

Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima  
Merrie Monarch Festival 2018  
Wāhine Division, Kahiko  
**Hula Ka‘i**  
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## Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La‘i

*Haku mele:* Unknown.

*Sources:*

1. Pukui Collection as shared with us by Patience Namaka Bacon as “Ka‘i For Hula Pahu” on June 21, 1986, at Kalōpā, Hawai‘i.
2. Adrienne Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu, Volume 1*, 166-7. “Acquired in 1934 by Vivienne ‘Huapala’ Mader from Keahi Luahine and... translated by Kawena Pukui.” This text differs somewhat from Pukui’s above. See the appendix of this essay for Mader’s version.
3. Elizabeth Tatar, *Hula Pahu, Volume 2*, 242-3. Transcribed from a 1935 performance by Pukui of the Mader text as also given by Kaeppler above.

*Our text:* Pukui Collection as noted in 1 above.

Māpuana learned “Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La‘i” from Pat Namaka Bacon (Aunty Maka) in June 1986, as a hula ka‘i for “Poli‘ahu,” the Pukui-composed hula pahu that Aunty Maka taught at that same ‘86 Kalōpā workshop. We know that “Ke Akua Uwalo” belongs to the tradition of Keahi Luahine who taught it to Kawena Pukui and Aunty Maka as the ka‘i for both “Kalani Manomano” and “Hāmākua Au” – two of the three hula pahu in the Keahi Luahine tradition. We know, too, that “Ke Akua Uwalo” was used as the ka‘i by Pukui for her debut performance of “Poli‘ahu” on December 19, 1985, and that it has become part of the “Poli‘ahu” performance tradition as it continues to be practiced today by the kumu hula who were present at Kalōpā: by Māpuana, Vicky Holt Takamine, and Kaha‘i Topolinski.

Adrienne Kaeppler and Elizabeth Tatar have written briefly about “Ke Akua Uwalo” in their *Hula Pahu, Volumes 1 and 2*. Kaeppler suggests that the lei-stringing described in its last two lines is a metaphor of ongoing generations. As applied to the turtle-god subject of “Kalani Manomano,” it honors “an ancestor or ‘aumakua of the Kaua‘i family in which these pahu hula descend”; it “honors him and his first born child...[and] honors his descendants, who in turn memorialize him with this dance.”<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth Tatar, for her part, observes that “Ke Akua Uwalo,” as with “other mele ka‘i for hula pahu, [is] a prayer.”<sup>2</sup> She also cites a note by Pukui in the Bishop Museum Library index that identifies a chant from the “legend of Pāmāno (Anon. 1862)” as a variant of the “Ke Akua Uwalo” that is “used as a ka‘i for coming in hula for a certain type of hula pahu originating in Kaua‘i”<sup>3</sup> Tatar supplies us with the mele oli of Pāmāno as follows:

Kuu akua hea i ka lai—e,  
I ka piina o Pueohulunui,  
Ka uhane pee i ka lauki—e,  
O Hamakua i kui lei,

Oia he kui lei au nou e ke akua—e,  
O ua akua mana ole nei hoi—e.

But she gives no additional explanation of the Luahine and Pāmano texts, their relationship, or the context of the latter in the legend of Pāmano. My own nūpepa search of Pāmano has taken me to “Moolelo no Pamano,” a four-installment account published in *Ka Hoku O Ka Pakipika* in the first two months of 1862 (Jan. 15, Feb. 13, Feb 20, and Feb. 27).<sup>4</sup> The last helu ends with the name of its contributor: J.W.P Keolanui of Kuhimana, Kapalama.

