## Māpuna ka Hala o Kailua

*An Essay by Kīhei de Silva*

*Haku mele:* Kīhei de Silva (words), Robert and Roland Cazimero (music).

*Date:* September 1982.

*Discography:* 1. The Brothers Cazimero, *Hawaiian Hula Eyes*, Mountain Apple.
2. Moe Keale, *Aloha is a Part of Me, a Part of You*, MDL.

*Our text:* Revised and retranslated, February 2002.

The hala grove of Kekele, named for the handsome, sweet-tempered wife of Kailua's 11th-century voyaging chief Kaulu-a-Kalana,[1] once flourished at the Koʻolau foot of Nuʻuanu Pali and is said to have been so fragrant that its perfume lingered long after the grove was destroyed.[2] "Māpuna ka Hala o Kailua" follows the path of this beloved phantom fragrance as it is borne on the wind across the Kailua ahupuaʻa from mountain to sea, from then to now.

The song begins at sunrise, in Kailua's distant past, in the upper-most reaches of the district:

> Māweke ʻia nō ka hala e ka wahine laʻilaʻi
> Ka hala hua o Kekele, ʻakihi pōlena lele halakau.
>
> The hala fruit is opened by the light-hearted woman
> The ripe hala of Kekele is like an ʻakihi pōlena perched up high.

Morning arrives in the golden colors of a just-opened cluster of hala fruit that perches birdlike[3] in Kekele's grove. A metaphorical lei of the new day and fresh start[4] is gathered and strung of these pua hala by a two-in-one "wahine laʻilaʻi" – by the serene, hala-loving Kekele and by Haumea-Laʻilaʻi, the mother of Kailua's first people.[5] The sense of many-in-one conveyed by drupes-in-cluster, women-in-woman, and generations-in-Haumea is further amplified by the multiple connotations of the verse's initial word. *Māweke* means "to open, loosen, separate, free" and refers here to the opening of the ʻāhui hala and its bursting forth in brilliant sun colors. Māweke is also the name of a 12th-century Oʻahu chief of the Nanaulu line whose son Kalehenui ruled the Koʻolau districts of the island and whose line of descent is the "first…from whom men of today trace their ancestry."[6] Māweke refers, finally, to a setting aside of the bitterness that can arise from a retelling of the history of Kailua's abuse at the hands of the self-serving, negligent, and uninformed. Kekele's grove was cut down for a cattle ranch and later plowed under for a golf course. The grove is gone, but layers of meaning and memory persist. We inhale the fragrance that lingers, wear the lei of

new days and fresh starts, and view with wonder the beauty and promise that still unfolds before us.

The song's second verse moves us forward in time and pond-ward in geography. We are borne by hala fragrance from the dim past of Kailua's first people to the still distant but more detailed period of conflict between the descendants of Haumea and their late-arriving chiefly overseers. We move, as well, from the foot of the Pali into one of Maunawili's remote sub-valleys, and from there to a spring-fed pool that empties into old Kawainui fishpond.

> ʻO Makawao kalakupua i ke kani a Kahinihini
> Ulawaiʻa me Mākālei i ka uka aʻo Waiʻahulu.
>
> Makawao is made wondrous by the singing of Kahinihini
> Who fished often, with Mākālei, in the uplands of Waiʻahulu.

The story behind this verse belongs to Samuel Kekoʻowai's "Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka Ia o Moa-Ula-Nui-Akea i Kaulana." It appeared serially in the 1922-24 issues of the Hawaiian language newspaper *Kuokoa* and tells of the boy Kahinihiniʻula, Haumea's great-grandson many generations removed, who uses the Mākālei branch to lure the fish of Kawainui and Kaʻelepulu ponds to a hidden pool near his home in Makawao Valley.[7] The branch is the same lāʻau piʻi ona used by Haumea in ages past to rejuvenate herself and deliver a multitude of descendants; once the fish are in hiding, she involves the boy and his grandmother Nīʻula in a plan to rectify the oversight of Pākuʻi, the pond keeper who had allowed Kahinihiniʻula's two days of work at Kawainui to go unrewarded. "Makawao kalakupua" (Makawao "under the control of a mysterious or supernatural power; magic") is Keko'owai's phrase for the wonder invested in Makawao through its association with the fish, pool, branch, goddess, grandmother, and boy.[8] Although Kekoʻowai gives the pool's name as Hālauwai, he often refers to it as kūʻono hālua ("tucked-away depression"), hoʻololohe wai ("watery attentiveness"), and uka wai-ʻahulu ("agitated upland water")[9] – the last of these appears in the concluding line of my verse. It is to ka uka waiʻahulu that the boy initially delivers the fish swarm, and it is to this pool that he returns regularly, Mākālei in hand ("ulawaiʻa me Mākālei"), to catch these fish for food and ceremony.

