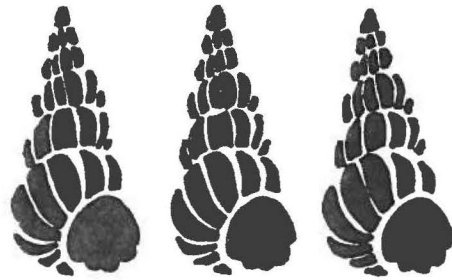


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# The Echo *of* Our Song



CHANTS & POEMS  
OF THE HAWAIIANS

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# Birth Chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli

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**T**HE CHANT WAS composed in honor of a newborn son of Ka-mehameha I, Kau-i-ke-ao-uli (1813–1854), who, as Ka-mehameha III, succeeded his brother, Liholiho, to the Hawaiian throne in 1824. He was born seven years before the arrival in 1820 of the first New England missionaries.

The chant reflects conventions of the sacred art of the hula, which has been described as “in essence a magical ritual designed to bring rain and fertility” (Handy, *Cultural Revolution*, p. 12). In pre-Christian Hawai‘i hula troupes, attached to the houses of ruling chiefs, performed their ritual prayers, songs, dances, and musical accompaniments primarily for two purposes and on two occasions. One was the annual *makahiki* festival, a first-fruits celebration beginning in October and lasting four months, in honor of the agricultural and fishing god Lono. The purpose of the other occasion, as in this chant for the infant Kau-i-ke-ao-uli, was to bring “an enriching and empowering magic” to the ceremonial and sexual union of *ali‘i*, high chiefs, especially to the birth of a royal child destined to become a great leader (Handy, *Cultural Revolution*, p. 12).

Kau-i-ke-ao-uli, second son of Ka-mehameha I and the royal chiefess Ke-ōpū-o-lani, was stillborn, a circumstance alluded to in the repeated references to his mother's difficult labor. The babe was "prayed into life" by a high priest, Ka-malo-'ihi (also called Ka-pihe), whose therapeutic and prophetic prayer made much of the idea that "the heavens will come down"—in other words, that the native temples would be destroyed, that their priests would abandon or be forced from their priesthood, while the ruling chiefs themselves would lose their posts as sacred heads of government. They would become more like ordinary men.

In the birth chant of Kau-i-ke-ao-uli, in the repeated query "Who shall be here below?" there is perhaps a pervasive premonition of this same notion of the declension of the heavens and the transformation of the old ruling chiefs into mere human beings.

The name of the royal child, Kau-i-ke-ao-uli, meaning 'placed in the dark sky', is expressive of many of the thoughts obscurely, and yet so radiantly, embedded in the language of the original Hawaiian. The native word *ao* carried profound associations for the early Islanders. The word can mean sky, light, day, daylight, and dawn. It can refer to the regaining of consciousness, and to achieving mental enlightenment. The idea of dawn is closely connected with the idea of night, and both fit in with the Hawaiian time sense, so that in this ancient language it is

quite possible to speak of “that night that dawned yesterday.” In some contexts *ao* can mean world or earth; and it can refer also to any kind of cloud.

So in this single nuclear element of *Kau-i-ke-ao-uli*’s sacred name are clustered and concentrated the seeds of some of the major symbols and sweeping cosmological conceptions found in the language of this old noble poem.



*Mele Hānau nō Kau-i-ke-ao-uli*

I

O hānau a hua Kalani,  
O ho‘onā kū i luna,  
O momoe o ma‘ule ka piko,  
O kolokolo ia pō ke ēwe,  
O mulea, o malahia ka nalu, ke a‘a.  
O ho‘onā kū o ka malama,  
O ka‘ahē a ka ‘iloli,  
O ho‘owiliwili e hānau Kalani.  
‘O ia ho‘i, ‘o Kalani, hānau Kalani.  
  
‘O Kalani ia ho‘i auane‘i kō luna nei la.  
‘O wai la ho‘i auane‘i kō lalo la?  
  
O hānau ka honua, a mole ka honua.  
O kolokolo ka a‘a, ka weli o ka honua.