In Keolanui’s account, Pāmano is lured to his death by Waipū, his jealous uncle, on the pretext of their going inland to enjoy ‘awa at Hāmākua, Maui. The spirit (akua) of Pāmano’s deceased sister Ka‘uhanekino-wailua calls out to Pāmano at several resting places along the way, warning him of Waipū’s real intent. When Pāmano finally recognizes the treachery of this “makua,”<sup>5</sup> he chants “Kuu akua hea i ka lai—e” to Ka‘uhane who he affectionately identifies as his “akua”<sup>6</sup> in hiding on the ascent to Pueohulunui. The ambiguity of the last three line of his chant – particularly because of his play on the words *Hamakua*, *makua*, and *akua* – leaves my head spinning. Because the story concludes with Pāmano’s victory over Waipū and marriage to the beloved Keaka (after Pāmano’s birth parents and akua sister have restored him to life), I take these lines to mean that his parents have strung a lei of generations to which Pāmano, Ka‘uhane, and Keaka now belong. It is a lei that cannot be denied by “ua [m]akua mana ‘ole nei,” by this afore-mentioned and ultimately powerless Waipū who will be stripped of his makua status and become nothing more than a despised ghost.

It is perhaps not ours to know every intricacy of either “Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La‘i” or “Kuu Akua Hea i ka Lai.” As J.M. Poepoe marvels after butting heads with an nearly impenetrable section of “He Inoa no Kualī‘i” – “He hohonu a he kuliū ke mele a ka poe kahiko, a he ano pohihihi no ke *Kuailo* ana ka manao” (Deep and profound are the mele of the people of old, and their complex nature causes the mind to cry ‘I give up’).<sup>7</sup> Or as Auntie Maka often puts it: some meanings are “lost to antiquity.” What we can know, at this stage of our own head-butting, is that our ka‘i belongs to “Poli‘ahu” in a way that Auntie Maka and her mother deemed immutable. Someone is outside, calling, knocking, seeking entry in the calm. She is the wreath-stringer of our ancestors. Let us ask her to string lei of continuity and adornment that we, too, can wear. “Pahūpahū, ‘o wai ma waho?”<sup>8</sup> Thump, thump; who is outside? It is Tūtū. Let her in.

### **Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La‘i**

Ke akua uwalo i ka la‘i e<sup>9</sup>  
E hea wale ana i luna o Pua‘a-hulu-nui<sup>10</sup>  
Ke akua pe‘e i ka lau kiele<sup>11</sup>  
O‘u makua i kui lei  
E kui nō ‘oe a e lei no mākou a.

The god who shouts aloud in the calm

Calling from the heights of Pua‘a-hulu-nui  
This is the god that conceals himself midst the kiele leaves  
Who strung the wreaths (of honor) for our fathers to wear  
String us wreaths that we, too, may wear.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Adrienne Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu, Hawaiian Drum Dances, Volume 1*, 166.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Tatar, *Hula Pahu, Hawaiian Drum Dances, Volume 2*, 237, 246.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham Fornander records a version of the story in his “Legend of Pamano,” *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-lore*. Vol. 5: 302-313. His account is similar to Keolanui’s but abridged and less-nuanced.

<sup>5</sup> In the vocabulary of Hawaiian familiar relationships, one’s parents’ siblings (one’s uncles and aunts) are all called *makua* as are one’s birth parents. Thus Waipū, the brother of Pāmano’s mother, is Pāmano’s *makua*.

<sup>6</sup> *Akua* has many meanings in addition to “god, goddess” – among them: “spirit, ghost, image, idol, corpse.” Ka‘uhanakinowailua (literally, “the spirit ghost”), as her own name indicates, is the sprit-ghost kind of *akua*.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph M. Poepoe, “Moolelo Hawaii Kahiko,” *Ka Nai Aupuni*, June 9, 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Kaeppler (167) provides us with the text of the dialog between ho‘opa‘a and ‘ōlapa that serves as the opening *kāhea* for the Luahine-taught “Ke Akua Uwalo”:

	Kahea (call by dancers offstage)	
Ke ‘owe‘owe a e nei!		Rustling, rustling!
A nakekeke		It is rattling
Pahupahu		Thumping, thumping!
	Kahea (call by hoopa‘a)	
Pahupahu, owai mawaho?		Who is thumping, thumping is outside?
Pahupahu, owai mawaho?		Who is thumping, thumping is outside?
	Pane (answer by dancers offstage):	
Ke akua.		The god.
	Kahea (call by ho‘opa‘a)	
Pahupahu, owai mawaho?		Who is thumping, thumping is outside?
	Pane (answer by dancers as they enter)	
Ke akua uwalo i ka la‘i e		The god who shouts in the calm
[...and the ka‘i begins]		

Aunt Māka did not teach this to us. We trust that she had good reason for leaving it out, and we have, therefore, not tried to add it to our own performance.