Although Kekoʻowai died before he could bring his story to a close, he left little doubt as to its outcome: Pākuʻi's neglect is redressed, the fish are returned, and the new keepers of Kailua's wealth are made very aware of the watchful presence of an older order. The lesson of the Mākālei, as we interpret it today, lies in the restoration of pono, of proper relationships, to the land and its people. The intent of my verse, in light of this lesson, is to remind and encourage. The land on which an exclusive golf course now sits, is that of Makawao kalakupua. The history there of wrong made right (and wrong again) is centuries old and still unfolding.

The third verse of the song moves us forward once more: to Kawainui Pond at the mouth of Maunawili Valley and to Hauwahine, the pond's mo‘o guardian.

> Uluhia au e ka nani o Hauwahine a‘ia‘i
> I ke ākea o ka ‘āina, ka pahuhopu ‘o Kawainui.
>
> I am entranced by the beauty of bright-skinned Hauwahine
> In the broad expanse of the land, Kawainui is the goal.

Although Hauwahine is older than the Mākālei legend,[10] her reach exceeds Keko‘owai's. Where the magic branch and its ‘ehu-haired bearer have long since faded from communal memory, stories of Hauwahine – and even sightings of the guardian in woman-form – continue into the mid-20th century. In one of these accounts, retold to us by Muriel Seto, a young girl is taken by her grandmother to the northeast bank of Kawainui where she is introduced to a beautiful, long-haired woman who emerges from the reed-choked water. Hauwahine, the girl remembers a half-century later, had bright, clear skin that glowed like yellow pua hala.[11] The word for skin of this sort is a‘ia‘i and is used by Keko‘owai in the following description of the mo‘o-wahine: "…he mea aiai keokeo…keia kaikamahine ui lauoho nuanua ke noho nei i ka makaha o ka loko o Kawainui" ("bright-skinned and fair is this beautiful young woman with masses of hair who resides at the sluice-gate of Kawainui pond").[12]

Kailua legend, chant, and oral history further identify Hauwahine as the beneficial guardian of Kailua.[13] She ensured the wealth of its fish ponds and lo‘i kalo and kept watch over the activities of its human inhabitants. When proper relationships were not observed, she abandoned Kailua, taking all of its prosperity with her. When all was pono, she returned with fish and fertility, and the vegetation surrounding the pond turned yellow in acknowledgment. Like La‘ila‘i, Kekele, and Mākālei, she embodies an abiding presence in the broad expanse of Kailua's land whose enduring purpose, pahuhopu,[14] is the harmony symbolized here by Kawainui's thriving fish pond and pond fields.

Our mele's next-to-last verse carries us from Kawainui to Ka‘ōhao and from legendary time to the present.

> He hānai nui ‘o Ahiki kōko‘olua me Ka‘iwa
> Na Pōhāki‘ileiokekula ho‘ohālau ‘ili iā Pūnāwai.
>
> A great provider is Ahiki in partnership with Ka‘iwa
> It is Lei-fetching-stone-of-the-plains who fills Pūnāwai with children.

Ahiki is the Waimānalo-most of the three Olomana Peaks; he was also the konohiki, in Kahinihini'ula's time, of the Kailua ahupua'a.[15] Ka‘iwa is the name of the "Lanikai" ridge that defines our Ka‘ōhao subdistrict; she was also the chiefess, in Ahiki's time, of our mountain ridge. Legend tells us that Ahiki loved

Ka‘iwa and pulled himself away from the remaining Olomana peaks in his desire to be with her; “that is why Ahiki is a little farther forward than the other two peaks, Olomana and Pakui.”[16] Māpuana and I find that our lives re-enact some of this legend and that we have become part of its larger pattern and deeper presence. My family has lived in Maunawili, in the shadow of Ahiki, for 51 years. Māpuana’s has lived in Ka‘ōhao, in the shadow of Ka‘iwa, for 66. Ahiki’s “move” to Ka‘iwa, has been mine to Ka‘ōhao, and Ka‘ōhao has been home to our own family and hālau since both their beginnings 41 years ago.

