

Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima  
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Hula Kahiko, Wāhine Division  
**Hula Ho’okūkū**

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## **Poli‘ahu i ke Kualono o Mauna Kea**

*Haku mele:* Mary Kawena Pukui, 1955.

*Sources:* “Pukui Collection,” as taught by Patience Namaka Bacon, June 21, 1986.

*Our text:* “Pukui Collection,” text and translation by Pukui; orthographic editing: Kīhei de Silva.

Māpuana learned “Poli‘ahu” from Aunty Pat Namaka Bacon on June 21, 1986, at Keahi Allen’s SCHH<sup>1</sup> workshop at Kalōpā, Hawai‘i. Aunty Maka explained that her mother Mary Kawena Pukui<sup>2</sup> composed it for Maka’s sister Pele Sukanuma to dance in the mid-1950s, partly as a response to the inappropriate use of the ‘ūlili step by Lokalia Montgomery in “‘Ūlei Pahu i ka Moku.” That hula pahu was one of three that Keahi Luahine had taught to Kawena and Maka (along with “Kalani Manomano” and “Hāmākua Au”), and Keahi had then assigned the keeping of these three hula pahu specifically to the mother and daughter team. They subsequently taught “‘Ūlei Pahu” to Lokalia who had difficulty learning its complicated foot pattern – the five hela (in five beats) and one ki‘i (in three beats) in each section, and the immediate use of the ki‘i foot to begin the next hela sequence – so she later sped up the mele and gave it the ‘ūlili beat and feet that are often thought of today as authentic.<sup>3</sup>

Māpuana learned Keahi Luahine’s “‘Ūlei Pahu” from Aunty Maka in 2002 and visited her several times afterwards to make pa‘a that deceptively simple hula. Much of what Aunty Maka had explained in 1986 became more clear to Māpuana in 2002 when Māpuana actually had the two hula in her repertoire and the occasion to discuss them, in ‘ike Maka fashion, with their sole surviving keeper. “Poli‘ahu,” as Māpuana learned it, was Kawena’s gift of a mele hula pahu composed for ‘ūlili; it is what the ‘ūlili looks like in a hula pahu to which it actually belongs. “Kalani Manomano” and “Hāmākua Au” are restricted, Luahine-legacy hula and therefore out of our reach; “Poli‘ahu,” as shared at Kalōpā in 1986, is the vantage point from which we appreciate a family tradition that is not ours to enter.

Elizabeth Tatar, in *Hula Pahu; Hawaiian Drum Dances, V. 2*, adds to our understanding of “Poli‘ahu’s” backstory by providing a date and debut: “It was composed and choreographed by Mary Kawena Pukui around 1955 for a program at Bishop Museum on December 19, 1955, in honor of the birthdate of Bernice Pauahi Bishop.”<sup>4</sup> Tatar also notes that the ho‘opa‘a for this performance was Ka‘upena Wong, and the ‘ōlapa was Pele Pukui Sukanuma. A photo of that event shows Ka‘upena, with pahu, at the right back corner of the kahua fronting the museum’s hale pili; Kawena is seated at back center with a microphone stand to one side and her program notes open in her lap, and Pele is at center stage with both hands raised forward above head-level

in accompaniment to what appears to be the fourth line of the mele: “E kū ana i luna o ke ki‘eki‘e.”<sup>5</sup>

Adrienne Kaeppler, in her first volume of the above-mentioned *Hula Pahu*, also contributes to the performance history of the mele by noting that it was taught by Ka‘upena and Auntie Maka to Kalena Silva (ho‘opa‘a) and my brother Kauka’s first wife Kathleen Ka‘iulani Browne de Silva (‘ōlapa) for presentation at the Bishop Museum’s “Pahu and Pūniu” exhibition in 1980.<sup>6</sup> Kaeppler writes that the mele was not, then, in the public domain, but she adds that Auntie Maka later shared it at the SHHC workshop. We can confirm that Auntie placed no restrictions on it at that time – other than the tacitly (but absolutely) understood, *teach it only as taught*.<sup>7</sup>

Kawena Pukui’s own program notes for the debut performance of “Poli‘ahu” offer only the broadest and most obvious of introductions:

Our first dance this evening is in honor of Poliahu, the snow goddess whose home is on Mauna Kea on Hawaii. It was said that when she wore her white cloak, snow covered our mountain tops.<sup>8</sup>

I have great difficulty leaving mele alone, and the dearth of mana‘o with regard to “Poli‘ahu” both aggravates and challenges me. I don’t like that, in the 68 years since its composition, Tatar and Kaeppler are its only explainers. We should be thinking and writing about it, too – not with the idea that we can know Pukui’s mind, but with an ‘imi na‘auao motivation. How do we advance understanding if we don’t attempt it?

