

Ho‘i Ke Aloha no Kawika

Aloha e ka hōkū, Hōkū Alaka‘i
Ka‘ika‘i mai ana i ka moana, kaulana o Hilo Hanakahi.
Ua hiki mai a pae i ke one o Halele‘a,
Le‘ale‘a i ka nani o ka ‘āina, Hanohano ‘o Hanalei.
HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha.
Lei ‘ia ka lele ‘ana e Ka Moa‘e,
Hele a‘e i Nā Pali, lulu i Makuaiki ‘ike i ke ahi o Kamaile.
Ha‘alele aku iā Nu‘alolo, ho‘okele i Lehua
Heahea mai ana ‘o Ni‘ihau, pūpū o Kahelelani.
HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha.
Kele iho i lalo, ‘ike ‘ia mai ‘o Pukaiki.
Pili iā Pu‘uwai, home o na makamaka, Ho‘i ke aloha no Elia.
Elieli kau mai i luna o Kawaihoa
Huli Ho‘i ma waho a‘o Ka‘ula, pi‘i mai ‘o Ka‘ulakahi.
HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha.
Aia i hea ‘o Anaki, kuikui i ka po
aniani mai ana ka makani Kalalau, ‘ō‘ili ‘o Pohakuao.
Ka ‘oē a ke kai i ke kino o ka wa‘a,
pilipa‘a i na ‘ale, ho‘ohenoheno, i ka lei o ka mokihana.
HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha.
Hā‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana,
Ho‘iHo‘i ‘ia a‘e ke aloha pumehana no Kapahulehua.
Hā‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana,
Ho‘iHo‘i ‘ia a‘e ke aloha pumehana no Kapahulehua.
HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha no Kawika Kapahulehua.

Ho‘i Ke Aloha no Kawika



In 1976, Elia “Kawika” Kapahulehua, an easy going, gentle man, was selected to be captain on the first voyage of the canoe Hōkūle‘a. As unassuming a person that he was, the selection was not without its controversial aspects. He was an experienced sailor of catamarans, well acquainted with blue water sailing these lively craft, the modern manifestation of traditional voyaging canoes of which Hōkūle‘a was a design replica. Having spent his youth on the island of Ni‘ihau, he was a native speaker of Hawaiian as well as a prime example of the soft spoken, warm hearted character exhibited by those elders wise in the ways of the ancestors.

After the initial ground breaking success of the first voyage, Kawika, as most came to know him, continued to work as a licensed captain, piloting the sunset catamarans cruising off Waikīkī on warm evenings in the shelter of Diamond Head. This is where I initially became acquainted with him personally after he graciously invited me to accompany him on Ke Kai o Māmala (the traditional name for the ocean off Honolulu) to explore the Hawaiian vocabulary of the sea and sailing. Patiently, he spoke simply in that venerated, old sonorous tongue to me (a novice and student of the language) about different aspects of wave and wind, and the movement of the vessel as we slipped through the failing light, gliding over the somnolent sea.

In later years, I would actually get to sail with him aboard Hōkūle‘a on a short stormy passage from Kaunakakai, Moloka‘i around Mokuapu and into Kualoa. Kawika joined the crew bringing Hōkūle‘a home at the conclusion of a journey that had begun a month before in Rarotonga in the Cook islands passing through Pape‘ete in Tahiti Nui before completing 30 days of sojourning with landfall at Kealahou, Hawai‘i. After a day or two to recover from the exertions of the longer legs of that journey, the homebound crew sailed to Kaunakakai to be joined by distinguished guests, among them an astronaut

and captain Kawika. During that short jaunt, he again shared his experience pointing out and naming the wind and sea conditions we encountered off that windward facing coast. Even later, we would occasionally meet at the university of Hawai‘i at Mānoa where he provided a much needed grounding in dimensions of his ‘ōlelo makuahine (mother tongue) for aspiring Hawaiian language students as it existed and was practiced outside of the confines of the classroom. As a manaleo, a native speaker, he was always in good humor and ever ready to share stories of his days at sea and the time of youth on Ni‘ihau.

In his last years, he had to battle with debilitating bouts of diabetes and eventually succumbed to its advances but not without touching many people with his own brand of aloha, especially those of younger generations who had become involved in one way or another with the revitalization of traditional voyaging and wayfinding that continues to grow after its inception in the first voyage of Hōkūle‘a on which Kawika served as captain. This mele is a chronicle of a voyage dedicated to the memory of Kawika, undertaken by a younger generation’s voyaging canoe, Hōkū Alaka‘i. The voyage, a journey to return the aloha and high regard for Kawika to the island of his youth was conducted under the leadership of Chad Kalepa Baybayan and sponsored by the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo, leaders in the revitalization of the Hawaiian language which Kawika valued so highly.