Pūnāwai is the name of a stream that once flowed from Ka‘iwa to the sea. For the most part, it followed the course of what is now the Po‘opo‘o St. culvert except that it curved back into the plain before reaching the beach and ocean at 1508 Mokulua Drive. Pūnāwai’s lower course was known for its ‘ili‘ili. In the 1950s these could still be found in the empty lots near the 1508 Mokulua residence.[17] In the 1980s, after stormy weather, they were still in evidence on the beach below.[18] Pūnāwai is also the name we gave to our home (with its bottom-floor hālau) when we rebuilt Māpuana’s old family residence in 1986; it was our hope that the name would signal the return of a figurative spring to a figuratively dry Ka‘ōhao. Five years earlier we had been asked by Muriel Seto and the Kawainui Heritage Foundation to look after a carved stone that had been left at (or perhaps returned to) Kawainui’s Ulupō Heiau. That stone has now been sitting for 36 years under the pūhala grove in the back yard of our Home Pūnāwai where it helps, in a figurative sense, to ki‘i lei and ho‘ohālau ‘ili – to fill our lives with lei, our hālau with students, and our pūnāwai with ‘ili‘ili. We have since learned its real name and origin,[19] but we continue to refer to it by the epithet Poha(ku)-ki‘i-lei-o-ke-kula, Lei-fetching-stone-of-the-plain.

Our mele’s next-to-last verse speaks of the full lives we have made in the presence of Ahiki and Ka‘iwa and of the growth that has resulted from our increased awareness of the long history of this land. Our mele’s last verse means to bring this point home.

> Mai kuhi hewa mai ‘oe eia nō ka pua mōhala
> Ka hala ‘i‘o, kahi kupa, i ka ‘ike pono i ko Kailua mo‘o.
>
> Don’t be mistaken, here are the blooming flowers
> The ripe hala fruit, the place of generations, here in the proper knowing of Kailua’s story.

We have moved from mountains to sea and from past to present. Along the way, we have touched on a multi-layered tradition of perseverance, redress, prosperity, and care. Now we end with reminders. The last verse reminds us that places of growth and promise still exist, that hala groves still perfume the air with more than phantom fragrance, that generations can still inhabit and care for the land in unbroken succession, and that the lessons of benevolence – and benevolent mo‘o – still live in properly understood mo‘olelo. Growth and promise, we conclude,

are still in us, and our land is still capable of response. It is to this conviction that we apply ourselves and to its fragrant, wind borne message of hope that we assign the refrain, "Māpuna ka hala o Kailua."

**Māpuna ka Hala o Kailua**

Māweke[20] ʻia nō ka hala
E ka wahine laʻilaʻi
Ka hala hua o Kekele
ʻAkihi pōlena lele halakau

ʻO Makawao kalakupua
I ke kani[21] a ka hinihini
Ulawaiʻa me Mākālei
I ka uka aʻo Waiʻahulu
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua

Uluhia[22] au e ka nani
O Hauwahine aʻiaʻi
I ke ākea o ka ʻāina
Ka pahuhopu ʻo Kawainui

He hānai nui ʻo Ahiki
Kōkoʻolua me Kaʻiwa
Na Pōhākiʻileiokekula
Hoʻohālau ʻili iā Pūnāwai[23]
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua

I ke ākea o ka ʻāina
Ka pahuhopu ʻo Kawainui
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua

Mai kuhi hewa mai ʻoe
Eia nō ka pua mōhala
Ka hala ʻiʻo, kahi kupa
I ka ʻike pono i ko Kailua moʻo
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua

I ke ākea o ka ʻāina
Ka pahuhopu ʻo Kawainui
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua
Māpuna ka hala o Kailua

The hala fruit is opened
by the light-hearted woman
The ripe hala of Kekele

Like an ʻakihi pōlena perched up high

Makawao is made wondrous
by the singing of the hinihini
Who fished often, with Mākālei,
in the uplands of Waiʻahulu
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua

I am entranced by the beauty
of bright-skinned Hauwahine
In this land's broad expanse
Kawainui is the goal

A great provider is Ahiki
in partnership with Kaʻiwa
It is Lei-fetching-stone of the plains
Who fills Pūnāwai with children
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua

In this land's broad expanse
Kawainui is the goal
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua

Don't be mistaken
Here are the blooming flowers
The ripe hala fruit, the place of generations
Here in the proper knowing of Kailua's story.
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua

In this land's broad expanse
Kawainui is the goal
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua
Wind-borne is the hala fragrance of Kailua.

