

Opening Prayer for the Hula Pahu

Ke akua uwalo i ka la'i e,
E hea wale ana iluna o Puaa-
hulu-nui,
Ke akua pee i ka lau kiele,

O'u makua i kui lei,

E Kui no oe a e lei no makou a.

The god who shouts aloud in the calm,
Is calling from the heights of Puaa-
hulu-nui,
This is the god that conceals himself
amidst the kiele leaves,
Who strung the wreaths (of honor) for
our forefathers to wear.
String us wreaths that we, too, may wear.

Kalani Kamanomano

Eia o Kalani ka-manomano
Ka manomano heke o ke kapu,
Ka honu peekua wakawaka,
Pipii ka unahi ma ke kua,
Hiolo ka unahi ma ke alo,
Ma ka maha opi o Kalani,
Kalani ka hiapo, kama kapu,

Hanau mua o Hawaii,
Ka ilio nukea ma ka lani,
Eia la ke o nei.

Here is our chief, our sacred one,
He of the strictest kapus.
A turtle with a horny shelled back,
With scales up the back,
Scales down the front,
Close to his wrinkled jowl.
The chiefess is his first-born child,
a sacred child,
First-born chiefess in Hawaii,
A white-fanged dog in the heavens,
We sing of her always.

This hula chant was said to have been composed by a god. This is the legend to which it belongs:

A beautiful young, kapu chiefess of Kauai was noticed to be continuously drowsy all day and when night fell, she was eager to retire into her private sleeping house and go to sleep.

Her father questioned her, but finding no satisfactory answer, consulted his kahunas. They told him she was in love with a sea god and that if he wished to see him for himself to set guards at intervals from her house to the shore. These guards were to maintain a perfect silence and when the god left just before the break of dawn, to gesture to the next one farther on when he had passed.

The chief and his kahunas were on the shore to see which form he would take before going out to sea.

Just before the dawn, a hand was seen to move to one side the mat that covered the doorway of the chiefess' sleeping house and a handsome youth emerged. He walked quickly to the beach and there he vanished. As he passed, a guard signaled by gesturing to the next guard that he was going that way.

The watching chief saw the youth vanish among the vines that grew over the sand and soon a huge, scaly and thick shelled turtle was seen to move toward the sea and swim away.

The following night the chiefess waited in vain for her loved. He did not come in person but instead he appeared to her in a dream and said, "You will never see me any more for I was seen by many eyes when I left you last night. When our child is born name her Honu (Turtle) for me. Listen, this is the name chant that you must sing for her and for her descendants, for she is both of divine and royal rank." This is how the chant "Kalani kamanomano" came into being.

The hula pahu was and is a hula of dignity and never danced for the pleasure of a ribald crowd.

Kamakau, in his story of Kamehameha I, tells of Kaahumanu's rank and of her descent from the high chiefs of Hawaii, Maui, Oahu, and Kauai and ends it with this phrase, "He honu peekua wakawaka o Kaahumanu," (a thick shelled turtle was Kaahumanu) or in other words, a descendant of this turtle god.

In the olden days the priests scanned the sky for signs and omens, and if the ever-changing clouds assumed the shape of a dog with bared fangs facing the land with tail on the seaward side, it foretold the coming of invaders that would slaughter and abuse the people, but if the dog-shaped cloud faced the sea with fangs bared, then the inhabitants, under the leadership of their