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Hō'alo i ka Ihu o ka Lanakila, Three Train Chants for Lili'uokalani

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This paper was read on the lānai of the Queen's home at Washington Place on September 27, 2003, at a gathering sponsored by the Hawaiian Historical Society in celebration of the republication of *Buke Mele Lāhui, National Songs of Hawai'i*. Other papers were delivered that evening by Leilani Basham, Noenoe Silva, Keali'i Reichel, Puakea Nogelmeier, and Amy Stillman.

'Auhea 'oukou e nā hoa kipūlani, mai Kūwili o Kanāueue, Mānana o ka iā hāmāu leo, Honolulu i ke ko a'ahuwale, a hiki loa i Wai'anae o ke Kaiāulu. Aloha 'ia o Wai'anae, 'aina kipi, 'aina kō'e, 'aina kū'oko'a. Aloha mai, e nā Hawaile'i, e ahonua i lanakila kākou.

"Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" is the 82nd mele in *Buke Mele Lāhui*; it appears on pages 98 and 99 of this collection. The title of the mele translates most simply as "The iron piston of the Lanakila" and refers – most simply – to the mechanical efficiency of the steam-driven locomotive named *Lanakila* on which Lili'uokalani, in the early 1890's, was a celebrated passenger. "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" is the third and least known of a trio of train chants composed for Lili'u; hula people will immediately recognize the other two as "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" (a mele hula performed in a variety of modes in a number of hula traditions and non-traditions) and "Eia mai Au 'o Makalapua" (a hula pā ipu taught by Kawena Pukui to Sally Wood Nalau and kept alive today by a handful of Aunty Sally's students).

These three chants, when considered in chronological succession, help to add a Hawaiian dimension to the story of B.F. Dillingham's O.R.&L., a story that otherwise reads far too much like an early script of *How the West was Won*. Benjamin Franklin Dillingham:

- Arrived in Honolulu in 1865 as first mate of the *Whistler*.
- He promptly fell off a horse and broke his leg. When his ship left without him, he took a job as a clerk in a hardware store.
- 20 years later, in 1885, he had become Hawaii's first big-time land speculator, buying and leasing vast tracts of property in West O'ahu in hopes of reselling it to housing and ag. interests.
- When no one, in fact, took interest in his largely inaccessible property, he decided to build a railroad through it.
- In 1888, Dillingham convinced Kalākaua to sign a franchise giving him three years to build a line running from Honolulu to the far end of Pearl River Lagoon. His critics called it "Dillingham's Folly," but Dillingham boasted that he would put his railroad into operation by Sept. 4, 1889, his 45th birthday.
- Things did not go well in the early months of construction, and in order to fulfill this boast, Dillingham had to fire up a minuscule saddle-tank engine named *Kauila*, hitch it to a flatcar that carried his passengers on jury-rigged seats, and send it bucking, wheezing, and spewing greasy foam down a mile-and-a-half of track that ended in the rice paddies of Pālama.
- Despite this farcical beginning, the construction of Dillingham's railroad then proceeded in rather impressive fashion: the line was opened to 'Aiea in November 1889, to Mānana in January 1890, to Honolulu in June and July 1890, to Wai'anae in July 1895, to Waialua in June, 1898, and to Kahuku in January 1899.