Notes

1. Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race*, v.2:12-15.

2. Mary Kawena Pukui, *Place Names of Hawai'i*, 106; *'Ōlelo No'eau*, #2211 ("Some people claim that although the hala trees have been cut down for many years, they can still smell the fragrance on the breeze as they pass at night"). Elspeth Sterling and Katherine Summers, *Sites of O'ahu*, 222-223. Abraham Fornander (*Collection*, v.IV, 3:532) gives the following description of Kekele and her hala grove: "[She} was a very handsome woman whose breath and skin were as sweet as the inamona. She was a very quiet woman. Her favorite flowers and vines were the hala, maile, [and] ieie…When she

rested at night she used to sleep with her hala wreaths and would wear them until they were dried up; therefore the hala at Kekele was planted for her and it grows to this day."

3. Samuel Keko'owai, "Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka Ia" in *Nupepa Kuokoa* 1922-1924, provides me with inspiration for this simile: he refers to a Kekele hala cluster as "ahui hala mooni ula me he akihi polena" – "hala cluster trimmed in red like an 'akihi pōlena." David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 39, identifies the bird as red feathered.

4. The lei hala is worn when one wishes to put the past behind and start anew. This is why it "was, and still is, a favorite at New Year. The word hala…means 'gone, past, dead, departed,' and for this reason the hala was not worn when on the quest for something. [But] what better lei for the New Year than the hala when the old year with its joys and sorrows had passed" (Kawena Pukui, "Aspects of the Word Lei," in Adrienne Kaeppler ed., *Directions in Pacific Literature*, 107-108).

5. Martha Beckwith summarizes the Haumea-La'ila'i myth in *Hawaiian Mythology*, 276-281. Haumea's return to Kailua to aid her descendant Kahinihini'ula and bring a new day to her troubled land is discussed later in this essay.

6. Fornander, *Polynesian Race*, v.2:41-42. Beckwith, 352.

7. "Mākālei the Fish-Attracting Branch of Moa'ulanuiākea at Kaulana."

8. Kuokoa, 4-7-22, 4-21-22.

9. Early in the story (*Kuokoa*, 1-13-1922), grandmother says to grandson: "E iho kaua ilalo o Halauwai, i 'ike mai ka Mokila ula i ka wai, ka hoololohe wai o Moaulanuiakea" ("Let us go down to Hālauwai in order to see the red lei needle [Mākālei] in the water, the attentive-water / watery-attentiveness of Moa'ulanuiākea"). More wai'ahulu phrases can be found in the 10-12-22, 10-19-22, and 11-2-22 installments of the legend.

10. Hauwahine appears in the Mākālei legend in a highly comic encounter with the pond keeper Pāku'i who enters Kawainui at night with a lū'au offering for the mo'o kia'i. Although he means well, he is unprepared for the unreasoning panic she stirs in him when he steps, slips, and flops face-first on her mo'o body. He looses his malo, clambers naked and mud-caked up the pond's bank, and runs home in terror to an unsympathetic wife. It is some time before he realizes that he has actually met the guardian for whom his offering was intended.

11. Muriel Seto, oral historian and present-day keeper of Kawainui's lore, has shared several Hauwahine stories with us over the years. The story recounted here was given to her in perhaps the 1960s by an older woman who had been, more than a half-century earlier, that young girl.

12. Kuokoa, 3-3-1922.

13. Selections of Hauwahine legend and oral history can be found in the Kailua sub-chapter of *Sites of O'ahu*. Hi'iakaikapoliopele's encounter with Hauwahine is recorded in

the Hawaiian language newspapers *Kuokoa* (1-22-1906) and *Hoku o Hawaii* (11-29-1925). A 19th-century mele lamenting the absence of Hauwahine at Kawainui – and deriding the ''ōpala ʻai ("edible rubbish," probably rice) that had replaced the pond's fish and kalo – is recorded by Nathaniel Emerson in *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii*, 82-83.