<sup>9</sup> There is/was a stone by this name in the waters off the Shipman home in Hā'ena, Hawai'i.

I ka hora 3 p.m. ua lawe au la o Mrs. Shipman ia maua e hoomakaikai i kona home nani ma Keaau, Puna. Ua hoike mai oia i keia pohaku iloko o ke kai ia "Haena," i ikeia ma no moolelo Hawaii, o Pele, ike pu i kela pohaku Akua, o ke akua uwalo. (At 3 p.m. Mrs. Shipman took us to visit her beautiful home at Kea'au, Puna. She showed us this pōhaku in the sea at Hā'ena that is known in the Hawaiian mo'olelo of Pele as the stone god Ke Akua Uwalo.) "Ka Huakai A Na Kamahale no Hilo," *Nupepa Kuokoa*, June 6, 1919.

I have yet to connect this in any way to our mele ka'i.

<sup>10</sup> I have yet to find a location for Pua'ahulunui except for Kamakau's brief mention of the name, along with Pueohulunui, as one of four trails into Waipi'o Valley: "Eha no alanui e iho ai ilalo o Waipio, o Koaekoa, o Pueohulunui, o Poolakike a me Puaahulunui" ("He Moolelo no Waipio i Hawaii...", *Nupepa Kuokoa*, December 9, 1865). Pueohulunui is the name given in the Pāmano version of the mele. Kamakau locates it in Waipi'o, Hawai'i, Pukui in upper Wai'ōhinu, Ka'ū (*Place Names*, 192), and *Moolelo no Pamano* in the vicinity of Kaupō, Maui.

<sup>11</sup> *Kiele* is the gardenia. Our endemic gardenia is the nānū (also known as nā'ū). Hui Kū Maoli Ola describes it as an:

...extremely rare plant [that] is one of many native Hawaiian plants found on the federal list of endangered species. In the wild there is only one plant remaining on O'ahu and a handful on Lana'i, all totaling around 10 plants left in the state, and since this is a species endemic to Hawai'i, that means 10 plants left in the world! In fact the plants in this pot are the grandchildren of the last remaining plant from O'ahu. They were once believed to have existed on all of the main islands in the dry forest, but are now restricted to the populations mentioned above. The lowland dry forest where this and many other native plants are found is the most species diverse ecotype in Hawaii, even more than the rainforest! It is also the most threatened since only 5% of it remains, 95% of the native lowland-dry forest including the all plants and animals within it are gone. (<http://www.hawaiiannativeplants.com/ourplants/nau/>)

It seems that *kiele* is a relatively modern word for the older *nānū*, and its use in Keahi Luahine's "Ke Akua Uwalo" might indicate a more recent adaptation of the mele than is evident in the "lau kī" of both the Pāmano and the Mader-collected versions of the mele.

## Appendix

The Mader-Collected text of "Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La'i."

Ke akua uwalo i ka la'i e.	The god that shouts in the calm.
Ke akua uwalo i ka la'i e	The god that shouts in the calm
Hea wale ana i luna o [Pua'ahulunui*]	Calling from above to the great canoe
Ke akua pe'e i ka lau ki e	The god that hides amidst the ti leaves
O Hamakua i kui lei	In Hamakua you shall string a wreath
E kui no 'oe a e lei no makou a.	You string the wreath for me to wear.
	(Let the god make the wreath of honor you wear to dance.)

From Kaeppler, 167.

\*Kaeppler's rendering of this line of the text ends with "i luna o." I assume that this is a typographical omission and have inserted "Pua'ahulunui" which is the proper noun used in Tatar's rendering of the same text. I cannot explain how the translation "great canoe" is associated with Pua'ahulunui; the translation is Pukui's.