

E Ho‘i ka Nani i Nu‘uanu / Maika‘i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu

An Essay by Kīhei de Silva

Haku mele: “E Ho‘i ka Nani i Nu‘uanu”: not known.
“Maika‘i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu”: Wahineikaili Kamaikuiopio.

Sources: “E Ho‘i ka Nani i Nu‘uanu”:
1. HI.M.71: 48, Bishop Museum Archives.
2. HEN 3:229, Bishop Museum Archives.
3. Puakea Nogelmeier (ed), *He Lei no ‘Emalani*, 93.

“Maika‘i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu”:
1. HI.K.23.3:1, Bishop Museum Archives.
2. HEN 3:715, Bishop Museum Archives.
3. Puakea Nogelmeier (ed), *He Lei no ‘Emalani*, 34.

Our text: Puakea Nogelmeier 93, 34. Translations as given in Nogelmeier except where otherwise noted.

Some of the most beautiful mele composed for the widowed Queen Emma are place-based vignettes of twelve lines or less. Each offers an evocative description of a scene that is dear to the queen and her people, and each conveys a brief but sweetly expressed wish for Emma’s own tranquility. Like old-fashioned portraits that emerge from softly blurred borders, these mele direct our attention to the beauty of each singled-out scene and sentiment, and the very absence of background serves to heighten their poignant meaning.

“E Ho‘i ka Nani i Nu‘uanu” and “Maika‘i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu” are two such mele. The first is set in Ko‘olaupoko where Emma travels with the Hōli‘o rain of He‘eia to a gathering of canoes at Oneawa, Kailua. She is obviously on a tour (although its larger context is withheld), and her calming effect on those she encounters is compared (powerfully but without elaboration) to that of Kala‘ihauola, a guardian woman of Nu‘uanu Pali. Although we are given no obvious reason for concern, the plaintive quality of the mele is implicit in its opening call for Emma’s return to her Nu‘uanu home and in its closing reference to the guardian who presides over that return and homeland. We lack the background details, but we are given more than enough, in clear focus, to appreciate the loyal heart of the poem: may Emma return, may she be granted the peace that she gives to others.

The tranquility of Emma’s Nu‘uanu home is the subject of our second mele, “Maika‘i i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu.” The ocean-treading Hōli‘o rain of the former is here transformed into the Ki‘owao and Wa‘ahila as they string the flowers of the Lanihuli heights and envelop the koa sheltered homes of the uplands. The activity of these rains – *kāhiko*, *kui*, *nihi*, and *loku* – is suggestive of the high regard in which Emma was held and (with *loku*) the difficulties she endured. The shelter of rain-drenched koa, both dainty-leaved and towering, reminds us of her son and husband, but also of the strength of those who

remain – both the queen dowager and her loyal subjects. Together they form Kahālauaola, the long house constructed by life itself; may Emma reside there “a kau i ka puaaneane.” Emma is not named until the penultimate line of the mele, and all that precedes its call to long life is a finely detailed description of rain and vegetation at Nu‘uanu. But this detached scene speaks to us with poignant devotion. Such is the nature of the Emma vignette.

E Ho‘i ka Nani i Nu‘uanu

E ho‘i ka nani i Nu‘uanu
Ua anu i ka ua Hōli‘o¹
Ke hahi maila i ka moana
‘O māla‘e ākuli ka i ‘ike
Ka ulu koa² ma Oneawa
Ke awa ho‘okomo iho ia
‘Ike ‘ia ‘o ka la‘i Hauola³
Ha‘ina ka inoa i lohe
Kaleleonālani he inoa.

May the beautiful one return to Nu‘uanu
Chilled by the Hōli‘o rain
Treading upon the ocean
The gathering calm is what gave witness
The koa grove at Oneawa
It is the bay to gain entrance
The calm of Hauola is seen
Tell of the name that it be heard
For Kaleleonālani a name song.

Maika‘i ka Ua i Nu‘uanu

Maika‘i ka ua i Nu‘uanu lā
Kāhiko i ke kāmakahala lā
Nā pua ‘āhihi o Lanihuli lā
I kuia mai e ke Ki‘owao lā
E ka ua Wa‘ahila i nā pali lā
Ke nihi a‘ela i ka nahele lā
Loku ana i ka lau kukui lā
I ke oho lauli‘i o ke koa lā
Malu ai nā hale i ka uka lā
Ka uka i Kahālauaola⁴ lā
E ola Nālani‘elua⁵ lā
A kau i ka puaaneane lā.
(He inoa no Nālani‘elua.)