Kapena Chad Kalepa Baybayan

Aloha e ka hōkū, Hōkū Alaka‘i

Ka‘ika‘i ana i ka moana, kaulana o Hilo Hanakahi.

Aloha to the star, Guiding Star

Leading(us) on the ocean, famous is Hilo of Hanakahi

Hōkū Alaka‘i (guiding star) was built to provide an educational platform for the families and students involved in Hawaiian language immersion educational programs based in Hilo Hawai‘i. It is a stately wa‘a, provided with high quality equipment, staffed by experienced canoe sailors and has made several voyages in broader Hawai‘i for the benefit of its students and crewmembers. She sails well on the deep sea and is becoming an icon for an already celebrated place, Hilo, connected traditionally to the ali‘i and ‘ohana Hanakahi.

Ua hiki mai a pae i ke one o Halele‘a,
Le‘ale‘a i ka nani o ka ‘āina, Hanohano ‘o Hanalei.

*Having arrived and come ashore on the sands of the House of Pleasure,
enjoy the beauty of the land, magnificent is Hanalei.*



Approach to Hanalei Hihimanu, Namaolokama and Mamalahoa stand back of the bay.

My actual participation on this journey began when the wa‘a arrived at Hanalei in the district of Halele‘a, a district celebrated in song both traditionally and in contemporary times as being a place of delight and pleasure to the senses. Hanalei was the home of some of my ancestors who lived there and worked as taro farmers and paniolo (cowboys). Almost all who visit Hanalei fulfill long held fantasies of tropical paradise with its many beaches, mountain hung waterfalls sidling up to the sea, and luxuriant foliage draping the landscape.

HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.

E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha.

The comforting mountain wind wells up [filling our sails]

A fond remembrance of affection rises [within].



Beginning the run to Nā Pali, Hā‘ena skyline marks the turn.

This reoccurring refrain recalls the wind blowing from the mountains propelling the wa‘a through the fringing seas of both islands. Malaki Kanahela, an elder Ni‘ihauan of my acquaintance, also recently passed away this year. He was a celebrated musician in his community, among musicians throughout the islands and also a surfing contemporary of Kawika in his youth. He described this wind as the favored wind on Ni‘ihau for making excellent surfing conditions. This wind sweeping from the land out over the sea propelled us out of Hanalei. It also arose after the long windless crossing of the channel between the two islands. Just as we passed through the narrow channel between the islet Lehua into the lee of Ni‘ihau, this makani came flowing over the low promontory just north of the islands distinctive mountains making for a magnificent sail down its leeward coast. This makani hoaaloha greeted us on our return to Kaua‘i, off the coast of Kalalau valley in the Nā Pali district, driving us under full sail in two galloping tacks back into the sheltering bay of Hanalei. While we sailed on the various segments of this voyage, many memories of Kawika held by the different crewmembers who knew him were shared in quiet conversations during this voyage as we remembered him while circumnavigating Ni‘ihau.

Lei 'ia ka lele 'ana e Ka Moa'e,
Hele a'e i Nā Pali, lulu i Makuaike i ke ahi o Kamaile.
*The Tradewind garlands the flight [of the departing wa'a]
Traveling outward along the cliffs, sheltering at Makuaike, see the fire of Kamaile*



The waterworn cliffs between Honopū and Nu'alolo.

We left Hanalei at midday, carried on the northeasterly “trade” wind into the afternoon sun. After coasting the spectacular, fluted cliffs of the Nā Pali district we anchored as evening fell in the only safe haven on that rugged coast, just east of the headland, Makuaike. The sheltering reef there, fronts a small accretion of sand fringing the site of an ancient fishing village hunkering in the shadows of amphitheater-like cliffs. At the apex of these sheer palisades is a peak, renowned in traditional times throughout Hawai'i for a ceremony, held long before Europeans arrived in these islands. People gathered from everywhere to witness flaming firebrands tossed from this formidable perch into the dark of night to celebrate the graduation of hula adepts after a season of sequestered practice and training.