My own attempt at understanding the poetry of “Poli‘ahu” leans first on the structural relationship of the mele to the three ‘ūlili in Pukui’s repertoire: “Kalani Manomano,” “Hāmākua Au,” and “Ke Akua Uwalo i ka La‘i” (the entrance chant for both “Manomano” and “Hāmākua” as well as for the later “Poli‘ahu”). All are composed in 5-line multiples: 10 for “Manomano,” 10 for “Hāmākua,” 5 for “Ke Akua,” and two 5s for “Poli‘ahu.” This suggests a careful effort, on Pukui’s part, to line her mele up with its 5- and 10-line antecedents. My guess is that care of this sort also encompassed a lining-up of meaning. “Kalani Manomano” honors an ancestral guardian, a turtle god, who enters the wao kanaka to father a chiefly lineage. “Hāmākua” can be read as a prayer chant “to the sacred protectors of this lineage”<sup>9</sup> – a chant that asks for “blessings to the homeland” and a “warding off of evil.”<sup>10</sup> “Ke Akua,” as ka‘i for both mele, serves to announce the arrival of these guardians into our hushed and awe-stricken presence.

I think that “Poli‘ahu,” when viewed in this company, should also be regarded with deep reverence – as a modern-day address to the ancestral guardian who presides from above over “a land that provides abundantly for its inhabitants.”<sup>11</sup> Pukui’s language reflects a familiarity with S. N. Haleole’s *Laielikawai*: she includes references to Poli‘ahu as “wahine noho anu,” to the hidden land of Paliuli where Lā‘ie, Waka, and the Maile sisters made their home, and to the surfing exploits, at Puna, of Lā‘ie and her many suitors. Pukui’s perspective, however, is considerably softer than Hale‘ole’s. Her wao kanaka is not the land of intrigue and manipulation

into which the snow goddess is drawn and from which she withdraws while administering waves of hot-and-cold punishment. Pukui's land is whole and healthy: Poli'ahu is above, Puna is below, and Paliuli rests at the awe-inspiring intersection point of akua and kanaka. This is not Hale'ole's dismal view of human and godly nature wherein everything that can go wrong is inevitably, out of self-interest, going to go wrong. Nor is it Frank Hewett's woe-begotten "waimaka o Poli'ahu i ka 'eha a ke aloha." It is, in fact, a world in balance, one that thrives in reverence and love, in mountain top and surf, in wao akua and rain-scattered lehua. It is good.

The question that nags at the edge of my analysis is this: why would a member of the Pele family compose this reverential tribute to Poli'ahu, a traditional enemy of her own people? I can think of two answers. 1- Pukui was able to transcend the Hale'ole mindset of endless rivalry, and 2- Pukui was profoundly aware of the context in which she presented her mele hula. We need only consider her devotion to the museum of the great-granddaughter of Kamehameha, another traditional enemy of the Ka'ū Makaha, to understand the first of these answers. Pukui put away Pai'ea's treachery at Koholālele in order to serve the pono-seeking, kamalei-nurturing vision of Pauahi. This devotion is clearly evident in "He Inoa no Pauahi," a name chant she composed in 1974 that was taught that same year by Aunty Maka at a Kamehameha hula conference at which Māpuana was, again, fortuitously present. Written at a time when no hula 'ōlapa for Pauahi had survived in the performing repertoires of contemporary hālau, Pukui's "He Inoa" gives us word, motion, and mana'o. It reminds us of the greater-good: of great-grandfather, mother, father, and cherished daughter; of the gift of education; and of the unforgettable love that is carried, in the lāhui that is our transcendent family, from generation to generation.

He mele, he inoa, nou e Pauahi, Ka mamō laha 'ole a Kamehameha.	A song of praise for you, Pauahi, The choice descendant of Kamehameha.
He pua milimili na ke ali'i Pākī, A he lei hulu nani na Konia.	An offspring cherished by the chief Pākī, A beautiful lei for Konia.
He ali'i 'imi i ka na'auao No nā kama lei o ka 'āina.	A chiefess who sought education For the beloved children of the land.
'A 'ole mākou e pōina wale Ua nui nā pono i 'imi 'ia.	We shall never more forget All of the good you have sought.
Ha'ina ka puana i lohe 'ia, E ola kou inoa e Pauahilani.	This is the conclusion of my song, Long may your name live on, O Pauahi.

