have entered in droves, all in a leaping, jumping, pulsing, creeping procession, all enthralled by the irresistible ona powers of Ka Lā‘au Pi‘i Ona a ka I‘a. There is no escaping the sexuality and fertility of this scene. Branch, pool, and fish-swarm are father, mother, and children in micro- and macrocosm, in their smallest and largest manifestations.

Today, after almost two centuries of inequity and loss, we find inspiration in Nī‘ula and Keko‘owai for the work that lies ahead: the return of a kulāiwi, a fishpond, and a prolific people.

We view the chant as having two sections – that beginning with “A lulu ka ‘ako,” and that beginning with “Ō ho‘okūkū ō ho‘onānā – and we often perform them as entrance and exit hula for older mele in our repertoire of dances for Kailua. The first section offers a joyful description of the coming of Haumea’s people to a place of rejuvenation. The second calls on these people to return to a state of unity and prosperity. The chant resonates with us as both ka‘i and ho‘i, celebration and prayer, because we are among the descendants of these same people, and we are much in need of reminding and encouraging.

### **A Lulu ka ‘Iako Pala ‘Ehu ke Oho**

A lulu ka ‘iako pala ‘ehu ke oho  
Ke kai lena i ka piko o Kanikapo‘o,<sup>3</sup>  
‘O ka ‘aoa<sup>4</sup> lā i Nu‘umea,  
I Moa‘ulanuiākea,<sup>5</sup>  
I Makawao lā kapu ai,  
I ka loko i Hālauwai lā,<sup>6</sup>  
Ka‘ina ma–i  
Ka‘i mai a kumu, ka‘i mai e ulu,  
Ka‘i mai pupupu, ka‘i mai la‘ola‘o.  
Ka‘i ‘āuna mai!  
Ō ho‘okūkū ō ho‘onānā,  
Ō hō‘eu ō ho‘omālana,  
Ō ‘īnana a māhikihiki,  
Ō pana ō miki ō kolo,<sup>7</sup>  
Ō ho‘okolo ka pili a Mākālei,  
Ō ho‘okolo ka pili a Mākālei,  
Kūlia i ka nu‘u,  
A papa a hono a lele.

The outrigger lies at rest, bleached red is the hair  
The golden sea at the center of Kanikapo‘o  
The place for offerings is at Nu‘umea  
At Moa‘ulanuiākea  
The kapu is set at Makawao

At the pond in Hālauwai  
Entering here in procession  
Enter here and establish yourself, enter in procession and grow  
Enter here and flourish, enter until we can hold no more  
Enter in droves!

Stand all about, look all about<sup>8</sup>  
Be in motion, move lightly together  
Moving into action, springing to it  
Pulse along, creep along, crawl along  
May the beloved ones of Mākālei return to their source  
May the Mākālei generations move to each other  
May they strive for the highest point  
Until joined, until unified, until bursting forth.

Notes:

1. Keko'owai, of course, did not give titles to any of the chants in his mo'olelo; "A Lulu..." and "Ō Ho'okūkū" are the first lines of each paukū, respectively, and we use these as titles for ease of reference.
2. Nī'ula's words are especially poignant in a Hawaiian language newspaper of 1922 when Samuel Keko'owai's readership, people, and language were at what might have been a demoralizing ebb. This is why we admire the storyteller so much; his legend of the Mākālei is a mea kū'ē; a defiant refusal to surrender his faith in our resilience.
3. These lines describe the end of a journey over the ocean; the canoe now lies becalmed, and the traveler's hair has been reddened by sun and sea spray. 'Iako and Kanikapō'o are also suggestive of the Mākālei branch (an outrigger boom, a "sounding stalk/stem") after it leads the fish swarm from Kawainui to Hālauwai. The color imagery in these early lines ('ehu, lena, and later, 'ula) are suggestive of Kahinihini'ula and Nī'ula, the 'ehu-haired boy and his grandmother. The "redness" of grandmother and grandchild, Beckwith notes, is indicative of their descent through Haumea and Pele (Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology*, 285).
4. Aoa, Pukui tells us, are "sacrificial places near fishponds where semiannual offerings were made, as of taro, bananas, mullet..." (*Dictionary*, 27). The word is used here with a hint of irony since offerings at fish-depleted Kawainui will have no effect until harmony is restored and Haumea is satisfied. What works at Nu'umea and Moa'ulanuiākea won't work in Kailua.
5. Nu'umea and Moa'ulanuiākea are the distant lands from which Haumea journeyed and to which she frequently returned. The first was her sacred home (Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology*, 79-80; Keko'owai, *Kuokoa*, January 13, 1922), and the second was that place "i ka pea kapu o Kukulu o Kahiki" (at the sacred borders of the Pillars of Kahiki) from which she first brought the Mākālei (Keko'owai, 1-13-1922). The mele's references to canoes, ocean travel, fish swarms, rejuvenative branches, and ancestral lands are all closely tied to Haumea's status as the mother of successive waves of Hawaiian people. After fighting with Wākea over his relationship with Ho'ohōkūkalani, she retreats to Nu'umealani and uses the Mākālei to make herself young

and fertile. She returns, mates, has children by her own children, and then repeats the process many times over. Keko‘owai relates his version of the Haumea/Papa story in the second installment of the Mākālei legend (1-13-1922).

6. Haumea’s sacred residences were in Nu‘umealani and Moa‘ulanuiākea, but the goddess and her branch are now at Hālauwai pool in the Makawao sub-valley of Maunawili. Nī‘ula therefore establishes a kapu at this new location.

7. Haumea’s sacred residences were in Nu‘umealani and Moa‘ulanuiākea, but the goddess and her branch are now at Hālauwai pool in the Makawao sub-valley of Maunawili. Nī‘ula therefore establishes a kapu at this new location.

8. Our translation of this enigmatic phrase is based on the example given by Pukui in her gloss of *ho‘onānā*: “Ho‘okūkū ho‘onānā, nānā kō maka i ka mahina” “Stand about, look, let your eyes see the moon” (*Dictionary*, 260).

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