

Lau Kapalili

An Essay by Kīhei de Silva

Haku mele: Kīhei de Silva (words), David Ka‘io (music).

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Discography: Anuhea Band, *Kahiau ‘Ia ke Aloha*, Mana Pa‘i Records, 1993.

Our text: Kīhei de Silva, revised October 2017.

I composed this mele in 1988, shortly after visiting the soon-to-be displaced farmers of Maunawili’s “Banana Patch” and testifying at the state capitol against the sale of almost 1,000 Maunawili acres to a Japanese corporation. I wrote it at the urging of my friend Kekuni Blaisdell who had read my testimony and asked for a mele to go with it – something to mark, in Hawaiian protest fashion, the loss of all those beloved lands and wahi pana to an exclusive country club and golf course. Although various community and conservation groups sought to prevent the Y.Y. Valley enterprise, the State had determined that the area contained no cultural sites or site complexes significant enough to warrant a halt in development.

The problem with this decision rests in the mistaken belief that cultural significance is measured by the size, number, and condition of man-made structures, particularly kauhale and heiau. Natural features and legendary associations like the pōhaku māwae of Hi‘iaka on the slopes of Makali‘i Valley carry little weight in assessments of this sort. So, too, with Hālauwai, the palapalai-fringed spring of Makawao Valley to which Kahinihini‘ula, the ‘ehu-haired, Mākālei-weilding descendant of Haumea, led the entire fish population of the Kawainui and Ka‘elepulu ponds. So, too, with the rock outcroppings of Hauwahine, the mo‘o guardian of Kailua and protector of its fish and kalo wealth, at Maunawili’s mouth. So, too, with the incredibly rich taro lands of Palawai – now buried in California grass – that once fed the ali‘i of all O‘ahu.

These names and places, none of them worthy of the developer’s and land-board’s serious consideration, are invoked for ours in this song that takes us along Maunawili Valley’s eastern course. We visit the smaller valleys of Makali‘i and Makawao as they descend from the Olomana peaks; we remember the hidden pond of Kahinihini‘ula and follow its waters downstream; we salute the country club perched on its hill of dollars; we call for Hauwahine’s return; and we see again, in mind’s eye, the flourishing kalo of Palawai.

The mele owes its phrasing, māka‘ika‘i progression, and nalo wale sentiments to “Waipi‘o Valley Song,” the composition of Sam Li‘a Kalainaina and Eddie Kamae whose journey through Sam’s valley resulted in a similar lament: “lost is the beauty of Paka‘alana.” My friend David Ka‘io put music to my words, and he and his band (David, Alan Distajo, and Kalani Kupau, the original Anuhea) sang it for Minoaka Demesillo in the 2002 Miss

Aloha Hula Competition. It served then as ka‘i and ho‘i to another of my songs, “Māpuna ka Hala o Kailua.”

Lau Kapalili

Ake a‘e ka mana‘o iā Maunawili
I ka holu lau kalo, lau kapalili.

I Makali‘i au e ‘alawa maka
Ka pōhaku māwae a‘o Hi‘iaka.¹

Ki‘eki‘e i luna ke kū o Ahiki²
A he nani he maika‘i ke ‘ike aku.

A hiki mākou i Makawao
He pōnaha wai lipo la‘i ka palai.³

Ua hui nā wai a‘o ke awāwa
Me he lei ho‘ohie no Hauwahine.⁴

Na wai nō ho‘i e ualo aku⁵
I ka ho‘i hou mai o Kea‘ia‘i?⁶

Eia a‘e nō ‘oe, e ka pu‘u dala
Ua nalo ka maika‘i a‘o Palawai.⁷

Ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana
No ka holu lau kalo, lau kapalili.

I yearn for Maunawili
The swaying kalo leaves, trembling leaves.

At Makali‘i I see with a glance
The fissured rock of Hi‘iaka.

The peak of Ahiki rises high above
So wonderful to see.