Just as Pukui rises above Ka'ū vs. Kohala in "He Inoa no Pauahi," so does she rise above Pele vs. Poli'ahu in "Poli'ahu." This doesn't strike me as much of interpretive stretch. But what really piques my interest is the possibility – the much longer stretch – that Pauahi is present in both mele, that she is as subtly essential to "Poli'ahu" as she is obviously essential to "He Inoa No Pauahi." "Poli'ahu," we remember, made its debut in celebration of Pauahi's birthday in the

piko of Pauahi’s museum. It was Pukui’s “first dance of the evening.” How could it occur in a vacuum; how could “Poli‘ahu” not be meant, in some quiet way, to honor Pauahi as well as the snow goddess?

There is precedent for the Pauahi-Poli‘ahu connection in Lili‘uokalani’s longer and older version of the well-known Kamehameha Schools’ Founder’s Day mele “Pauahi o Kalani.”<sup>12</sup> This version, in Lili‘u’s HI.M.5:38 manuscript, contains the following “forgotten” verses:

I walea ka noho na	Relaxing is the lifestyle
I na manu kui pua	Birds stringing flowers
Hoolauna lililehua	Lililehua makes friendly introductions
Awili pua awapuhi	Weaving ginger blossoms
Lilinoe Poliahu	Lilinoe, Poli‘ahu
Waiiau Kahoupokane	Waiiau, Kahoupokāne
Na kupua kamaaina	The resident kupua
O nei kuahiwi	Of this mountain

In the first of these verses, Pauahi enjoys the relaxed, affectionate, almost Paliuli-like lifestyle of her companions (“nā manu kui pua”) as she is made welcome by her līlilehua hosts – probably the John Parker family whose Mānāhale on the Waimea slope of Mauna Kea, was a favorite stopping-place for visiting ali‘i. In the second of these verses, Pauahi is affiliated with the sister-deities of Mauna Kea: with Poli‘ahu of the snows, Lilinoe of the mists, Waiiau of the lake, and Kahoupokāne of the springs, thunder and lightning. The four are described here as “nā kupua kama‘āina o nei kuahiwi” (the resident demi-goddesses of this mountain), and their benevolent presence in the heights above Mānā lends mana to Pauahi’s own circle of sisterly companions, among them, of course, her own hānai younger sister, Lili‘u. Just as Poli‘ahu presides over her circle of four, so – I infer – does Pauahi preside over her own. Lili‘u’s mele begins with what sounds very much like a Poli‘ahu epithet: “noho ana ka wahine i ke anu o Mānā” (compare it, for example, to Pukui’s “wahine noho anu i uka o Līhu‘e”). Lili‘u’s now-redacted verses reenforce this immediate, first-line connection and render it less attributable to coincidence. I can only speculate that Pukui, in her decades of work in the Bishop Museum Archives, was familiar with Lili‘u’s archived text and might have seen it as a precedent for her own conflation of goddess and princess.

This conflation, I think, is also hinted-at in Pukui’s use of the two place names Līhu‘e and Paliuli. The Līhu‘e of her third line (cited above) is a now difficult-to-identify land division on the Waimea slopes of Mauna Kea.<sup>13</sup> That Poli‘ahu would reside here is not geographically inappropriate, but I admit to confusion over Pukui’s choice of a location that, in my research, bears no other connection to the Poli‘ahu of mele and mo‘olelo. The Līhu‘e on the inland slope of O‘ahu’s Mt. Ka‘ala, on the other hand, is very much associated in mele and mo‘olelo with the benevolent goddess Kaiona who regularly came down from the heights (or sent her birds) to help those who were lost in the forests below. Adam Manalo-Camp describes fragments of legend

and oral tradition that characterize Poli‘ahu as the benevolent, life-giving, maka‘āinana-loving goddess of Hāmākua in much the same way as Kaiona is seen as the benevolent guardian goddess of Mt. Ka‘ala: both descend from above to care for their people below.<sup>14</sup> As Pukui herself explains in the gloss to *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau* 1643:

Ka wahine hele lā o Kaiona...

Kaiona was a goddess of Ka‘ala and the Wai‘anae Mountains. She was a kind person who helped anyone who lost his way in the mountains by sending a bird, an ‘iwa, to guide the lost one out of the forest. In modern times, Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop was compared to Kaiona in songs.<sup>15</sup>

The Līhu‘e of Mauna Kea thus triggers, for me, the Līhu‘e of Ka‘ala which, in turn, triggers connections of height and benevolence between Poli‘ahu, Kaiona, and Pauahi.