At some point in mid-1890, in the interval between the January and July openings of the Mānana and Honolulu stations, Dillingham brought to Hawai'i a passenger coach named *The Pearl* and a locomotive named *General Valého*. The sumptuous *Pearl* was built for Dillingham by Carter Co. of San Francisco. It was paneled in rich woods and outfitted with plush chairs, velvet drapes, electric lights, a kitchen, a lānai with a striped canvas awning, and a new-fangled contraption called a flush toilet. The *General Valého* was purchased from the Sonoma Valley Railroad of California where it had been engine #3; Dillingham renamed it *Lanakila* and gave it the number 45, a tribute to his 45th birthday boast and erstwhile victory in the rice paddies of Pālama. The *Lanakila* became Dillingham's 4th locomotive – after the *Kauila*, *Leahi*, and *Ka'ala* – and for many years it was regarded as the most attractive engine in the OR&L stable. Dillingham apparently wasted no time in hitching the *Pearl* to the *Lanakila* and using the pair as his wine-'em and dine-'em celebrity train, the vehicle in which he woed financial and political support for his business ventures. According to Bobby Paoa, historian of the Hawai'i Railway Society, Dillingham gave Kalākaua the inaugural ride on the *Pearl* and gave Kalākaua the impression, as well, that *The Pearl* was the king's own, royal car. Paoa thinks that Dillingham did his best to offer Lili'u the same accommodation and impression, and it is probably safe for us to assume that Lili'u rode in the *Pearl* when the *Lanakila* took her on the train rides celebrated in the first two of our mele: in "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" and in "Eia mai Au 'o Makalapua."

The details of the first of these mele, "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i," suggest that it was composed after the January 1890 opening of the OR&L's Mānana Station but before the June-July openings of its Honolulu and 'Ewa Mill stops. As described in "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i," the royal train conveys Lili'u from the Kūwili Station in Honolulu to the Mānana Station in what is now Pearl City. It's my guess that Mānana was then at the end of the line; the train stops, the crown princess disembarks, her subjects bow and wave their hats, and she continues her journey by carriage, across the Leilehua plain, presumably to her country residence in Waialua.

For me, the imagery of this mele centers on efficiency and harmony. In "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" everything works without a hitch, everything responds as it should. The wheels roll inexorably over the track; the miles fall away when the engineers pull out all the stops; a single command is all it takes to bring the train to a halt; heads bow and hats wave in a perfectly choreographed display of affection for the disembarking princess; the horses of her carriage respond with graceful prancing to the snap of the driver's whip; and through it all, Lili'u remains poised, calm, and in complete control. The mele, then, places Lili'u at the still point of this flawless dance; the mele extols her capacity as Queen-to-be; she brings man, nature, and machinery into harmony; all work to a single purpose under her calm leadership. The message of the mele is unmistakable: with Lili'u at the helm, victory – lanakila – is ours.

The details of the second chant, "Eia mai Au 'o Makalapua," indicate that it was composed shortly after the opening of the Mānana to 'Ewa Mill segment of the OR&L in July 1890. In "Eia mai Au 'o Makalapua," Lili'u does not disembark at Mānana; her journey on the *Lanakila* takes her to Waipio, then through the lowlands of Honolulu, and finally to the exposed coral plain of Pōlea on which the 'Ewa Mill Station was located. Aunty Sally Wood Nalau insisted that this mele was composed for Lili'u the Princess, not Lili'u the Queen; as a result, we can actually identify the six-month window in which the journey was made and "Makalapua" written: that period between the July opening of the line and Lili'u's January 29, 1891, accession to the throne.

"Makalapua" shares with "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" the sense of awesome efficiency and harmony that we touched on earlier. These are apparent in "Makalapua's" description of the working of the train's piston at Kūwili, in the rising and billowing of steam at Mānana and Waipio, and especially in the sense of speed with which the mele whisks us from Honolulu to Pōlea in the space of its six, two-line verses. Efficiency and harmony, however, are not at the heart of "Makalapua"; it is inspired and driven, instead, by *aloha ma'a* – love for the land – and by *kō'e ho'ohui 'āina* – resistance to annexation. In my reading of the mele, the dominant imagery is that of flower-stringing. The train and track serve as the contemporary equivalent of lei needle and thread; with them, Lili'u sews a series of beloved place-names and place-associations into a lei of adornment and protection for Ke-awalau-o-Pu'u'loa. Keawalauo'pu'u'loa, the many-harborred sea of Pu'u'loa, is the old name for Pearl Harbor. The cession of Pearl Harbor to America in return for sugar reciprocity was one of the hottest political issues of "Makalapua's" day. Lili'u was absolutely opposed to any Keawalau deals; her brother, on the other hand, had regularly waved this bait at the American nose; he was even rumored, on his Nov. 1890 departure to San Francisco, to have harbored a hidden Pearl Harbor agenda. The key lines of "Makalapua" are "Ua lava ka 'ikena i ke awalau / I 'Ewa ka iā hāmāu leo ... I kai ho'au a Honolulu / Ahuakale ka o Pōlea." In my reading, these lines say: "We hold to our knowledge of Keawalau, we are like its closed-mouthed pipi, its oysters; we will never give up the pearl that we contain; here at the shoreline of Honolulu we normally silent fish reveal this deeply held conviction." "Makalapua," then, casts a darker, more defiant shadow than does the earlier "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i." It uses a sequence of beloved places and associations strung on a lei of railroad tracks to draw a figurative line in the sand, a line that defines the terms of victory for those loyal to Lili'u.