Text: Mary Kawena Pukui

O lani weli ka honua, o lani 'i'i.  
O holo pu ka mole, o 'u'ina ke a'a,  
O hale ka pou lewa ka honua.  
O pali nu'u ka honua, ākea ka honua,  
O honua kū, o honua noho ka honua,  
O honua lewa, o honua pa'a, ka honua,  
Ka honua ilalo, ilalo nu'u ka honua.  
O honua a Kea, nā Kea ka honua.  
O honua a Papa, nā Papa ka honua,  
'O ka hiapo honua a Papa i hānau.  
'O ia ho'i, 'o ka honua, hānau ka honua.

'O ka honua la ho'i kō lalo nei.  
'O wai la ho'i auane'i kō luna la?

II

O hānau ka pō iluna,  
Hānau ka pō i luna nei.  
O lani hāne'e ka pō, o pīna'i ke ēwe.  
O pipili ka pō, o moe anana le'a,  
O kōhi ana, le'a ka pō o Mahina-le'a.  
O huli ka pō, o ka'awale ka pili.  
'O ke keiki pō lani keia a Kea i hānau,  
Keiki 'akāhi a ka pō, keiki 'alua a ka pō,  
Keiki 'akolu a ka pō.  
'O ke kuakoko a ka pō,  
E hānau mai auane'i ka pō,  
'O ia ho'i o ka pō, hānau ka pō,  
'O ka pō la ho'i auane'i kō luna nei la.

‘O wai la ho‘i auane‘i kō lalo?  
‘O wai la ho‘i o ka moku?

III

O hānau ka moku a kupu,  
A lau, a loa, a a‘a, a mu‘o, a liko.  
Ka moku ia luna o Hawai‘i.  
‘O Hawai‘i nei nō ka moku.  
He pūlewa ka ‘āina, he naka Hawai‘i,  
E lewa wale ana nō i ka lani lewa,  
Hanou mai e Wākea, pā hano ia.  
Mālie ‘ikea ka moku me ka honua,  
Pa‘a ‘ia lewa lani i ka lima ‘ākau o Wākea,  
Pa‘a Hawai‘i, la‘a Hawai‘i, ‘ikea he moku.

O ka moku la ho‘i kō lalo nei.  
‘O wai la ho‘i kō luna, ‘owai la?  
O ke ao, ‘oia ho‘i hā.

IV

O hānau ke ao, o hiki a‘e.  
O ‘ohi a‘e ke ao, o hiki a‘e.  
O mokupawa ke ao, o hiki a‘e.  
O aka ‘ula ke ao, o hiki a‘e.  
O moakaka ke ao māla‘e.  
‘Ōpukupuku ke ao melemele.  
O memele ka ‘ōpua he la‘i.  
O ‘ōpua nui, uli ka ‘ōpua hiwahiwa,  
O hiwahiwa ka ‘ōpua lani‘ele,

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*Birth Chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli*

‘Ele‘ele ka lani huhulu weo,  
 Lani ‘eka‘eka hā‘ele‘ele,  
 Hākona, hākuma, hākumakuma,  
 ‘O ke ao nui mai he‘e ua kaia.  
 E ho‘owiliwili ana e hānau,  
 ‘O ia ho‘i, ‘o ke ao, hānau ke ao.

‘O ke ao ho‘i hā kō luna nei.  
 ‘O wai la auane‘i kō lalo la?  
 ‘O ka mauna, ‘oia ho‘i.

v

O hānau ka **mauna a Kea**,  
 ‘Ōpu‘u a‘e ka **mauna a Kea**.  
 ‘O Wākea ke kāne, ‘o Papa, ‘o Walinu‘u ka wahine.  
 Hānau Ho‘ohoku he wahine,  
 Hānau Hāloa he ali‘i,  
 Hānau ka mauna, he keiki mauna nā Kea.  
 O ka lili o Wākea, o ka ha‘i i ka hala,  
 O ke kū kukū lā‘au ‘ana me Kāne,  
 I ho‘ōuka ai iloko o Kahiki-kū.  
 He‘e Wākea, kālewa kona ‘ōhua.  
 Kuamū ‘ia e Kāne, kuawā ‘ia e Kāne.  
 Ho‘i mai Wākea a loko o lani momoe.  
 Moe Wākea, moe iā Papa.  
 Hānau ka **lā nā Wākea**,  
 He keiki kapu nā Wākea,  
 ‘O ka uluna a Wākea nā Kea nō.  
 ‘Oia ho‘i hā, o ka mauna, hānau ka mauna.

