

Hālau Mōhala ʻIlima  
Merrie Monarch Festival 2023  
Hula ʻAuana, Wāhine Division  
**Kaʻi and Hoʻi**

## **Ka Uʻi o nā Pali Koʻolau**

*Haku Mele:* T. Sylvester Kalama (1859?-1906).  
*Discography:* Bill Kaʻiwa, “Pali Koolau,” *More From Bill Kaiwa: The Boy from Laupahoehoe*,  
Lehua/Sounds of Hawaii, SHS 5018, 1964.  
*Our Text:* T. Sylvester Kalama, “Ka Uʻi O Na Pali Koolau,” *Ka Elele Poakolu*, July 27, 1881.  
Hawaiian orthography and English translation: Kīhei de Silva.

This mele was composed in 1881 or earlier, by Sylvester Kalama, Aunty Vickie Iʻi Rodrigues’s maternal grandfather. Much like his “Pua Mikinolia,” this is a let’s-linger-for-a-while song. In “Pua Mikinolia,” the kāhuli are singing and the rain is falling. The poet suggests to his magnolia blossom partner that they should “hoʻi i ka māwae,” return to lovemaking, and sway to “ka ʻowē a ka wai” as it patters on the metal roof above.<sup>1</sup> In “Ka Uʻi o nā Pali Koʻolau,” the uplands are suffused with fragrance, the wind is rustling the kāwelu of Lanihuli, and the palai are adorned with rain. The poet suggests to his Koʻolau beauty that they take advantage of this peaceful setting and “hoʻi i ka pili” while all is “malu” and they are both of the same lovemaking mind.

Although Sylvester Kalama’s nūpepa publication of his mele includes the annotation: “Tune—We Parted by the River-side,” the only melody we have today – Bill Kaʻiwa’s “Pali Koʻolau” – bears only a passing resemblance to Will S. Hays’s “old time” folk song of 1866. The discography of the Hays’s “original” begins in 1928 with Ernest Stoneman and His Dixie Mountain Boys. Stoneman’s driving, “high lonesome” rendering of the melody made for a blue-grass classic that has been recorded many times since, most notably by the Carter Family (1932), the Prairie Ramblers (1935), the Blue Sky Boys (1940), and the Whitstein Brothers (1989).<sup>2</sup> The melody that Sylvester Kalama must have heard in the 1880s was decades before the high energy, fast-tempo surges of Appalachian fiddles, banjos, and mandolins reshaped the song.

Not being a sheet-music reader, the closest I’ve been able to get to the Hays’s original is a quirky Youtube rendition by an otherwise unidentified “Old Man in the Woods” who explains: “It has been adapted by country singers over the years, but The Old Man in the Woods sings it from the original sheet music.”<sup>3</sup> To my unsophisticated ears, the Old Man’s (OM) parlor version is as

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<sup>1</sup> Rodrigues family, *Na Mele Ohana*, Hula Records H501. Other well-known songs by Kalama include “Wehiwehi ʻOe” and “Maui Girl.” He is also sometimes credited with “Kaleleonālani.”

<sup>2</sup> These recordings are readily accessible on Youtube and Spotify.

<sup>3</sup> “We Parted by the Riverside,” Youtube, Ptapit733, posted April 15, 2010.

removed from Uncle Bill's tune as are the bluegrass versions. OM is slow, cowboy-plaintive, and tending towards the bombastic; Ka'iwa is sweet, light-footed, and backed by what sounds like the lilting steel guitar of Billy Hew Len.

When Uncle Bill, in the early 2000s, shared with my family some of the mele in his handwritten songbook, he explained that they were given to him – words only – by his hānai father (Keaka Waterhouse) and the cowboys of their Kīpū-Kai Ranch. He was required to learn, by ear, the melodies for each of these songs which, in many cases, had never been recorded or musically notated. He taught my daughter Kapalai one of these songs, E. Pilipo's "Ke 'Ala e Moani Mai," and explained that it would be voice-less were it not for his having been made to learn it in his youth.<sup>4</sup> Although he had included one or two such songs on his early albums, Ka'iwa was hoping to work with Ken Makuakane on recording this trove of mele for posterity, but I think that he passed away before the project could be completed. I suspect that "Ka U'i o nā Pali Ko'olau" was one of the few already-recorded songs in this collection and that his memory of it is all we have of Kalama's original.<sup>5</sup>

Without the benefit of additional input, I can't say much more about the musical relationship between the two songs. That they bear a passing resemblance is all I can come up with. Whether speeded up or slowed down, I find it hard to fit Kalama's lyrics and Ka'iwa's voice into Hays's melody. Even then, I hear a whine in Hays and a chuckle in Ka'iwa. The one is driven, the other delicate; the one bears down, the other lightens up.

