

# Ha'a a Hula Le'a

## 5 | THE RITUAL, THE DANCE

Hula begins with the movement of the sun, the wind, the sounds, the growth on land, and the ocean. Hula is ritualized as it personifies nature. Like nature, hula is rhythmic, inclusive, transformative, physical, spiritual, healing, and above all, it is Hawaiian.

HE MELE HULA

## Ke ha'a lā Puna i ka makani

- 1 Ke ha'a lā Puna i ka makani
- 2 Ha'a ka ulu hala i Kea'au
- 3 Ha'a Hā'ena me Hōpoe
- 4 Ha'a ka wahine
- 5 'Ami i kai o Nanahuki
- 6 Hula le'a wale
- 7 I kai o Nanahuki
- 8 'O Puna kai kuwā i ka hala
- 9 Pae ka leo o ke kai
- 10 Ke lū lā i nā pua lehua
- 11 Nānā i kai o Hōpoe
- 12 Ka wahine 'ami i kai o Nanahuki
- 13 Hula le'a wale
- 14 I kai o Nanahuki.

Emerson, *Pele and  
Hiiaka*, 1–2.

- 1 *Puna dances in the wind*
- 2 *Moving through the hala grove at Keá'au*
- 3 *Hā'ena and Hōpoe dance*
- 4 *The female sways*
- 5 *Revolving at the sea of Nanahuki*
- 6 *Perfectly pleasing, the dancing*
- 7 *At the sea of Nanahuki*
- 8 *Puna's sea resounds in the hala*
- 9 *The voice of the sea is carried*
- 10 *The lehua blossoms are scattered*
- 11 *Look toward the sea of Hōpoe*
- 12 *The dancing woman at the sea of Nanahuki*
- 13 *Perfectly pleasing, the dancing*
- 14 *At the sea of Nanahuki.*

“Ke ha’a lā Puna i ka makani” is the first recorded hula in the Pele and Hi’iaka saga. Hi’iaka performed the hula to this mele to please her sibling, Pele. The motif of this mele focuses on movement as it appears in certain places, with particular weather phenomena, motivated by the wind portraying the natural imagery of dance through the trees, upon the grass, and in the ocean.

The district is Puna, Hawai’i, the ahupua’a is Kea’au, the ‘ili is Hā’ena, the beach is Nanahuki, the character is Hōpoe, and this is the place of the birth of hula, or ha’a, as it is known in this chant.

Puna is the source of regenerative energy. Some examples of this fact are Puna’s eastern location, which welcomes the rising sun; its proximity to the volcano, which results in the creation of new land; its

## Ha’a ka wahine

### ‘Ami i kai o Nanahuki

#### Hula le’a wale

origination of the Moa’e wind source; and its sustained growth of new vegetation on new land. Puna is described in other texts as “Ka ‘āina i ka houpo a Kāne,” or the land in the heart of Kāne. Puna is the easternmost land section of the Hawaiian archipelago; therefore, it is the initial land to be impacted by all of the manifestations of Kāne.

The poetic mind of the Hawaiian views the wind as a dramatic character with many faces. For instance, when the wind blows on your back in certain situations, it is an element of support and encouragement. When a strong wind is accompanied by rain, it can be interpreted as destructive and piercing, such as the Kīpu’upu’u wind and rain. The Kā’īlialoha wind has a reputation of snatching away love, never to

return. The Malanai wind is so comfortable and pleasant it entices and encourages lovemaking. In association with Hi'iaka, the wind is the primary component that aids in the dispersal and distribution of seeds. However, the phrase, "i ka makani," or in the wind, enables one to look at the wind as an object that brings good tidings. The wind gives movement to Puna, and this flux and flow is worthy of imitation. Therefore, the basic, primal movement of ha'a is born. This is the relationship of the first hula in Puna.