I'm fairly comfortable with the prospect of offering you these interpretations of "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" and "Makalapua" because I've worked with these mele, off and on, for the last 15 years. I'm nowhere near as comfortable with advancing an interpretation of the third of our mele – "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" – since I've only been looking at it for two weeks, and since I'm still very much in what we literary analysts call the "floundering" stage of exploring a composition. Still, I'll take a shot at discussing the clues and contexts that are beginning to shape my appreciation of the mele at hand.

One key to understanding "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" is that its author, S. Pinao, is also the author of one of the most scathing anti-annexationist mele in *Buke Mele Lāhui*: "Ho'ohū'āina Pala ka Ma'i'a." "Annexation is a spoiled banana – it is no good for us." The mele appears on page 63 of *BML* and delivers a name-by-name attack on the annexationists and turncoats whose overthrow of the queen and nation is compared to the rape of Hawai'i by a groping, poisonous, syphilitic ma'i'a. When set in the context of "Pala ka Ma'i'a," the *ku'e hao* of Pinao's train chant must be understood as signifying something more than the iron piston of its literal translation. Add *kahako* to the vowels of the first word and you have *kō'e*, which, as we well know, means *defiance, resistance, protest*. *Hao*, in addition to meaning *iron*, also means to *deliver with force, and to grasp, gouge, loot, pillage, and plunder*. The *ku'e hao* of our mele, then, must also be read as *kō'e hao*, as forceful defiance and as *kō'e i ka hao* – resistance to and defiance of the *hao* of theft, pillage, and plunder.

A second, staggering clue to understanding "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila," is the event that inspired its composition. The mele was composed in ostensible celebration of the opening of the 18-mile stretch of railway that connected 'Ewa to Wai'anae: I say *ostensible* because that grand opening occurred on July 4, 1895 – a double insult to Lili'u's loyalists since it marked the 119th birthday of the nation to which Hawai'i would soon be annexed – and because it also marked the first birthday of the Republic of Hawai'i, the government against which the counter-revolution had just failed.

A final, equally staggering clue to understanding "Ku'e Hao" is the absence of Lili'u; she is no longer the crown princess, no longer the reigning queen. She is not in this chant and not on this train. She is imprisoned in a corner room of her former palace. Because Lili'u is so very present in both "Lanakila ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i" and "Makalapua," and because "Ku'e Hao" employs many of the same descriptions and poetic conventions of the two earlier *Lanakila* chants, it requires a paradigm shift, a conscious act of will, for me to remove her from the third *Lanakila* composition. The facts, however, require her removal. The Wai'anae track opened in July 1895; *Buke Mele Lāhui* was published in late 1895, probably in August or September of that year. "Ku'e Hao" could only have been written in that three month period between the Wai'anae opening and the release of *Buke Mele*. Lili'u's imprisonment lasted from January to September of the same year and was followed by house-arrest here in Washington Place. No way, then, could she have been a passenger on Pinao's Wai'anae-bound train.

