

Ho‘opuka ē ka Lā i Kai o Mālei

An Essay by Kīhei de Silva

Haku Mele: Kahikina de Silva, 2011.

This has become the mele hula ka‘i of Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima. We have certainly tried more than once, over our 40-year history, to compose something on the order of the traditional ho‘opuka of “Unulau” and “Ka hikina,” but nothing stuck until our own Kahikina put pen to moleskine for our 2012 hula kahiko entry in the Merrie Monarch Festival. Her ka‘i rings with the names of our cherished places and guardians, with a procession of uhu, pu‘u, breeze, and birds, and with a call to the kini of Kailua to rise, remember, and reclaim. Most of all, her ka‘i honors the words of Mary Kawena Pukui, our teacher’s teacher, who once explained:

The sun rises flooding the earth with light, and bringing forth vitality to all nature. The Hawaiians wished for life, health, and growth in dancing and expressed it by building the kuahu on the east side. Hawaiians also expressed this wish by associating the entrance of a dancer with the appearance in the east of that same golden sun. Like the rising sun, the dancer brings with her the promise of something considerably more important than mere entertainment: she brings life itself.¹

Much to her father’s delight, Kahikina has hereby surpassed his best (and now retired) efforts.

Ho‘opuka ē ka Lā i Kai o Mālei

Ho‘opuka ē ka lā i kai o Mālei² ē
E pi‘i a‘ela i luna o Wailea³
Kahu o ka ‘ena ‘au i ke kai⁴
E ala nā kini kupa o Kailua ē
Eia Hi‘iaka-wāwahi-lani ē
‘Ea lā, ‘ea lā, ‘eā.
Ka hikina a ka lā i Pu‘uoehu⁵
Kāunu pū ana me ka Malanai⁶
Ho‘ola‘i nā ‘iwa me Hi‘iaka
Me nā wāhine ‘ili a‘ia‘i⁷
E ka‘i mai ana, e ka‘i mai ana
Ho‘opuka ē ka lā i Wailea
‘Ea lā, ‘ea lā, ‘eā.
He inoa no Hi‘iakaikapoliopole.

The sun rises over the sea of Mālei
Rising above Wailea
That keeper of burning affection, reaching into the sea

Arise O children born of Kailua
 Here is Hi‘iaka-heavenly-dawn-breaker
 ‘Ea lā, ‘ea lā, ‘eā.
 The sun arrives at Pu‘uoehu
 Joining in love with the Malanai
 Soaring are the ‘iwa with Hi‘iaka
 With the bright-skinned women, Hauwahine and Kahalakea
 Entering, entering
 Yes, the sun rises at Wailea.
 ‘Ea lā, ‘ea lā, ‘eā.
 A name chant for Hi‘iakaikapoliopole.

Notes:

1. Mary Kawena Pukui, “Hulas of Kaua‘i,” HI.M.72:5, Bishop Museum Archives.
2. Malei: The guardian of Makapu‘u and the procession of uhu in the sea below. Hi‘iaka addresses her with affection upon arriving on O‘ahu from the east.
3. Wailea: The promontory of the Ka‘iwa ridge that separates Waimānalo from Ka‘ōhao. Named for Lea, the guardian of canoe fleets, fishermen, and po‘e hula.
4. Kahu o ka ‘ena ‘au i ke kai: A play on the Wailea epithet made somewhat popular by the poet’s father: “Ka wahine ki‘a‘i ‘au i ke kai.” Here the guardian woman is renamed “Kahu o ka ‘ena,” the keeper of both the burning sunrise and the intense affections of the people who live with and love her.
5. Pu‘uoehu: The hill that overlooks Kawainui and Ka‘elepulu at the entrance to what is now Kailua town. It emerges from darkness as the third in this mele’s procession of pu‘u over which the sun rises, bringing light and life to our Kailua home.
6. Malanai: The beloved breeze of Kailua. It arrives from the ocean and travels inland across Kailua following a path similar to that of the approaching sun. “Kāunu pū ana me ka Malanai” echoes the line “Ho‘okahi nō kāsunu pū i Waialoha” in a mele hula ho‘i composed for Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima by Kahikina’s uncle (and the man who helped name her) Robert Lokomaika‘i Snakenberg. His mele “Mekila e nā ‘Iwa” is included in this collection of essays.
7. Ho‘ola‘i...me nā wahine a‘ia‘i: An allusion to the story of Hi‘iaka’s journey through Kailua. When she greets the guardian mo‘o of Kawainui with the chant “‘O Kailua i ke oho o ka Malanai,” the two beautiful, bright-skinned women (wahine a‘ia‘i) turn into ‘iwa and rise into the sky. It is only in Kailua that Hi‘iaka and her traditional enemies, the mo‘o, demonstrate mutual respect and manage to keep the peace.

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