As noted in line two, "Ha'a ka ulu hala i Kea'au," the hala groves are impacted by the movement of the wind. The abundance of hala in the Puna district gives birth to the saying, "Puna, paia 'ala i ka hala," or Puna wafts with fragrance of hala. The hala is valuable because the leaves are woven into mats, baskets, and other usable items. The ripe

### The female sways

#### Revolving at the sea of Nanahuki

#### Perfectly pleasing, the dancing

yellow and orange fruit is often compared to the glow of a lava flow. The ripe fruit is also made into lei. While on her journey to Kaua'i to fetch Lohi'au, Hi'iaka wore a lei hala. Kapo'ulakina'u, the female deity of giving or taking life, wore hala as a shield of protection.

The word "ulu" before hala is a qualifier, which simply means grove. However, in this context "ulu" indicates abundance in reference to hala growth in Puna.

In line three, "Ha'a Ha'ena me Ho'poe," Ha'ena and Ho'poe are names that symbolize hula. Ha'ena is a small 'ili, or land section, but more importantly it is a small village at the ocean on the coast of Kea'au in eastern Hawai'i. There is another coastal village bearing the same name on the northwest coast of this same island. Yet another Ha'ena is located on the northwest side of the island of Kaua'i.

The Hā'ena villages have an impressive view of sunrise and sunset, depending on the specific location. The day begins and ends at Hā'ena. At the Hā'ena on Kaua'i, on the summer solstice, the sun's rising and setting are in full view from that one location.

The clarity of Hā'ena should be realized in the hālau hula with the ho'opuka and ka'i, the traditional hula entrance and exit ritual, which is emblematic of the sun's first and last appearance.

The word "hā'ena" should be examined in conjunction with the places bearing the same name. If the word is separated into its component parts, "hā" is breath and "ena" exudes intensity. The Hā'ena locations are calculated to receive the very first and the last intense breath of the sun each day.

In an 1835 essay, Kai'aikawaha mentioned six Hā'ena place names beyond the island of Nihoa. His story moves toward the northwest. Mokumanamana is the next island northwest of Nihoa. Mokumanamana is the island on the pathway of "ke alanui polohiwa a Kāne," or the summer solstice. The six Hā'ena mentioned by Kai'aikawaha, collectively, are found on one island. Mokumanamana has six pu'u, or hills, and each pu'u has a Hā'ena name attached to it. The whole island is the intense breath of the sun.

Hōpoe, the woman, is the dancer whose residency is at Hā'ena. Hōpoe is also a place name, as in "i kai o Hōpoe," or at the sea of Hōpoe. The Pele and Hi'iaka saga employs Hōpoe as a friend, teacher of the hula, and lei maker. This lei is worn with the hula as part of the celebration. Fully developed, or well-rounded, as a lehua blossom, are other definitions for "hōpoe."

Another point is the full-bloom lehua, or the hōpoe. The image of the lehua hōpoe connotes the dome of the sun's path rising on the island of Hawai'i—renowned for its lehua—and setting on the island of Lehua in the west.

There is a functional interplay between Hōpoe and the deities Pele and Hi'iaka. Pele is land growth, the production of fresh lava. Hi'iakaikapoliopole is new growth, the natural movement on the land. Hōpoe is the physical essence of both deities. She is the ki'i, or recipient of the natural movements inspired by the gods, which developed into the ha'a, or the dance. The imitation of these movements is an act of recognizing, praising, and honoring these sources, which are Pele and Hi'iaka. The ha'a is a ritual to maintain the saga of Pele and Hi'iaka in dance form.



Line five, “Ami i kai o Nanahuki,” is an ingenious effort to encompass hula foot and body movements in one simple line. The key words in line five suggest specific kinds of movements. “Ami” suggests a circular

Pae ka leo o ke kai

The voice of the sea is carried

Ke lū lā i nā pua lehua

The lehua blossoms are scattered

or rotational movement. “Kai” implies movements of the sea, a pendulum execution to and fro. Going and returning, back and forth, rising and falling. “Nanahuki” means to pull away from, describing the ku’i and hu’e steps in hula. The foot movements of kāholo, wāwae kā, kāhela, kalākaua, ‘uehe, and ‘ō present some imagery of the kai movement. The movements of ‘ami, ‘ami poepoe, ‘ami ‘ōniu, and niniu are in line with the ‘ami motion of the sea.

