

Hiehie Olomana

An Essay by Kīhei de Silva

Haku Mele: Kahikina de Silva, March 2011.

Although this mele wahi pana for Kailua, O‘ahu, was composed in 2011, its language, landscape, and sentiments are those of the chants and mo‘olelo recorded a century and more ago by Keko‘owai, Kapihenui, Poepoe, and Ho‘oulumāhiehie in their nūpepa retellings of the legends of the Mākālei branch and of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole’s passage through Kailua.¹

We find, again and again, in faded newsprint, yellowing manuscripts, and newly digitized collections, that the old people have left us a treasure of names and epithets, of anchor-places and ways of addressing and responding to them. “Hiehie Olomana” upholds this legacy. Against all odds and expectations, despite a Kailua population that is now less than 8% ‘ōiwi, a new poet steps forward, and that which has begun to fade is again made new.

Like the mele of Kailua’s distant past, “Hiehie Olomana” girds us in the names of places that cannot be lost lest we also lose ourselves. It girds us in the name *Olomana*, the guardian peak of Kawainui pond and its swarm of Mākālei-attracted fish. In the name *Wai‘auia*, the ‘ili ‘āina at the confluence of Kawainui and Ka‘elepulu ponds from whose womb was born a people who bowed to no one. In the name *Pu‘uoehu*, the inland sea-cliff that holds these iwi kūpuna in stubborn embrace. In the names *Ahiki* and *Ka‘iwa*, the peak and ridge, man and woman, whose pebble-children dance in the tides at Pūnāwai. In the name *Nā Mokulua*, the off-Ka‘ōhāo islands whose ‘ilima blossoms are strung by the gentle Malanai tradewind into a lei of mischievous adornment for all our ahupua‘a. E kākua hou i ka pā‘ū ‘āina, e hume pa‘a i ka malo kai.

Hiehie Olomana

Hiehie Olomana² i ka‘u ‘ike
Makua po‘okela a‘o Maunawili
Mālama aku ‘oe iā Kawainui
‘O ka i‘a ona ‘ia i ka lā‘au³

‘Auna ka‘i i ke ano ahiahi⁴
Hō‘oni i ka neki o Wai‘auia⁵
Huli aku nānā iā Pu‘uoehu⁶
Kulāiwi ho‘oheno a‘o ke kupuna

Ea mai ‘o Ahiki,⁷ ku‘u lani ia
Kualono ne‘e mai i ka mālie
Ko‘olua o ka ‘iwa⁸ ho‘ola‘ila‘i

I ka nehe 'ili'ili a'o Pūnāwai⁹

Na wai e 'ole ho'i ke aloha
No ke one kahakaha o nā Mokulua¹⁰
Eia ku'u wehi lei 'āpiki¹¹
No Kailua i ke oho o ka Malanai¹²

He inoa no Olomana.

Olomana is distinguished in my eyes
The preeminent guardian of Maunawili
You care for Kawainui
And its fish, attracted by the lā'au

Theirs is a group that travels in the evening
Rattling the neki of Wai'auia
Turn and view Pu'uoehu
It is the native land of our ancestors

Ahiki arises, he is my chief
Mountain that inches closer in the calm
He is the companion of Ka'iwa, poised
Above the rustling pebbles of Pūnāwai

Who indeed could fail to love
The sands of the Mokulua?
Here is my adornment of 'ilima
For Kailua touched by wisps of the Malanai wind.

A name chant for Olomana.

Notes:

1. The three chants that most influenced the present composition are “Nānā a'e au a'o Ahiki,” and “Ki'eki'e i luna ke kū o Ahiki,” published by Samuel Keko'owai in the legend “Makalei ka laau pii ona a ka ia o Moaulanuiakea i Kalana” (*Nupepa Kuokoa*, 13 Ianuali, 1922, and 10 Pepeluali, 1922), and “A Kailua i ke oho o ka Malanai” published – in various versions – by Kapihenui (*Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*, 6 Pepeluali 1862), Bush and Pa'aluhī (*Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 16 Malaki 1893), Ho'olumāhiehie (*Ka Nai Aupuni*, 22 Ianuali 1906), and Poepoe (*Kuokoa Home Rula*, July 9, 1909.) Essays for all three chants are included in this collection.