‘O ka mauna auane‘i kō lalo nei.  
‘O wai auane‘i kō luna la?  
‘O ka lā, ‘oia ho‘i hā.

VI

O hānau ka lā a nā‘ū,  
O nā‘ū ka lā o Kupanole.  
‘O Kupanole ka lā kōhia,  
Kōhia ka lā iā Hina.  
‘O ke kukuna o ka lā pa‘a,  
‘O ka pe‘a o Hilinamā, o Hilinehu,  
‘O ka lālā o ke kamani,  
‘O ka hui o ke kamani ‘ula.  
‘O ka ‘ēheu o Halulu,  
Ke ha‘ina mai lā, ha‘i,  
Ke hakeia mai la e ka lā,  
E ke keiki hele lani ā Kea.  
‘O Wākea ka i lalo, o ka lā ka i luna,  
‘O ke keiki ia ā Kea i ho‘okauhua ai.  
‘O ia ho‘i o ka lā, hānau ka lā.

‘O ka lā auane‘i kō luna.  
‘O wai auane‘i kō lalo nei?  
‘O ka moana, ‘oia ho‘i hā.

VII

Hānau ka moana ā Kea,  
O nā nalu nā Kea, o ke kai nā Kea,  
O kai kāne, o kai wahine nā Kea,



O ko'a kū, o ko'a hālelo ulu nā Kea,  
 O ho'owiliwili a ka i'a iloko o ka moana.  
 Uliuli, 'ele'ele nei lae o ka moana.  
 O ka moana auane'i kō lalo nei.  
 'O wai auane'i kō luna e?  
 'O Kū, 'o Lono, 'o Kāne, 'o Kanaloa,  
 'O Ka'eka'e, 'o Maui,  
 O haku o ka pule, o nu'u pule,  
 O nu'u kahuna, o 'eli'eli holo i mua kapu,  
 O 'eli'eli holo imua noa, noa ka hānau 'ana o ke ali'i.

Hānau Kū, 'o Kū la auane'i ho'i kō luna.  
 'O wai la ho'i kō lalo nei, 'o wai la?

'O Hāloa, puka kānaka, laha nā ali'i.  
 Loa'a i luna nei 'o Ka-lani Mehameha,  
 'Ekāhi ka lani la, 'ekāhi o luna nei.  
 'O Ka-lani Kau-i-ka-'alaneo 'elua o luna nei.  
 Pili lāua, ua mau paha, 'oia paha?  
 'O Ka-lani-nui-kua-liholiho 'akāhi,  
 I ke kapu la, 'akāhi o luna nei.  
 'O Ka-lani 'o Kau-i-ke-ao-uli, 'alua o luna nei,  
 Pili lāua, ua mau paha.

'Oia e.



*Birth Chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli*

I

The chiefess gave birth,  
she bore in labor above,  
she lay as in a faint, a weakness at the navel.  
The afterbirth stirred at the roots, crept in darkness,  
in waves of pain came the bitter bile of the child.  
This was a month of travail,  
of gasping labor,  
a writhing to deliver the chief.  
He is this chief, born of a chiefess.

Now a chief shall be here above.  
Who shall be below?

Born was the earth, rooted the earth.  
The root crept forth, rootlets of the earth.  
Royal rootlets spread their way through the earth  
to hold firm.  
Down too went the taproot, creaking  
like the mainpost of a house, and the earth moved.  
Cliffs rose upon the earth, the earth lay widespread:  
a standing earth, a sitting earth was the earth,  
a swaying earth, a solid earth was the earth.  
The earth lay below, from below the earth rose.  
The earth was Kea's, to Kea belonged the earth.