Puna produces sounds with the beating of the sea on the cliff. This sound is magnified through the groves of hala. The hala grove becomes the resonator. The sea of Puna heaves, rolls, dashes, splashes, sprays, and vibrates, producing various distinct sounds and chords. The various sounds emanating from the hala grove are emblematic of the sounds reproduced by the hula implement, which excites and provokes movement for the dancer.

The word “kai” is often used in this chant. The common translation of “kai” is sea or ocean. In line eight, “O Puna kai kuwā i ka hala,” “kai” could also be read as “ka i”—a contraction of “ka mea i”—which would mean “the one who.” If so, the translation of line eight would be,



“Puna is the one who creates the sound in the hala grove.” Another possibility is “ka‘i”; however, “ka‘i” is a hula entrance or exit. “Ka‘i” is also a contraction for “alaka‘i,” or leader. When translating, all definitions must be considered.

The sound of the sea against the pali is carried onto the land through the trees. In line nine, “Pae ka leo o ke kai,” the word “pae” is defined as coming ashore. It also means a line, as in a group of islands, a retinue of rain clouds, a line of stars, or a line of trees. This provides the imagery of a line or group of dancers. This line signifies the readiness of the dancers, upon the initial sound of the instrument, to make their entrance into the dance area. “Pae” could also be “pa‘ē,” which refers to a distant sound—in this case, “ka leo o ke kai,” the voice of the sea. “Ka leo” is the instrument that begins the dance.

Line ten, “Ke lū lā i nā pua lehua,” gives particular attention to the lehua blossom—the beloved flower of Hōpoe, Hi‘iaka, and Pele—as the adornment for the dancer. Late summer and late spring are when lehua petals are loose and scattered by the wind.

In line eleven, “Nānā i kai o Hōpoe,” if “ka‘i” is used instead of “kai,” the English translation would read, “Watch for Hōpoe’s lead.” In the saga of Pele and Hi‘iaka, it is Hōpoe who takes the lead in performing the hula.

The chant “Ke ha‘a lā Puna i ka makani” explains the role of the deities in hula. They provide the means and arena; therefore, one must be ingenious to create the dance by imitating things found in nature. Imitation of nature gives praise to the elemental deity that is copied. Just as Hi‘iaka is a reflection of natural phenomena, the movement of hula is a natural process that reflects nature itself.





HE MELE KUAHU A HE PULE HO'OU LU

## Eia au e Laka, e Kāne, e Ha'iwahine

- 1 Eia au e Laka, e Kāne, e Ha'iwahine
- 2 Ha'iha'i pua o ka nāhelehele
- 3 Ho'ouluulu lei nou, e Laka ē
- 4 'O Hi'iaka kā ke kāula
- 5 Nāna i hele a 'ā'e a ulu
- 6 A noho i kō wahi kapu, e Laka ē
- 7 Ho'oulu 'ī, ho'oulu 'ā.

Kuluwaimaka, "Eia au e Laka, e Kāne, e Ha'iwahine," 78.

- 1 *Here I am, Laka, Kāne, and Ha'iwabine*
- 2 *Plucking the flowers of the forest*
- 3 *Creating a wreath for you, Laka*
- 4 *However, it is Hi'iaka who is the seer*
- 5 *As she travels about things will grow*
- 6 *Enter your sacred dwelling, Laka*
- 7 *Possess, inspire, be the best, have passion.*



This mele kuahu, or altar chant, is a plea from a student of hula to the deities directly involved with hula. Laka is the female deity whose kinolau, or body forms, are some of the majestic and fragrant forest plants that are used on the kuahu, or hula altar. Laka is the primary deity of hula kuahu, and this chant is addressed to Laka i kō wahi kapu, the kuahu in the sacred dwelling place.