14. The phrase "ka pahu hopu ʻo Kawainui" appears regularly, and in various permutations, in Kekoʻowai's telling of the Mākālei legend, usually in reference to the travels of Ahiki and his companions in their efforts to discover the reason for the disappearance of Kawainui's fish. The ultimate goal – ka pahuhopu – of their inquiry is the return of Kawainui's wealth. For examples, see *Kuokoa* 1-6-22 and 11-2-22.

15. Kekoʻowai refers to Ahiki as the "konohiki hoolakolako" ("prosperity-bringing overseer") of Kailua. My line, "He hānai nui ʻo Ahiki…" follows Kekoʻowai's lead but adds a hint of "lei-stringing needle" (hānai/ mānai) to the mix.

16. *Sites of O'ahu*, 239.

17. As recorded by Sterling and Summers in a 1952 interview with "Old Solo" Mahoe, *Sites of O'ahu*, 239.

18. There are no longer any empty lots along mansion-fortified Mokulua Drive, and the sandy beach into which the old stream drained is now seawall, sandbag, and surf; no beach remains.

19. Both of which are consistent with its present resting place and function.

20. *Māweke* is a variation of the word *māwehe*. Both have the same meaning and both begin with the stative prefix mā. Although both words, by virtue of this initial mā, are classified by Pukui and Elbert as stative verbs (and therefore unlikely candidates for the passivizing ʻia that I have attached to the former – māweke ʻia ), my use of māweke as a transitive verb takes its precedent from the following passage in Samuel Kekoʻowai's Mākālei legend. His use of māwehe (to mean "to undo" rather than "the state of being undone") in conjunction with the direct object i ka manaʻopaʻa is decidedly transitive:

> Nolaila aohe mea nana e mawehe ae i ka manaopaa o ke Konohiki e hele i ka uka waiahulu o Makawao. [*Kuokoa*, 11-2-1922.]
>
> Consequently, no one could undo the determination of the Konohiki to go to the agitated upland waters of Makawao.

21. The hinihini is a land shell believed by Hawaiians to produce a soft trilling kani. The connection between boy and shell, voice and kani, is evident in "Nānā aʻe Au aʻo Ahiki," an old mele for Kailua in which Kahinihiniʻula announces "Eia mai au ʻo Mākālei / Ka lāʻau piʻi ona lā a ka iʻa / Ke kani kuʻu pio hone i ke kula / Kaʻi ʻāuna lā i ke ano ahiahi ("Here I am, the Mākālei / The fish-attracting branch / Sending my soft whistle across the plain / Leading the fish-swarm in the time of fond memories." The mele appears in *Kuokoa's* Jan. 13, 1922, installment of Kekoʻowai's legend.

22. Uluhia means “to be entranced, enthralled, possessed.” It is not too strong a word for use with Hauwahine in light of stories shared with us by Muriel Seto of men who fell under the mo‘o’s spell, disappeared for days, and returned to the world in dazed and sometimes incoherent condition. A sure sign of their enthrallment was the cool, pale, slimy condition of their skin. Keko‘owai’s description of Pāku‘i's encounter with Hauwahine serves to corroborate Seto’s oral histories. The pond keeper, although he merely slips and falls on the mo‘o before beating a hasty retreat, seems to experience some of the same chill and slime:

> Ke noho nei o Pakui me ka lia o ka ili, me he mea la, aia no ka huihui o ka ili o kela mea pahee ka wai, ke pili la i kona kino. [*Kuokoa*, 2-17-22.]
>
> Pāku‘i sat there [with his wife] shivering in fear as if the chill of the skin of the slippery (Hauwahine) were still clinging to his body.

23. The full expression of this very condensed phrase is “Na Pohakuki‘ileiokekula i ho‘ohālau iā Pūnāwai a piha i nā ‘ili‘ili – It is Lei-fetching-stone-of-the-plain who has filled Pūnāwai full with water worn pebbles.” The pebbles, of course, are dance-stones and those who use them.

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This essay was first published in Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima’s 2002 Merrie Monarch Fact Sheet. It is offered here in revised and updated form.