Ha'alele aku iā Nu'alolo, ho'okele i Lehua
Heahea mai ana 'o Ni'ihau, pūpū o Kahelelani.
*[We] departed Nu'alolo and sailed for Lehua
Ni'ihau beckons, renowned for its exquisite shells.*



The Crew

We left the safe anchorage at Nu‘alolo at dawn, motoring into a windless sea. Lehua, a dormant cinder cone, eroded by the sea into a crescent shaped islet, stands companion to the northernmost tip of Ni‘ihau, separated only by a narrow channel. This little island, rich in seafood has long be used by Ni‘ihauans as an extra repository for certain kinds of fish and crustaceans. “Mona” Shintani, our lone Ni‘ihau crewmember and head engineer told us how the people of his island would cross the channel to catch the delicious ‘āholehole there. Crewmembers of a small wa‘a accompanying us, quickly went ashore to gather ‘opihi for their return to Kaua‘i. The smaller wa‘a parted company with Hōkū Alaka‘i, in the lee of the main island just after we negotiated the channel. After a long passage from Kaua‘i marked by no discernible wind requiring the tiny auxiliary outboard to labor for long hours beyond its normal use, the wind rose steadily from over the land. With no engine noise and the sails fully set, Hōkū Alaka‘i slid effortlessly southward through the calm leeward waters on the steady, gentle but robust, makani kuahiwi (land breeze), the favorite surfing wind of Elia and the companions of his youth.

Kele iho i lalo, ‘ike ‘ia mai ‘o Pukaiki.

Pili iā Pu‘uwai, home o na makamaka, Ho‘i ke aloha no Elia.

Sailing downward [of the wind], Pukaiki is seen

Close to Pu‘uwai, home of close friends, affection for Elia returns.



Sailing southward, leaving the uninhabited northern coast of the island behind, we glimpsed Pukaiki, a section of land marked by a coconut grove, where the houses of the Ni‘ihau families began to appear.

“Pukaiki, wai māpuna, ‘āina i ke kula mānienie.

Pukaiki, wai māpuna koni i ka ‘ili.”

Pukaiki, bubbling springwater, homeland on the plain of mānienie grass

Pukaiki, frothy springwater throbbing on the skin.



Pukaiki is the small grouping of houses in the lower left. Pu‘uwai the larger group on the right.

While working on a mapping project, documenting the place names of that island, the preceding saying was offered with a chuckle by Malaki Kanahele. Pukaiki is somewhat separated from the greater number of houses at Pu‘uwai but seemed to be a place beloved by Malaki. It is where he rebuilt the buildings in the small kauhale that was his home after the damage of the hurricanes. He related that he had salvaged lumber and other building supplies on Kaua‘i and used those on the house he built at Pukaiki where his children and grandchildren continue to live today. It was also close to the beach that he, Kalihilihi and Elia escaped to when the surf was in good form.



Pāpā Malaki

Pu‘uwai, the main village is nearby and is where the majority of Ni‘ihau families live. This little settlement nestles in groves of kiawe and other trees behind and along the shore and coastal dunes about halfway down the leeward coast of the island. Here, Kawika, known as Elia to most of the friends of his youth, spent the time that was to form his character and influence so greatly the kind of man he would become.

Elieli kau mai i luna o Kawaihoa

Huli ho'i ma waho a'o Ka'ula, pi'i mai 'o Ka'ulakahi.

A profound reverence alights on Kawaihoa,

[We] Turn and return [to Kaua'i] off the island of Ka'ula, Ka'ulakahi rises [before us].



Kawaihoa

We arrived at Kawaihoa, a prominent hill at the furthest southern tip of Ni'ihau, as the sun plunged towards the ocean. Open ocean swells greeted us there now that the land no longer sheltered us from the long fetch of the trade wind swell marching in off the open ocean. The wind freshened and as the canoe pitched vigorously in the now boisterous waters, the forestay cable parted company from the bow sprit where it was anchored. Tava, a Marquesan crewmember, seasoned veteran of many canoe voyages, jury rigged a connection for the all important “backbone” of the jib sail. By the time he had completed the job, the sun was on the horizon and we were well south of Ni'ihau. In fact, Ka'ula islet, embattled bombing target and home to thousands of seabirds lay only a few miles to our starboard. Described in Hawaiian proverbs as the “taproot” of the archipelago, it was the first time most of us had ever come close enough to see it. Tacking into the wind, we turned northward to begin the return leg to Kaua'i. The windward cliffs of Ni'ihau lay on our leeward beam and Kaua'i was a distant shadow to windward as we began the strenuous climb up the restless Ka'ulakahi channel.



Tava teaching.

Aia i hea 'o Anaki, kuikui i ka po
aniani mai ana ka makani Kalalau, 'o'ili 'o Pohakuao.

Where is Anaki, light[house] in the night?

The Kalalau wind beckons, Pohakuao appears [in the dawn].



Anaki stands high above the beach at Miloli'i.