Paliuli, the final place-name hint of Pukui’s first verse, is familiar to us as a hiddeh land of extraordinary beauty where carefully selected children were raised with great care and expectation.<sup>16</sup> The Paliuli of Hale‘ole’s *Laieikawai* falls short of this ideal: Lā‘ie and her Maile attendants are ejected from Paliuli by her guardian-grandmother Waka after Halaaniani works his trickery in the Puna surf. The mo‘olelo evidence for Poli‘ahu’s positive influence on the well-being of Paliuli’s children is also sketchy at best. In Hale‘ole, Poli‘ahu is unhappily involved with ‘Aiwohikupua who is, in turn, unhappily involved at Paliuli with Lā‘ieikawai. In Moses Manu’s *Keaomelemele*, Poli‘ahu disrupts the marriage of Paliuli (the woman) by taking Hānaiakeakua as her lover, and when he returns to Paliuli (the woman and the place), Poli‘ahu follows and steals him away. But these don’t seem to be details on which Pukui is fixed. Her Paliuli is the connecting point between the akua and kānaka; it is that land between Mauna Kea and Puna where the most promising of us are nurtured under the ho‘ānoano influence of an apparently irreplaceable Poli‘ahu.

So there is dissonance here. Like the Līhu‘e of Mauna Kea, the Paliuli of Hale‘ole and Manu does not make for the most exact or happy of connections: I can’t examine either place-name too closely without wondering why Pukui chose them. My answer to this conundrum, my interpretive stretch, is that Pukui’s Paliuli – like her Līhu‘e – carries a subtle and more positive O‘ahu-Pauahi connotation. I think that Pukui is hinting in “Poli‘ahu” at a metaphorical Paliuli on O‘ahu – namely, Pauahi’s Kamehameha School. Pauahi is above, the town is below, and between them, on the Kapālama hillside, is the school where (at least in theory) carefully selected children are raised with great care and expectation. KS is the intersection point, the place infused with the ho‘ānoano benevolence of Pauahi, the conduit through which life below is made whole and healthy by the intervention of the guardian of the heights. I can’t forget that Kapālama (the lama enclosure) was already known as a place, like Paliuli, where select, high-born children were sequestered to ho‘oulu lāhui.<sup>17</sup> Nor can I forget that the Kamehameha Schools Preparatory Department was opened on the current Kapālama Heights campus in September 1955, just three months prior to “Poli‘ahu’s” debut.<sup>18</sup>

The double vision of the first verse seems to give way, in the second, to the less complicated poetry of “Puna, my beloved homeland of rain-scattered lehua, surfing companions, and life-giving abundance.” For those of us familiar with Pukui’s “Ke Ao Nani,” this is the “I kai, lā, i kai” that balances and makes complete the “i luna lā i luna.” And for those of us who have learned Pukui’s “Mūkīkī Wai,” the verse is almost trance-inducing because of its echoes of the lullaby in which the birds of Kālī‘u are put to sleep by the famously potent ‘awa of that lehua-forested land. Forgive me then, for scratching at another tickle of cognitive dissonance. Namely, the Puna of this verse seems to be at odds with Hale‘ole’s Puna-by-the-sea. His Puna is a place of disappointment where unprincipled men trick beautiful young women into breaking their word and kapu. So, is this a case where the Pukui in my head doesn’t want me to make too deep a comparison? Or is it a case where she hints that I should look for an even deeper correspondence?

Well, there’s this thing with Kālī‘u.

In Joseph M. Poepoe’s 1906 *Ka Nai Aupuni* account of the mo‘olelo of Haumea and Wākea, Kālī‘u<sup>19</sup> is a farmer of lands adjacent to Kapālama who helps Haumea prepare ‘awa that accompanies the prayer that allows Haumea to rescue her husband from the ulu tree and imu of the ali‘i Kane Kumuhonua. At the outset of the story, Haumea is the guardian goddess of Kilohana, the highest peak of the Ko‘olau Range at the head of the Kalihi and Kapālama valleys. She descends from these heights, bedecked in lei lehua,<sup>20</sup> to save her husband who has been sentenced to death for enjoying the banana-bounty of the uplands. War ensues, and Kālī‘u who has become the battle-leader of Haumea and Wākea’s army, is instrumental in defending Kapālama and Kalihi – for a time – against Kumuhonua’s attack on Kilohana. The central battle in this conflict occurs after Haumea mā have retreated from that mountain peak to the Kualoa shores of Ko‘olau where the goddess and her priest Kamoawa have predicted a [kū]puna-inspired surfing-victory:

“...e lawe ana ke kai ia laua [Haumea and Wākea] ame ko laua mau ohua; a mai ke kai mai laua e hoi hou mai ai a pae i ka aina nei, he kaua hee wale ko kou aoao e ke alii.”