So, too, with the lyrics. In "Riverside," nature is at odds with the poet whose opening verse describes a beautiful scene – moon light, stars, murmuring river, dew-drops on a blushing rose – that is shattered by a single word from his now-estranged lover, "that sad word was goodbye." The emotional trajectory of the rest of the song, a chorus and a pair of four-line verses, is all down hill. Forlorn and unrequited, the poet, having "wandered to distant climes," continues to express his undying love for a woman who has long since rejected him, and he pleads for her return although he concedes that "we may never meet again."

If Sylvester Kalama was influenced by these lyrics, it must have been a kū'ē thing, an antidote to the weepy, forever faithful protestations of "Riverside's" knight errant. Hays's biographers note that many of his songs were popular in the minstrel and blackface shows of the mid 19th

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<sup>4</sup> Uncle Bill first shared this mele with us on April 4, 2002. He taught it to Kapalai de Silva and her group Līhau for our Natasha Lopez's Miss Aloha Hula 'auana performance in the April 2004 Merrie Monarch Festival.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Ka'iwa, Personal communication, January 2004.

century.<sup>6</sup> An obituary in the nūpepa *Ka Nai Aupuni* notes that Kalama was “he Hawaii ike himeni, he mea maamaalea loa ma na hana hoolealea ‘keaka nika,’ a he mea haku mele Hawaii kaulana no ho‘i.”<sup>7</sup> One wonders if this pure Hawaiian man in “keaka nika” was as le‘ale‘a in his work as the obit indicates. One wonders if he was familiar with “We Parted by the Riverside” because of this work. One wonders if his acknowledgement of the song in the preface to his own very different mele was meant to separate himself from that racist tradition. ‘O ia paha.

Our efforts as po‘e hula from Kailua, Ko‘olaupoko, are driven by the imperative of remember in the face of forget. Sylvester Kalama’s beautiful love song for our moku and its U‘i has been too long on the brink of forget and forgotten. We mean to call it back from that brink and use it as a ka‘i-ho‘i setting for a Kailua-specific mele that, though newly composed, is meant to serve the same purpose of calling back and holding close.

### **Ka U‘i o nā Pali Ko‘olau**

‘Auhea wale ana ‘oe	Please listen,
E ka U‘i o nā Pali Ko‘olau,	O Beauty of the Pali Ko‘olau,
Ho‘i mai kāua e pili,	Let’s be close again,
‘Oiai ua like ka mana‘o.	While we are of the same mind.

Chorus:

‘O ‘oe ka beauty o ia uka	You are the beauty of these heights.
Helu ‘ekahi o ke onaona	The sweetest of all,
Ua puā ia uka i ke ‘ala	The upland is filled with fragrance,
I ka lawe a ke ahe kēhau	Carried by the gentle kēhau breeze.

Nani wale ka luna i Lanihuli	So beautiful are the upper reaches of Lanihuli,
I ka holu a ke oho kāwelu	With the swaying of the kāwelu grass,
‘O ka nehe a ka makani Malanai	The rustling of the Malanai wind,
Kololio i ke kōwā o Nu‘uanu	Moving swiftly through the Nu‘uanu gap.

E ho‘i e ka U‘i o Ko‘olau	Won’t you return O Beauty of Ko‘olau
‘Oiai ua malu nā pali	While the cliffs are at peace
‘O ka nehe a ka ‘Āpuakea	The rustling of the ‘Āpuakea rain
Kāhiko i ke oho o ka palai.	Adorned in fronds of palai.

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<sup>6</sup> Wayne Erbsen, “William Shakespeare Who?,” Hudson Valley Bluegrass Association, December 9, 2018; <https://hvbluegrass.org/william-shakespeare-who-the-deep-roots-of-bluegrass-songs/>. “William Shakespeare Hays,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Shakespeare\\_Hays#cite\\_ref-Abel\\_47\\_1-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare_Hays#cite_ref-Abel_47_1-3).

<sup>7</sup> “Make o T.S. Sylvester Kalama,” *Ka Nai Aupuni*, November 17, 1906.