When we reach Makawao
There is a pool deep and still with palai.

The waters of the valley once joined together
Like a beautiful lei for Hauwahine.

Who will cry out
When The Bright-Skinned One returns?

Here you come, hill of dollars
The beauty of Palawai is lost.

Tell the summary of the song
For the swaying kalo leaves, trembling leaves.

Notes:

1. According to Muriel Seto, Kailua's oral historian for more than 50 years, the cleft stone (pōhaku māwae) of Makali'i serves as a Hi'iaka-substitute in a local version of Hi'iakapoliopele's encounter with Kanahau on the Olomana slopes of Kailua (Personal communication, December 1988). As in other, better-known accounts, he prepares her favorite food – lū'au – from the large, trembling-leaved kalo of his land, becomes enamored of her, and asks that his hospitality be given sexual reward. Seto's version has Hi'iaka avoid this transaction by turning a stone into a woman, "and that's what Kanahau got: Pōhaku Hi'iaka." Although Kanahau's residence is otherwise identified as being on the Waimānalo side of Olomana, the massive pōhaku māwae of Makali'i Valley gets Muriel's vote as the man-tricking stone of the goddess (having visited it in 1987, I can attest to its almost overwhelming female appearance). The Kanahau story that Seto collected from Kailua's old-timers is mentioned in Sterling and Summers' *Sites of O'ahu*, 241-242. The better-known, nūpepa versions of Hi'iaka's encounter with Kanahau/Ka'anahau can be found in Kapihenui (*Hoku o ka Pakipika*, 2-6-1862), Bush and Pa'aluhi (*Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 3-6-1893), Ulumahiehie (*Ka Nai Aupuni*, 1-17-1906), and Poepoe (*Kuokoa Home Rule*, July 9, 1909). The fissured stone does not appear in any of these newspaper accounts, and it is only in Ulumahiehie that Kanahau and Hi'iaka consummate a mutual attraction. Ulumahiehie, however, does mention alternate version of this love-making in which Hi'iaka tricks Ka'anahau with a decoy-body in the same manner that she had earlier tricked Pahulu, the concupiscent fisherman of Laupahoehoe:

Ma kekahī mahele hoi o ka moolelo o Hiiaka, ua hoikeia, ua ae no o Hii-(aka)-i-ka-iu-o-na-moku i ke koi hoomano a hoopaakiki a Kaanahau; aka, elike no me ka Hiiaka i hana ai ia Pahululawaianiuokai i Laupahoehoe, ma Hilo, Hawaii, pela no oia i hana ia ia Kaanahau, oia hoi laua i hihina aku ai e kaunu i ka "awihi a ka moe," ua waiho iho la o Hiiaka i kona kino lepo i hoa kaunu o Kaanahau; a ku ae la no ua Hii-(aka)-i-ka-iu-o-na-moku a hele akula a loaa ke aikane, o Wahineomao ame ke kahu o Pauopala-a.

In one mahele of Hi'iaka story, as has been shown, Hi'iaka agrees to the repeated and headstrong demands of Ka'anahau, but, as Hi'iaka had done with Pahulu in Laupahoehoe, Hilo, Hawai'i, so did she act with Ka'anahau; that is to say, while they were swaying in the pleasures of sleep, she left a "dirt" body as his intimate and departed with Wahine'ōma'o and Pa'ūopala'a. (*Ka Moolelo o Hiiakaikapoliopelē, Ka Na'i Aupuni*, 19 January 1906, p. 4.)

2. Ahiki is the Waimānalo-most of the three Olomana Peaks. In Samuel Keko'owai's *Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka Ia*, Ahiki is also identified as the "konohiki hoolakolako o Kailua," the much-loved, prosperity-bringing overseer of the Kailua ahupua'a. Keko'owai's mo'olelo appears

serially in the 1922-1924 issues of the *Nupepa Kuokoa*. The line “Ki‘eki‘e i luna ke kū o Ahiki” opens an old welcoming chant for Kailua that appears in both *Ka Hoku o Hawaii* (“Hiiakaikapoliopele,” 12-15-1925) and *Kuokoa* (“Makalei ka Laau Pii Ona a ka Ia,” 2-10-1922).