We sailed hard on the wind as night folded us in its wings with the rugged, boulder ridden coast slowly creeping towards us in our lee as the gradually diminishing wind in our faces failed us and the deep night wrapped its cloud ridden shroud over the stars. The valiant little auxiliary outboard, known as the “iron paddle” in some quarters, again was called upon to get us across the channel. In traditional times, certain strategic places were used as navigational landmarks. Some were known to have fires lit as beacons on them to lead the fishing canoe fleet home after a long night pursuing malolo and other fish. The place Anaki is one mentioned in an old chant connecting Ni‘ihau with Kaua‘i. After years of searching for its location, a handwritten map generated in the late 1800’s revealed that it was a mountain peak on the southwest shoulder of Kaua‘i, above the area fronted by Nu‘alolo and its companion valley to the south, Miloli‘i. This night, however, we were guided, not by the a night beacon from Anaki, but by the lights given off by radar stations for tracking missiles that have been built by the military and other companies on that part of Kaua‘i.

After chugging upstream all night through the channel waters we arrived off the deserted desert coast of Mānā, Kaua‘i, passing Nohili and Polihale two other notable places mentioned in the orature of our people. After many hours of breasting the waves, the brave little engine began to sputter, falter and die sporadically.



Flaming dawn off Nā Pali.

As we passed a mile or so offshore of Nu‘alolo and ‘Awawapuhi in the pre-dawn hours, first aid administered by our two engineers failed to restore its health completely but the little engine that could, continued to propel us slowly over a glassy sea. With the sun beginning to make its ascent behind the island, we limped northward again with the shadowed cliffs standing between us and the dawn. Pale light grew and a halo of predawn pastels fringed the 3000 foot high ramparts of Nā Pali climbing from the sea topped by the Alaka‘i, a rainforest and bog cresting the summit of Kaua‘i.



The calm before the jump into the wind.

A wrinkling of the sea ahead of us displayed the footprints of whispering breezes, forerunners, betraying the arrival of the wind. Increasing in velocity, the clean, fresh, northeasterly boosted us. We made full sail jumping onto the welcome lift generated by the early morning trades providing a well deserved rest for our beleaguered engine. As the light of the sun clambered over the island to windward, a curious knob of basalt embedded in and protruding from the flank of the island appeared in the blue grey shadow of the stalwart cliffs of the coast. Pōhakuao [stone of light] emerged, the first bit of land along those regal cliffs to be touched by the morning sun.

Ka ‘oē a ke kai i ke kino o ka wa‘a,
pilipa‘a i na ‘ale, ho‘ohoheno, i ka lei o ka mokihana.

*The sea resonates against the hulls of the canoe,
closely slicing through the ocean swells, the lei of Mokihana is cherished.*

Slicing cleanly upwind, the slender hulls of Hōkū Alaka‘i resonated with the constant murmuring rhythm train of swells passing under us as we fetched out on a long tack away from the island towards the empty northern Pacific. We had to shorten sail while in proximity to the land as the wind accelerated in response to the venturi effect of the moving air bending around the northwest corner of Kaua‘i in the rising heat of the day. An hour or so later, well out into the seaway, we shook out the reefs and stretched into our full wardrobe of sails. We held this course for several hours, leaving the island far in our lengthening wake, awaiting the discerning calculation and pronouncement of Captain Kalepa for the appropriate time to reverse our direction and tack back towards our destination and anchorage for the night at Hanalei.

The perspective of seeing Kaua‘i from this distance, far out at sea, brought on the realization of how much affection I, being a native of this island, have for my island home. The bond for Kaua‘i is affirmed in the last line of the verse in which the lei of Mokihana represents the island on which it is endemic and recognized by the Hawaiian people as the fragrant floral symbol of this, the oldest of the inhabited Hawaiian islands. All Hawaiians feel a great bond of affection for their islands of their birth. Aloha ‘āina is one way this relationship is expressed. I know that both Kawika and Malaki, had a deep and abiding affection for their home island, Ni‘ihau.

Hā‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana,
Ho‘iHo‘i ‘ia a‘e ke aloha pumehana no Kapahulehua.
*Let the refrain of the story be told,
of the returning of warm affection for Kapahulehua.*

This song ends in a way traditional to many Hawaiian songs with the “hā‘ina” verse, the restating of the theme. In this case, returning affection and paying homage to shipmate, mentor and friend, to the gentle, caring man, Kapena Elia Kawika Kapahulehua and the islands we call home.

HUI- E hū mai ana ka makani kuahiwi ‘olu‘olu.
E hū mai ana ka hali‘a aloha no Kawika Kapahulehua.
*The comforting mountain wind wells up [filling our sails]
A fond remembrance of affection rises [within] for Kawika Kapahulehua.*



Last tack home. Having it made in the shade.