Delightful is the rain at Nu‘uanu
 Adorning the kāmakahala flowers
 And the ‘āhihi flowers of Lanihuli
 That were strung into lei by the Ki‘owao rain
 By the Wa‘ahila rain moving over the cliff
 Passing quietly by the forest
 Pouring down on the kukui leaves
 And the dainty leaves of the koa trees
 That shelter the homes in the upland
 The upland of Kahālauaola
 May you live, O Nālani’elua
 Until you reach extreme old age.
 (A name chant for Nālani’elua.)

Notes:

1. Hōli‘o: “Dazzled, as the eyes by sunlight; rain name associated with Hawai‘i and O‘ahu” (Pukui and Elbert, *Dictionary*), but perhaps a play on *holio*: “constantly in mind and thought” (Ibid). Our review of several nūpepa occurrences of the name ties it to Ko‘olaupoko: 1- it appears in a chant for Keahi as an ocean-fluttering companion of the Mololani rain of Kāne‘ohe Bay: “Naue ka ua puluhi o Mololani / Ka ua Holio kalepa i ka moana” (*Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, Aoao 1, 20 Feberuari, 1862); 2- in a kanikau for Ioseba Nawai as an ocean-treading companion of the ‘Āpuakea at Mololani: “Mai ka ua Apuakea o Mololani e / Mai ka ua holio i ka moana la / Ke hehi mai la i ka ili o ke kai e,” *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, Aoao 1, 16 Ianuali, 1862); and 3- in association with the “Āpuakea of He‘eia in a mele inoa for Kahakuohawai‘i: “Naue ke koa mokumoku o Heeia / I ka ua Apuakea-la / Ua huki hewa ka ua Holio---e,” *Ka Hae Hawaii*, 4 Iulai, 1860).

2. Ulu koa: Although Puakea Nogelmeier records the text as *ulu ko‘a* (“the coral fields at Oneawa”) we think that the poet is describing an *ulu koa* – a grove-like gathering of koa canoes at Oneawa Beach in Kailua (known for its fine sand, not coral). The description probably echoes an attempted joke made by Hi‘iakaikapoliopole when she referred to the koa canoes of Oneawa in the same figurative manner; of course, her humorless and ever literal companion Wahine‘ōmao didn’t catch on or find much to chuckle over:

Hi‘iaka: “How strange that you would not recognize the koa grove...Have you never thought about how the canoe comes from the koa tree?”

Wahine‘ōma‘o: “Yes, you are absolutely right, friend. The canoe is really a koa tree, in which case, that actually is a koa grove floating offshore.” (Ho‘oulumāhie, *The Epic Tale of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole*, 147.)

3. Hauola: “Probably not referring to the Maui site but using the name of the goddess Kala‘ihauola to play on *ola*, life and health” (Nogelmeier, 93). Kala‘ihauola and Hāpu‘u appear frequently in Hawaiian poetry as “nā wahine kia‘i alanui o Nu‘uanu,” the guardian women of the Nu‘uanu Pali trail. Originally mo‘o, they later took the form of a pair of large stones – one round-edged and rough (Hāpu‘u), the other long and smooth-backed (Hauola) – that rested near the cliffs on the trail above Kahaukomo. According to William Ellis, offerings of lei, fern, and kapa

were left “by every native who passes by the precipice...to render [the stones] propitious to their descent; all who ascend from the opposite side make a similar acknowledgement for the supposed protection of the deities, which they imagine to preside over the fearful pass” (*Journal of William Ellis: Narrative of a Tour of Hawaii...1831:15*).

4. Kahālauaola: “Probably an inland region of Nu‘uanu Valley” (Nogelmeier, 34); perhaps a play on the guardian Kala‘ihauola. The name also echoes a reference to a koa-shaded site (possibly a heiau built by Ola) through which Emma and her party passed on their 1871 journey to the Kilohana Lookout of Wai‘ale‘ale: “‘O Ka-Hālau-a-Ola / Malu i ka hale lau koa” (in “A i Waimea ‘o Kalani,” Pukui Collection, taught to Māpuana by Aunty Maiki). Thrum notes that “Lahilahi Kaeo [Emma’s aunt] gave this name to what was Luakaha, Nu‘uanu, because it reminded her of the “place in Kaua‘i, which it resembled because of its then wooded character” (*All about Hawaii: The Recognized Book of Authentic Information on Hawaii, Combined with Thrum's Hawaiian Annual and Standard Guide*, Star Bulletin, 1904:153n). In every case, the name resonates with life, health, and salvation.

5. Nālani‘elua: a less-common chant name for Emma. Like “Kaleleonālani,” it was given in figurative reference to her pair of departed “lani,” her son and her husband.

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