*The sea will carry off Haumea, Wākea, and their people, and they will return again by sea to this land; it will be a war of surfing/fleeing for your side, O Chief.*

– Kamoawa to Kumuhonua in prophecy of the coming battle; May 25, 1906.

“E nee ana au me ke kahuna [Kamoawa] a ku i ka moena kai-uli, kai popolo hua a Kane; a mai laila mai kaua e hoi mai a noho ke kai i ka hale o ka puna.”

*I will go with the kahuna and alight on the dark sea mat, the purplish-blue sea of Kāne, and from there you and I will return, and the sea will reside in the house of the [ku]puna.*

– Haumea explains to Wākea what will happen to end the upcoming battle; May 30, 1906, emphasis mine.

“...o ka wa ia e Kalewa aku ai oia a me kana kane a me ko laua poe ohua no moana kai, e like me ka makemake a kona mau kūpuna i ka po; o kona wa ia i noi ae ai e pii mai ke Kai mai kai mai a halehale poipu ae i na aekai o na Koolau.”

*This is when Haumea, her husband, and their people were adrift on the ocean as was the wish of her kūpuna of the distant past; this is when she asked for the sea to rise from the deep and break as high as houses on the shores of the Ko‘olau districts.*

– Poepoe describes Haumea’s activity, June 13, 1906; emphasis mine.

When the kūpuna-sent waves arrive from the house of the [kū]puna, they crash on shore and scatter the remains of Kumuhonua’s army (which have already been devastated by the kukui-hurled attack of Haumea in her multitude of bodies at Kaahuula Punawai). This same ocean is described by Poepoe as that on which Haumea surfs victoriously: she rides the “kumu kukui ali‘i a Papa” (royal kukui tree of Papa-Haumea) which, he suggests, might be the name of the “papa au-kai a heenalua paha no ua Haumea nei” (perhaps the ocean-traveling and wave-surfing board of the Haumea of whom we speak). This same ocean, after a “pig” offering by Wākea and another mele pule by Haumea, is what then rises in a different, gentle swell that carries the party safely to shore at various Ko‘olau locations, one of which is later named He‘eia in honor of that successful battle of fleeing and surfing.

E ku ka nalu mai Moanaliha-nui-akea mai,  
Ku ka nalu, popoi kai-ula, i popoi kai-kaikoo,  
Ku ke kakala o ke kai-poi hoi au-e!  
A pee au i ka nalu; ha‘i kua-lua,  
Owa, owa ka papa o Haumea i ka moku,  
A ku i ka moku i Ka-lihi-lihi-o-Laumiha,  
Owe, o nakeke ka papa o Haumea,  
A pae—hoi.

Ia pau ana no o keia pule a Haumea o ka ohu aela no ia o na opuu kai nui. Ia wa i hoolanaia ae ai o Wakea, o Haumea, o Kamoawa ame na ohua apau a lana maikai ana iluna o ka niao o ka nalu. A ia nee ana o ia nalu akua nei; o ka laweia mai la no ia o lakou nei mai ka moana lilo loa mai a hoea lakou nei i na kua-au o na Koolau...

*At the conclusion of this prayer by Haumea, the ocean swells became spray-covered and Wākea mā were all suspended nicely at the top of the rim of the wave. And the action of this god-sent wave was the immediate carrying of them inland from far out in the ocean until they arrived on the Ko‘olau shoreline.*

– June 15, 1906

Poepoe’s account concludes with a final battle in Kalihi between the still unsinkable Kumuhonua and the Kali‘u-led army of Haumea and Wākea. They meet again in Kalihi, and it is on the heights above that the farmer-warrior kills Kumuhonua with a spear-thrust to his side. The place, Poepoe tells us, was then named “Pahu-Kīkala” – pierced hip. And as a consequence of this battle, Wākea becomes the ruling chief of O‘ahu, and he, Haumea, and their retainers choose to

live again in the Waolani uplands ma uka of Kali‘u’s old farmlands where Kali‘u now serves as their premier. This life of peaceful abundance to which they finally return is described earlier in the mo‘olelo as presided over by Wākea ke ali‘i, Kali‘u the teacher, and Haumea the priestess of progeny:

Eia na kanaka ke mahiai nei i ka ai, a ke hooulu nei i na mea apau e pono ai ko lakou noho ana. Ua makaukau pono ae la ke ku aupuni ana o Wakea ia wa. Oiai e ulu ae ana ka lahui o Wakea oia hoi na keiki a na ohana kanaka o Kali‘u, ua lilo iho la o Haumea i kahuna hooulu lahui. A o kana hana o ka hoohanau keiki, a o ke pale keiki nohoi.”  
*Here were the people farming taro and engaged in the growing of everything that contributed to harmonious living. Wākea, at this time was thoroughly proficient at establishing his rule. And while his people were increasing in number, namely the children and families of Kali‘u, Haumea became the expert at ho‘oulu lāhui. Her work was that of causing babies to be born and of delivering them safely.*  
– May 31, 1906<sup>21</sup>

Although this is a barely adequate summary of Poepoe’s 35-installment mo‘olelo,<sup>22</sup> it does suggest the possibility that something more is going on in the second verse of “Poli‘ahu” than the straightforward description of an idyllic life at Puna, Hawai‘i. The word *lehua* of line one is figurative of a warrior, a loved-one, an expert. This suggests the farmer-warrior Kali‘u who rises to a highly-regarded station in the circle of people Haumea loves and relies on. The *hoa he‘e nalu* of line two can be seen as these same companions riding with Haumea on the kūpuna-sent wave that carries them safely to shore. *Kū la‘i* in line three means “stand in the calm” and “exist in a state of peace,” but *kula‘i* means “to shove, push over, knock down.” *‘Āina kula‘i i ka ua lū lehua* can then be given an alternate reading that suggests the defeat of Kumuhonua’s “lehua” who are scattered on the shores of Haumea’s ‘āina: “Land that knocks down the scattered warrior rain.” Martha Beckwith observes that Haumea is always associated with “food supply for the life of man, and marriage and birth for the increase of the family.”<sup>23</sup> The closing lines of verse two are consistent with this Haumea; the twice repeated *‘āina* speaks to us of “that which feeds” and “she who feeds.” We live in abundance, in food and babies, through the example of Kali‘u, through our allegiance to the guardians above.

I am thus in awe of what I think are the undercurrents of “Poli‘ahu.” Verse one tugs at me with hints of a Kaiona-Pauahi who keeps watch over her children. Verse two does the same with a Papa-Haumea who is inspired by her puna to rescue, feed, and make fertile the lāhui o lalo. The mele begins with Poli‘ahu residing above, and it ends with Puna thriving below. It is ultimately that simple, but I am entranced by the layers, the resonance, that I think Mary Kawena Pukui gives to this picture of how the world might exist in harmony.

In my mind’s eye, I imagine Pukui sitting in her Pauahi museum cubicle, pencil in hand, thinking of a hula pahu on the order of “Kalani Manomano” but appropriate for a 1955 Founder’s Day audience. I imagine her dressing her new mele in the snowy mantle of Poli‘ahu and the lehua-scattering rains of Puna-in-the-calm. But I also imagine her summoning quietly, carefully, the



female guardians of past and present: not just Poli‘ahu, but Kaiona, Pauahi, and Haumea. Like Tūtū Kawena, I do so love the homeland of my kūpuna and its mana wahine.

## **Poli‘ahu**

‘O Poliahu i ke kualono o Mauna Kea  
Noho ana i ka wao o ke kuahiwi  
Wahine noho anu o uka o Līhu‘e  
E kū ana i luna o ke ki‘eki‘e  
Ho‘ānoano wale ana i Paliuli ē.

Aloha mai i a‘u ka lehua i Kali‘u  
‘O nā hoa o‘u o ke kai he‘e nalu  
Ia ‘āina kū la‘i i ka ua lū lehua  
‘Āina ho‘ōla i nā kupa nei ē  
Aloha ku‘u ‘āina o Puna lā.

Poli‘ahu dwells on the mountain top of Mauna Kea  
She resides in the upland forest  
A woman who remains in the cold of Līhu‘e  
Standing up on regions high  
Awe for her presence is felt in Paliuli

Beloved to me are the lehua of Kali‘u  
My companions in surfing in the sea  
That is the calm land where the rain sheds the Lehua  
A land that provides abundantly for its inhabitants  
Beloved is my homeland Puna.

Mary Kawena Pukui Collection

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> State Council on Hawaiian Heritage. Vicky Holt Topolinski and Kaha‘i Topolinski were also in attendance, as were Māpuana’s students Kahulu Ka‘iama and Kalei de Silva Kamaka‘ala.