2. Olomana is the Kāne'ohe-most of the three peaks that rise from Maunawili Valley in Kailua, O'ahu. Collectively known today as “Mount Olomana,” these peaks are more accurately named, from north to south: Olomana, Paku'i, and Ahiki. Fornander describes Olomana as a giant who was cut in half by Palila, the fearless warrior of Kaua'i: one side of the giant flew towards

Kāne‘ohe and became Mahinui Ridge; the other stands to this day as the hill of Olomana (*Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*, 375). *Olomana* can also mean “old man.” The composer’s grandparents lived inland of Olomana – in Maunawili Valley – and this mele is, in part, a tribute to her kupunakāne olomana around whose feet his grandchildren gathered like the fish of Kawainui.

3. ‘O ka i‘a ona ‘ia i ka lā‘au: this line echoes the title of the Samuel Keko‘owai legend and line 6 of the mele “Nānā a‘e au a‘o Ahiki” (see note 1, above) and refers to the fish-attracting quality of Haumea’s magical branch, the Mākālei. It was responsible for drawing a wealth of fish to the Kawainui and Ka‘elepulu ponds.

4. ‘Auna ka‘i i ke ano ahiahi: this line echoes the concluding line of “Nānā a‘e au a‘o Ahiki.” Keko‘owai offers the chant as a poetic summary of his lengthy discussion of the four powers of the Mākālei branch when wielded by its original keeper, Haumea. It has the power to cause pregnancy: “he ho‘ohāpai keiki.” It has the power to ease the travails of pregnancy: “he ho‘ohānau keiki.” It has the power to restore the body to a youthful state: “ka ho‘ololi ‘ana i ka helehelena...[he] ho‘ou‘i kino.” And it has the power to attract multitudes of open-mouthed fish: “ka pipili pikokoi o ka i‘a ma kona wahi e kū ai.” These are the things that can happen when the branch is held to the body, and the Mākālei’s power is evident, Keko‘owai concludes, in “kekahi mau lālani ho‘ou‘i kino o kēia mele” – in several rejuvenatory lines of the following mele, “Nānā a‘e Au a‘o Ahiki” (*Nupepa Kuokoa*, 13 Ianuali, 1922).

5. Hō‘oni i ka neki o Wai‘auia: this line echoes lines 3-4 of “Nānā a‘e au a‘o Ahiki” (note 1, above) and lines 7-8 of “Ki‘eki‘e i luna ke kū o Ahiki” (also note 1, above). The neki is a giant bulrush (also known as ‘aka‘akai, naku, and kaluhā) that is still found on the fringes of Kawainui. Wai‘auia was a small land division at the mākāhā (sluice gate) of the stream that once joined the Kawainui and Ka‘elepulu ponds. That stream, once called Kawainui, has since been renamed Hāmākua. Wai‘auia is now the “Old ITT Property” in back of the “Welcome to Kailua” sign at the entrance to Kailua Town. Solomon Māhoe, Sr., identified Wai‘auia as home to ali‘i of such stature that they deferred to no one (oral history recorded by Sterling and Summers in *Sites of O‘ahu*, 230).

6. Pu‘uoeahu is the hillside opposite Wai‘auia and ma uka of what is now Hāmākua Drive and Stream. It will overlook the soon-to-be-realized site of re-interment for the iwi kūpuna of Kailua who were disturbed in various sewer line, water main, electrical line, and home construction projects in the last decade. These iwi, formerly in the custody of the State, are now in the care of Kailua Kau a Ho‘oilō, the ‘ōiwi organization dedicated to returning them to peaceful and permanent rest.