Kāne is the male counterpart of the female deities. His kinolau—fresh water and sunlight—affords life, and therefore growth, to the kinolau of Laka. Kāne and Laka are male/female entities of many of the same forest plants, such as the ‘ie‘ie, pua lehua, halapepe, and maile. It is therefore the natural order to find Kāne included in a pule ho‘oulu, or prayer for growth and inspiration, with Laka and Hi‘iaka.

However, Hi‘iaka belongs to another category. She presides over Laka and the other deities of hula. An interesting observation concerning this mele is the definite hierarchical relationship between these gods. Line five, “Nāna i hele a ‘ā‘e a ulu,” refers to Hi‘iaka and her responsibility for increasing growth among vegetation.

Lines six and seven refer to the sacred abode of Laka, the kuahu hula.

- 6 A noho i kō wahi kapu, e Laka ē
- 7 Ho‘oulu ‘ī, ho‘oulu ‘ā.

In some hālau, a kuahu hula is built to house the sacred plants of hula, as referenced in line three. “Ho‘ouluulu lei nou, e Laka ē” refers to the creation of both a kuahu hula and the lei of plant materials that adorn the kuahu. Laka is the plants, the plants are Laka. Inspiration for hula is received when the plants are present and when the dancer wears the plants for hula. The honor of “master of hula” is given to Laka, and the patrons and devotees of the hula recognize this fact.

This pule ho‘oulu reveals that Hi‘iaka is the causative for growth. Laka is the kuahu and the plants on the kuahu, and Ha‘iwahine is used as a medium through which inspiration may be transmitted. This is the hierarchy.

HE MELE LEI

## Ke lei maila 'o Ka'ula i ke kai

- 1 Ke lei maila 'o Ka'ula i ke kai
- 2 Ke mālamalama 'o Ni'ihau, ua mālie
- 3 A mālie, pā ka Inuwai
- 4 Ke inu maila nā hala o Naue i ke kai
- 5 No Naue ka hala, no Puna ka wahine
- 6 No ka lua nō i Kilauea.

Emerson, *Unwritten Literature*, 212.



- 1 *Ka'ula in the sea is wearing the lei*
- 2 *Ni'ihau is clearing, it is calm*
- 3 *In the calm, the touch of the Inuwai wind is felt*
- 4 *The hala of Naue drink in the sea*
- 5 *The hala is from Naue, the woman is from Puna*
- 6 *From the pit, from Kilauea.*



“Ke lei maila ‘o Ka‘ula i ke kai” was first sung by Manamana‘iakalua, a maimed female spirit encountered by Hi‘iaka and Wahine‘ōma‘o as they journeyed to Kaua‘i to fetch Lohi‘au, the lover of Pele. Hi‘iaka and Wahine‘ōma‘o met this pitiful creature trying to catch fish for herself on a beach on the island of Maui. One version of the story identifies the beach as Honolulu, and the other gives Kahakuloa as the name. Hi‘iaka shares a hala fruit with Manamana‘iakalua, and the maimed creature cherishes it as she chants this song of the hala, as if recognizing the origin and destination of the travelers.

Manamana‘iakalua makes the connection of the hala given to her by Hi‘iaka with the famous hala grove of Naue on the island of Kaua‘i. Manamana‘iakalua makes reference to the western islands, or the direction in which Hi‘iaka is headed. She is also aware of the status of the woman before her and announces the origin of Hi‘iaka as being from Puna and Kilauea. Manamana‘iakalua is credited for this mele, which is given as an offering to Hi‘iaka.

The chant “Ke lei maila” is included in the formal dressing ceremony of the dancer. This is chanted as the dancer dons the lei ‘āī, or neck lei, and the lei po‘o, or head lei. Donning the lei is the last act of the dressing ceremony before the appearance to perform.

The mele lei represents the archipelago and views the lay of the islands as a “hoaka lei,” or open-ended lei. This chant is significant for hula and is associated with Pele and Hi‘iaka’s role in the origin of the islands and, therefore, the origin of hula.

*The lei is your archipelago. When you adorn yourself with your lei to dance, you envelop your universe.*

**‘ELI‘ELI KAU MAI!**