<sup>2</sup> Aunt Maka told me years ago that her family does not use an ‘okina in the name *Pukui*. I have since been reluctant to tinker with the orthography of anything shared with us by mother and daughter.

<sup>3</sup> Kaeppler notes that Lokalia later taught it to Maiki and ‘Iolani, and that ‘Iolani taught it, in turn, to Hoakalei, “who in turn taught it to numerous students. [Thus] in its evolved form, it has passed into the public domain.” Adrienne Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances, V.1, Ha‘a and Hula Pahu, Sacred Movements*, Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 199e, 169. This evolved form, as we have witnessed in the last twenty years, has become increasingly frantic and martial; it is a far cry from the slow, exquisitely restrained hula-pahu-with-kilu that Aunty Maka shared with us.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Tatar, *Hula Pahu; Hawaiian Drum Dances, V. 2, The Pahu – Sounds of Power*,” Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993, 250.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 258, figure 3.52a from the Bishop Museum Visual Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Kalena Silva discusses the mele as it was taught to him by Ka‘upena Wong, in the unpublished M.A. thesis “The Chanting of Traditional Hawaiian Mele Hula by James Ka‘upena Wong,” Glenn Paul Silva, UH Mānoa, 1982: 93. I know I have a copy somewhere but suddenly can’t find it. With the deadline for this fact sheet fast approaching, I can only reference the work as cited by Tatar on pps. 251 and 337 of *Hula Pahu*, V.2.

<sup>7</sup> This is always our understanding of mele hula taught to Māpuana by Aunty Maka, and she has firmly critiqued us, many times, when we’ve inadvertently strayed from the tempo and fluidity of motion of the hula she has shared.

<sup>8</sup> Tatar, 250; from Pukui Program Notes.

<sup>9</sup> Kaeppler, 169.

<sup>10</sup> Tatar, 249-50.

<sup>11</sup> Line 9 of “Poli‘ahu”: “‘Āina ho‘ōla i nā kupa nei ē.”

<sup>12</sup> “Pauahi o Kalani,” Bishop Museum Archives, HI.M.5:38. The text is notated: “Liliu, Mana, 1868.” I have written at some length about the significance of this older and longer version of the Founder’s Day mele. That essay, “Noho ana ka Wahine” can be found at [https://apps.ksbe.edu/kaiwakiloumoku/kaleinamanu/essays/noho\\_ana\\_ka\\_wahine](https://apps.ksbe.edu/kaiwakiloumoku/kaleinamanu/essays/noho_ana_ka_wahine).

<sup>13</sup> Līhu‘e: “Ahupua‘a in the District of Kohala... Waikoloa, Ili of Waimea.” *Boundary Commission, Hawaii*. Volume A, no. 1, pps 6-12. Also: “...Lihu‘e [on the Waimea plain].” *Kepa Maly, Mauna Kea – Kuahiwi Kū Ha‘o i ka Mālie*, Kumu Pono Associates, 1997, excerpted online at [http://www.mauna-a-wakea.info/maunakea/13\\_chantsabout.html](http://www.mauna-a-wakea.info/maunakea/13_chantsabout.html). Kepa and Māpuana are both ‘Ilima class graduates of Aunty Maiki. Kepa remembers that his friendship with Pukui began with an introduction by Maiki; their friendship led to Kawena’s sharing “Poli‘ahu” with him in 1980. Kepa provides his version and translation in the above-cited work. There are some differences with that taught at Kalōpā by Aunty Maka, including the substitution of the word *lau* for *wao* in line 2 (Kepa’s translation: “Dwelling on the expanse of the mountain”). His translation of line 4 (“Woman who dwells in the cold above Līhu‘e”) is followed immediately by the bracketed note cited above “[on the Waimea plain].”

<sup>14</sup> Adam Keawe Manalo-Camp, “Poli‘ahu: The Hawaiian goddess of snow and compassion,” Youtube, May 20, 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMVr1kqrV6k>.

After a bitter love affair with a Kaua‘i demi-god, ‘Aiwohi, Poli‘ahu focused her love on farmers and fishermen of Hāmakua who referred to her as the “goddess of compassion” and personally sculpted the valleys of Hāmakua... In return for their affection, Poli‘ahu ensured that there was always water for farmers by covering Mauna Kea with snow and rescuing fishermen lost at sea. She was one of the few goddesses in Hawaiian mythology that favored the prayers of farmers, fishermen, the lowly, and priests over the prayers of rulers.