When I read "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" with my mental doors closed to these clues and contexts, it strikes me as happy, harmless, and transparent – a typical mele māka'ikai of the late nineteenth century in which we travel from place to place, cataloging the names and memorable features of each location until we arrive at a beautiful and memorable final destination. We travel the familiar route from Moanalua to Pu'u'loa to 'Aiea to Mānana to Waikeli. We enjoy the touch of the Mo'a breeze, the 'ohai shade of Mānana, the coconut grove of Waikeli, the iā hāmāu leo of West Loch, and the sugar cane of Honolulu. Beyond the 'Ewa Mill Station, the newly opened stretch of track, we admire the kiawe trees that shade the hot plain of Waimānalo; we acknowledge Pu'u'ohulu, the famous hill of Wai'anae; and we come to rest at Wai'anae Station where the sea plays over the sand dunes and where we are cooled by the gentle Kaiāulu breeze. When, however, I read "Ku'e Hao" in the context of "Ho'ohū'āina Pala ka Ma'i'a," the 4th of July opening of the Wai'anae line, and Lili'u's imprisonment at 'Iolani Palace, the mele takes on an entirely different character.

It becomes a mele steeped in irony and protest. In one sense it provides a profoundly depressing description of a ghost train that has been stripped of its queen, that spins its wheels meaninglessly, that goes through the hollow motions of delivering victory to the other side. In another sense, it provides a paradoxically uplifting message of defiance and denial. It says that, no matter what, empty train or no, the loyalists will hold fast to queen, land, memory, and their belief in ultimate victory. In quite prophetic fashion, it says that the counterrevolution isn't over and that the loiakī will never go away.

Over my last two days of looking at "Ku'e Hao," I've begun to view it as a very deceptive mele; it offers up clichés of apparent beauty and well-being that, upon closer examination, blow up in my face: they speak of loss, disturbance, and consequences yet unrecognized. Allow me to provide four examples before I move to a conclusion.

1. The opening lines of "Ku'e Hao" refer to the action of the *Lanakila*'s piston as *niniu poahi* and then compare the train to a porpoise that slips and slides in *pakiaka-pahe* fashion, along the iron track. This sounds pretty nice until we recognize that *niniu poahi* refers to a dizzy, blurry, almost drunken kind of spinning, that the porpoise in traditional times was a food forbidden to women, and that *pakiaka* and *pahe* are often connotative of instability. Suddenly we have, beneath the pretty picture of piston and porpoise, a subtext that warns of the almost reckless instability of the government from which Lili'u has been barred.

2. The third verse of "Ku'e Hao" refers to Moanalua as "kai hā [i] ke 'au," as "the one who broke the shaft." Lovers of Hawaiian music will recognize this as an allusion to the song "Moanalua" which begins "Moanalua, ha'i ke 'au / Kahauki hemo ka 'umoku" – "at Moanalua the carriage shaft breaks, at Kahauki we pop the cork to our bottle of booze." In its early verses, the song is cute and its references to a tipsy adventure seem festive and harmless. The conclusion of the song, however, is considerably darker and concerns something very much like rape: specifically the pain caused by the forced insertion of a noni fruit. This image is extraordinarily consistent with those of the spoiled bananas and carbuncular ʻole in Pinao's "Ho'ohū'āina Pala ka Ma'i'a." As a result, Pinao's seemingly innocuous reference to Moanalua in "Ku'e Hao" blows up in our face like an exploding cigar. Boom: there's horror, anger, and defiance just beneath the mele's pretty surface.

3. The middle verse of "Ku'e Hao" lingers in the 'Aiea, Mānana, and Waikeli areas of Keawalau and offer seemingly pleasant references to the Mo'a breeze, a dance hall at Pualaehu, and the famed *iā hāmāu leo* of the lagoon's placid waters. A review of the history of the area, however, suggests something other than tranquility. In 1890, Dillingham carved up the Mānana peninsula to create O'ahu's first major housing development. He held a contest that gave to Mānana the new name "Pearl City," and on its main thoroughfare, Lehua Road, he promoted a dance pavilion named Remond Grove. His railroad ran regular tours to Remond Grove, and he advertised it as being "always at the disposal of Pleasure Parties." What the Mo'a breeze and pearl oysters have to do with this, is made clear in Kawena Pukui's discussion of the 'olelo no'eau, "Haunāe 'Ewa i ka Ma'i'a – 'Ewa is disturbed by the Mo'a wind." Pukui explains that the proverb is used in response to something disruptive. "When the people of 'Ewa went to gather the pipi (the pearl oyster), they did so in silence, for if they spoke, a Mo'a breeze would suddenly blow across the water, rippling it, and the oysters would disappear." The exploding-cigar kaona of the superficially pretty Mānana verses of "Ku'e Hao" is that of incompatibility, disruption, and loss; the traditional wealth of the area falls victim to those who fail to respect the old ways.