The earth was Papa's, to Papa belonged the earth,  
the earthly firstborn borne by Papa.  
He is this earth, the earth that was born.

The earth shall be here below.  
Who shall be above?

II

Born was the night above,  
born was the night up here.  
The heavens slid away into the night, swift came the  
afterbirth.  
The nights came closer together, stretching along  
until came a separation, making distinct the night  
of Mahina-le'a.  
The night turned, closeness became separated.  
This is the royal offspring of night borne by Kea,  
first child of the night, second child of the night,  
third child of the night.  
The night lay in travail  
to give birth to the night.  
He is this night, the night newly born.

Who shall be below?  
Who shall be upon the island?

III

Born was the island, it grew, it sprouted,  
it flourished, lengthened, rooted deep, budded,  
formed tender leaves.

That was the island over Hawai‘i.  
Hawai‘i itself was an island.  
The land was unstable, Hawai‘i quivered,  
moved freely about in space,  
Wākea recognized the island, Hawai‘i recognized  
remained.

Visible were island and earth,  
held in heavenly space by the right hand of Wākea,  
Hawai‘i was held, Hawai‘i was seen, an island.

Down here shall be an island.  
Who shall be above—Who?  
The cloud, that is who it shall be.

## IV

The cloud was born, it rose and appeared.  
The cloud thrived, it rose and appeared.  
The cloud came at dawn, it rose and appeared.  
The cloud flushed with a reddish tinge, it rose and  
appeared.  
The cloud rose and appeared in clearest configuration,  
turned yellow and menacing.  
The horizon cloud hung yellow over a calm sea.  
A swelling cloud, a dark cloud,  
a cloud whose deepening darkness turned to black  
in a sky already black with feathery clouds of dusk,  
a sky heavy with blackness, rough, lowering,  
a sky speaking in threat:

a vast cloud foretelling the approach of rain.  
The sky writhed in labor to give birth.  
He is this cloud: thus it was born.

A cloud shall be up here.  
Who shall be below?  
The mountain, that is who it shall be.

v

Born of Kea was the mountain,  
the mountain of Kea budded forth.  
Wākea was the husband, Papa Walinu‘u was the wife.  
Born was Ho‘ohoku, a daughter,  
born was Hāloa, a chief,  
born was the mountain, a mountain-son of Kea.  
Jealous was Wākea, he revealed his fault,  
told of his smiting Kāne with a club  
in battle, fought in Kahiki-kū.  
Wākea was routed, fled in confusion with his family.  
None spoke to Wākea save in whispers, but Kāne  
shouted.  
Wākea returned to the sky seeking a wife.  
He mated, sleeping beside Papa as mate.  
The sun was born to Wākea,  
a sacred offshoot of Wākea,  
the growth of Wākea was Wākea’s own.  
He was this mountain’s growing, this chief: so was the  
mountain born.

The mountain shall be down here.  
Who shall be above?  
The sun, that is who shall be above.

VI

The sun was born to be mine,  
mine the sun of Kupanole.  
At Kupanole the sun held back,  
the sun held back for Hina's sake.  
Rays of the sun made secure  
the boundaries of Hilinamā, of Hilinehu,  
joined the branch of a *kamani* tree  
to the linked branches of the red *kamani*.  
The wings of Halulu were broken, broken.  
They were severed by the sun,  
by the sky-voyaging sun of Kea.  
Wākea was below, above was the sun,  
the sun-child born to Kea.  
He it was, the sun-child: the sun brought to birth.

The sun shall be above.  
Who shall be below?  
The ocean, that is who shall be below.

VII

The ocean was born of Kea,  
the surf for Kea, the sea for Kea,  
the wild sea, the gentle sea for Kea,  
the coral beds, coral caverns that grow for Kea,

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*Birth Chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli*

the fish who twist and turn in the surge.  
Deep black were the headlands pointing seaward,  
broad lay the ocean spread out below.  
Who shall be above?  
Kū, Lono, Kāne, Kanaloa,  
Ka'eka'e and Maui,  
composers of prayers, givers of prayers,  
high priests who uttered solemn prayers in sacred  
places,  
voiced them in places free: free of kapu was the place  
of the chief!