Manalo-Camp provides a list of sources for the information offered above; I cannot vouch for the accuracy of his comments because I have yet to work my way through a book list that is made difficult by the absence of specific page numbers.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau*, #1645, p. 177.

<sup>16</sup> In Pukui’s own words: “A legendary land of plenty and joy, said to be on Hawai‘i, where chiefs’ children were raised” (*Dictionary*, 305). Beckwith notes that, although it is sometimes anchored in Puna, it is described at other times as floating in the clouds (*Hawaiian Mythology*, 72-3). Lā‘ieikawai, Kepaka‘ili‘ula (*Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore*, Volume 4, 498-517), and Paliuli (Moses Manu, *He Moolelo Kaa no Keaomelemele*, Pukui-Nogelmeier translation available online at [http://hwst270.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/9/3/13939637/keaomelemele\\_pt1.pdf](http://hwst270.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/9/3/13939637/keaomelemele_pt1.pdf)) are the three Paliuli-raised, high-born children with whom I am familiar. In Manu, the ‘ōhi‘a-forested land is not named, and the child of the gods who is raised there by Waka is herself called Paliuli.

<sup>17</sup> David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 135-139. Cited by Sterling and Summers, *Sites of O‘ahu*, 319.

Kapalama means, the enclosure (of) lama. An enclosure made of the sacred wood from the lama tree, surrounded an establishment in which the young alii, chief and chiefess, were kept just before pairing off for offspring. Because the first born child of a high chief and chiefess were considered one of the highest ranking alii of old Hawaii, and in order to secure such an offspring, the selected chief and chiefess were placed under keepers in separate establishments. After religious ceremonies had been performed and the mating accomplished, the chief and chiefess were allowed to leave. Kapalama is said to have obtained its name from just such an establishment which was once located there.

<sup>18</sup> The Kamehameha Schools Preparatory Department, Charles Reed Bishop campus on Kapālama Heights was dedicated on September 25, 1955. “Kamehameha Schools Archives: Significant Dates,” <http://kapalama.ksbe.edu/archives/historical/lists/dates.php>.

<sup>19</sup> *Kali‘u* means “well-salted.” Poepoe explains that it is both the name of the farmer and of the land he farms. When the farmer introduces himself to Haumea, he says “O Kali‘u ko‘u inoa. A ua loa mai ia‘u ia inoa mamuli o ka nele o keia wahi i ka wai mai kahiko mai.” (“My name is Kali‘u. I got this name because of the absence of water here since ancient times.”) *Ka Nai Aupuni*, May 9, 1906; my translation. When the name comes up again, Poepoe explains:

O ka inoa keia o kela apana aina ma ka aoao makai o ke alanui Kuakini, maluna aku o ke kahawai o Puehuehu; a ua oleloia, ua loa ia inoa ia wahi mamuli o ka inoa o kela kanaka i hoikeya ae la ma ka iwi kuamoo o ka moolelo, oia hoi o Kali‘u. Nolaila, ua loa mai kela inoa, Kaliu mai ka wa mai o Wakea, a he inoa kahiko loa hoi keia. (This is the name of that section of land on the ocean side of Kuakini St., just above Puehuehu stream; and it is said that the name of this place was gotten because of the name of that man who appears in the course of this story, namely Kali‘u. Therefore the name Kali‘u is a very old one from the time of Wākea.) May 22, 1906; my translation).

<sup>20</sup> “O na pua lehua nohoi o ka uka, ua lilo iho la no ia i mau kahiko nani nona. Ua hele ua Haumea nei a ohu i ka maile, ka lehua, ka palapalai ame na lau e ae he nui o kana hapuku ana mai.” (The lehua blossoms of the uplands had become her beautiful adornments. Haumea was wreathed in maile, lehua, palapalai and the many other items of greenery that she had quickly gathered.) *Ka Nai Aupuni*, May 8, 1906; my translation.

<sup>21</sup> All five selections are from Poepoe’s “Ka Moolelo Hawaii Kahiko,” *Ka Nai Aupuni*, 1906. All translations are my own.

<sup>22</sup> Noenoe K. Silva does a far better job of discussing Poepoe’s mo‘olelo in *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen*, 197-205. I find comfort in her assertion that Poepoe’s purpose in tackling the kaona of such mo‘olelo and the profound mele contained therein is to encourage us to do the same, to model for us what it is to be Kanaka: “This kind of mele and mo‘olelo full of kaona and our obligation to interpret them are aspects of our kupuna’s culture that characterize us as a people, an intellectual people” (204).

<sup>23</sup> Martha Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology*, 279.