4. Wai'anae. The tempo of the mele changes as the *Lanakila* approaches Wai'anae. She slips, slides, and falters on the first half of her run, but she now responds enthusiastically to Wai'anae's call: "Ku'upau Lanakila i ka oeoe / E 'i mai ana 'o Wai'anae." My gut feeling here, although I have yet to pin it to specific references in the mele, is that Wai'anae is S. Pinao's ultimate exploding cigar. Wai'anae was home then and now to the kipi, the kō'e, and the kō'o'ko'a: the rebellious, the defiant, and the independent. The mele's conclusion suggests to me that in the figurative Wai'anae of loyalist hearts, the *Lanakila* of Lili'u's regency is kept alive and well. The mele seems to say: "Ts! If you think you're going to Wai'anae to celebrate the Republic of Hawai'i, you are in for a surprise."

This is about as far as I'm prepared to take my analysis of "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila." As I said, I'm only beginning to appreciate the mele and would much rather give it a couple more months – or years – to talk to me before I attempt to speak for it. I expect, however, that in two weeks or two years time, my dominant impression of the mele will stand: it is marvelously deceptive, full of pleasant, readily accessible descriptions that disguise its core of defiance and resolve. The surface and the depth, the words and the message, of "Ku'e Hao" are at opposite ends of the meaning spectrum. I would guess – although I have no way of knowing – that it was composed for performance in "mixed" company and that it was meant to subvert an audience that could not see past its inoffensive disguise.

I chose to discuss "Ku'e Hao" tonight in response to a paragraph in Amy and Puakea's introduction to the republished *Buke Mele Lāhui*. That paragraph identifies 20 songs in the latter portion of the book as seemingly apolitical: 'love songs, teasing songs, and honorific songs mixed among the more clearly political and loyalist expressions.' Stillman and Nogelmeier speculate that these mele may have been popular songs of the period that were included in *Buke Mele Lāhui* to increase its appeal and fatten up its page count, but they also acknowledge the following possibility: "The case may be that these various songs do contain political connections that aren't apparent to us today, either by their content, their composers, or the context from which they were drawn."

I offer this Lili'u train chant as an example of a mele whose political connections aren't readily apparent to us today but whose multiple contexts in Hawaiian poetry and history help us to understand anew its powerful and enduring political message. I hold up "Ku'e Hao o ka Lanakila" as encouragement to those of us who are interested in reconnecting the loyalist themes of other such compositions to the wonderfully recalcitrant heart of *Buke Mele Lāhui*. Kipūlani ē, kūpa'a mākou ma hope ou e Lili'u'olokukikekapu.

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Appendix 1: Lanakila Ke Ka'a Ahī Ali'i

O Lanakila ke ka ahi ali'i
Nāna i lawe mai kahu aupuni
A hiki o ka Lanali i Moanalua
Ka uwapo holoholu a'o Hālawa

'Alawa ioe ma ka 'ao'ao
Ka nome ka huila i ke alahao
Kā'ohē ou loa a'e Mānana
I ke ku'upau a nā wili'i

Ho'okahi nō leo a'o ke kuhina
Ho'opā'a 'la mai nā mikini
Kūnou welo pāpale ke aloha
Nā kupa, nā kini ou e Kalāni

A kau 'o Kalani i ke ka'api'o
Huli aku (a noho) ho'olā'i
Kiani ka uwepa ha'a nā lio
Kili'opu ke kula o Leilehua

Hea aku mākou o mai 'oe
'O Lili'uokalani hā ihe inoa.
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