7. Ahiki is the name of the Waimānalo-most of the three Olomana Peaks. Samuel Keko‘owai, in the February 10, 1922, issue of *Kuokoa*, explains that Ahiki was also the overseer chief of Kailua in the long-past days of Olopana. The magnitude of Ahiki’s generosity and kind leadership was such that “me he mea la, aole lakou he poe okoa, aka, he ohana koko pono no keia konohiki a ka lokomaikai nui wale” – it was as if [the people of Kailua] were not a separate people, but of the same family and blood as this extraordinarily good-hearted konohiki. So great, in fact, was their esteem for Ahiki that they gave his name to one of the Olomana peaks, and “ua paa ia inoa ahiki loa mai ia kaua e ka mea heluhelu i keia la” – and this name has held fast all the long way to us, O reader, in this our own day.

8. Ka‘iwa (used here as a common noun meaning “the frigate bird,” but very much intended to evoke the Kailua location above which ‘iwa frequently soar) is the ridge that divides Ka‘ōhao (commonly called “Lanikai”) from Ka‘elepulu (commonly called “Enchanted Lakes”). Sterling and Summers report that the ridge was named for a chiefess who made her home here and that she was the object of Ahiki’s (note 7, above) deep affection; indeed, Ahiki was so taken with the chiefess that he rose up and pulled himself away from his brother peaks (Olomana and Pāku‘i) in order to be closer to her (*Sites of O‘ahu*, 239). The story of Ka‘iwa and Ahiki makes for a bit of de Silva family kaona and is the subject of the third verse of our family song “Hanohano Wailea”: “Halakau ‘o Ka‘iwa i luna lilo / Ne‘e mai ‘o Ahiki i ke kualono.”

9. Pūnāwai is now a cement drainage ditch that runs from cliff to beach at the far end of Ka‘ōhao. In older days it was a meandering stream noted for the hala groves on its banks and the ‘ili‘ili at its mouth. Women were quartered here near the beach while their men trained at spear-throwing on the Ka‘ōhao plain (*Sites of O‘ahu*, 239). Pūnāwai also is the name of our home in Ka‘ōhao; we have a seven-tree hala grove in our yard, and our students – we like to say – are the ‘ili‘ili that still dance in the tide.

10. Nā Mokulua is the name of the two islands (commonly referred to as the “Twin Islands” or “Mokes”) that lie off Wailea Point on the Ka‘ōhao coast of Kailua. The two are further identified as Mokunui (“Big Moke,” “Two Hump”) and Mokuiki (“Baby Moke,” “One Hump”), but their older names are no longer remembered (Jiro Tanabe, personal communication, 1983). In 19th century Hawaiian language newspapers, “Mokulua” also refers to the traditional fishing grounds that surround Nā Mokulua (other nūpepa-named “kai lawai‘a” of Kailua are: Aalapapa/Alaapapa, Haimilo, Ahulili, and Kea). The name is also used in two de Silva family songs (“Mokulua,” and “Hanohano Wailea”) for its paired, male-female, symbolism; the two islands are in pilikua-pilialo relationship; they are husband and wife, the two that are one.

11. Lei ‘āpiki is another name for lei ‘ilima. Pukui and Elbert explain that the ‘ilima was thought to attract mischievous spirits – ‘āpiki – hence the name; “some did not wear this lei but others considered it lucky” (*Hawaiian Dictionary*, 29). Nā Mokulua, especially in the rainy months, are wreathed in the wild, low-growing variety of ‘ilima known as ‘ilima kū kahakai.

12. In the Ho‘oulumāhie account of Hi‘iaka’s journey through Kailua, “A Kailua i ke oho o ka Malanai” (Kailua in the wisps of the gentle Malanai breeze) is the opening line of a chant attributed to Hi‘iakaikapoliopole during an encounter with Hauwahine and her companion, the mo‘o guardians of Kawainui (note 1, above). The two are sunning themselves on the banks of the pond when Hi‘iaka and Wahine‘ōma‘o pass, unobserved, along an inland trail. Wahine‘ōma‘o insists that the mo‘o are wāhine kanaka (human women), but Hi‘iaka demonstrates that they are wāhine mo‘o: she startles them with her chant, and they vanish into the water. “Kailua i ke oho o ka Malanai” embodies a lesson that Hi‘iaka tries – repeatedly, but without success – to teach her imperceptive companion: do not take things at face value, look deeper. This is the same lesson to which we, as the keepers of a changing, sometimes barely recognizable Kailua, must constantly attend.

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