Born was Kū, let him remain above.  
Who shall be below? Who indeed?

From Hāloa men came forth, chiefs multiplied.  
Chief Ka-mehameha was conceived above,  
the first chief, the first up here.  
The Chiefess Kau-i-ka-'alaneo was the second up  
here.  
They joined, clung together. Was it not so?  
Ka-lani-nui-kua-liholiho was the first  
to inherit the kapus, the first up here.  
Chief Kau-i-ke-ao-uli was the second up here.  
Brothers are they, close joined: they hold firm to  
one another.

So it is.



NOTES

I

**Kea (for Wākea)** and Papa: Progenitors of chiefs. The birth of the prince is linked to cosmic events and these are personified and mythologically defined in the mating of the sky-father, Wākea, and the earth-mother, Papa.

II

Born was the night: Night (*pō*) here refers to the world of the unseen as revealed in dreams. Thus the gestation and birth of the child was accompanied by a series of revelations of increasing intensity, until there appeared Mahina-le'a, when "the moon shone at its brightest"—probably the act of parturition. The sequence of three "royal offspring borne by Kea" may be an allusion to the three children of Ke-ōpū-o-lani sired by Ka-mehameha.

V

Ho'ohoku and Hāloa: Ho'ohoku was a daughter of Wākea by whom she bore offspring. Hāloa was the name of two sons born of the mating. The first son was the taro plant; the second (an ancestor of Kau-i-ke-ao-uli) was a man. The name Hāloa (literally, 'long breath') is based on the form *hā*, referring to breath expelled to impart *mana*, 'magical power', as when a priest would exclaim "Hā!"

Kāne: A comprehensive source-god worshiped by early Polynesians as the god of life, water, sunlight, and the whole world of nature. Three other major gods are invoked later in the chant. Kanaloa, companion of Kāne, is introduced as a god of healing. Kū, a male fertility symbol, was regarded as a god of human activities, especially



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canoe-making and war. Lono, also concerned with fertility, presided over the peaceful activities of fishing and agriculture.

VI

sun of Kupanole: The allusion is obscure, but appears to refer to a place involved in legends of the moon-goddess Hina. The “boundaries of Hilinamā, of Hilinehu” likewise may be a reference to mythical events connected with the monthly lunar cycles. Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, lists Hilinamā as the name of a month and Hilinehu as the name of both a month and a star.

Halulu: A mythical bird and messenger of the high gods, one of the sons of the goddess Haumea, mother of Pele and her sisters. The historian Kamakau noted that the feathers that rise and fall on the heads of images in answer to *kahuna* prayers were believed by Hawaiians to come from the sacred birds Halulu and Kuwa‘a—“wonderful feathers made out of particles of water from the dazzling orb of the sun” (Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology*, pp. 91–92).

VII

Ka‘eka‘e and Maui: Two legendary, if not historic, men famous for their religious piety. The gods kept them alive until extreme old age. In a chant honoring Ka-mehameha, *Fallen Is the Chief (Hawi ka Lani)*, they are mentioned as forebears (*kupuna*) of Ka-mehameha.

Kau-i-ka-‘alaneo: Literally, ‘placed in the clear sky’; another name for Queen Ke-ōpū-o-lani, ‘the flower opening in the sky’.

Ka-lani-nui-kua-liholiho: Liholiho, Ka-mehameha II (1792–1824), elder son of Ka-mehameha I by Ke-ōpū-o-

ani. After his father's death, the widowed Queen Ka-'ahu-manu proclaimed that, according to Ka-mehameha's will, she and Liholiho would rule over the Kingdom. Both Liholiho and his sister-wife, Queen Ka-māmalu, died of measles while in London in 1824, when on a mission to discuss the possibility of a British alliance with Hawai'i.