3. Pōnaha wai (literally, “water circle”) is a poetic expression for “pool.” Keko‘owai identifies “Halauwai” as a small, spring-fed pool in upper Makawao Valley. When the boy Kahinihini‘ula is overlooked by the pond keeper of Kawainui, his grandmother instructs him in the use of the Mākālei branch with which he lures all of Kailua’s fish into hiding at Hālauwai. He is later taught to stand the Mākālei on end in the midst of an adjacent clump of palai. When he does this, the branch changes into a fern that can be distinguished from the rest by its red stem: ka palai ‘ula. Later, when the boy returns to the pool to gather fish for meals and ritual offerings, he removes the palai ‘ula (which then changes back into its lá‘au form) and waves it over the water; as the fish swarm to him, the water is described as lipo – as darkened by their presence.

4. Our Hawaiian language newspapers and oral histories identify Hau wahine as the beneficial mo‘o guardian of Kailua. She ensures the wealth of our fish ponds and lo‘i kalo and keeps watch over the activities of its human inhabitants. When proper relationships are not observed, she leaves Kailua, taking with her all of its prosperity. Summaries of the Hau wahine story appear in the Kailua section of *Sites of O‘ahu*, 227-243; she also appears in Keko‘owai’s “Makalei” and in the previously mentioned (note 1 above) nūpepa versions of Hi‘iaka’s visit to Kailua.

5. This verse is meant to echo lines 17-18 of ““O ‘Oe nō Paha Ia e ka Lau o ke Aloha,” a 19th-century lament for the decline of Kawainui fishpond. The mele addresses Hau wahine’s long absence (note 4 above) and our fast-fading memory of her presence; we are asked:

Hiki mai no la ia, na wai e ue aku?
Ho‘i mai no la ia, ia wai e ue aku?

If she comes (again), who will cry in greeting?
If she returns, to whom will she respond in kind?
(Nathaniel Emerson, *Unwritten Literature*, 82-83; my translation.)

6. Muriel Seto told me some time ago (personal communication, 1982) that she had talked to a Kailua old-timer whose childhood memories included meeting Hau wahine in her beautiful-woman form near what is now the Kalāheo side of Kawainui “Marsh.” Hau wahine’s most distinctive feature, according to this kupuna, was her light, clear, shiny skin – skin that resembled the glossy surface of a yellow hala drupe. One word for this skin-tone is *a‘ia‘i* – hence my fabrication of the epithets “Ka Wahine A‘ia‘i” and “Ke-a‘ia‘i” in Hau wahine’s honor. The epithets, however, are not entirely my own doing; their inspiration comes from Keko‘owai’s description of the mo‘o as “he mea aiai keokeo” – someone of bright, fair complexion.

7. Palawai can have at least two meanings. Palawai: bottom land, and pālāwai: a pond algae. The name appears, unmarked (as was the custom), in old maps, land documents, and nūpepa accounts in reference to a land division in Maunawili Valley, O‘ahu. It is also a Molokai and Maui place name. The Palawai of Maunawili is, today, the weed-choked wetlands between the Makali‘i slope of Mt. Olomana and the Maunawili Community Park. Maunawili Stream flows through it, crosses under the Pali Highway ma uka of Castle Hospital, and empties into Kawainui. In older days, certainly through the 18th and 19th centuries, Palawai was the most fertile and productive of the Kailua taro lands. In Water Commission hearings of 1895, it was identified by Hika‘alani, a 74-

year resident of Kawainui, as: “the place where taro was planted most and that was the taro that supplied the chiefs when they called for hookup.”

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It is offered here in revised and updated form.