

New Musical Tradition

“Music serves to enliven many an hour of sadness, or what would be sadness otherwise. It is an expression of the emotions of the heart, a disperser of gloomy clouds.”

(Juliette Montague Cooke; Punahou)

Since the beginning of time, every culture has developed means of passing on important information to its people. For Hawaiians, there was no written language until the 1820s. The missionaries introduced the alphabet which made it possible to represent Hawaiian language in the written form. Until then, all information was passed orally through the use of songs, chants, and poems.

Hawaiians devised various methods of recording information for the purpose of passing it on from one generation to the next. The chant (mele or oli) was one such method. Elaborate chants were composed to record important information, e.g. births, deaths, triumphs, losses, good times and bad.

In most ancient cultures, composing of poetry was confined to the privileged classes. What makes Hawai'i unique is that poetry was composed by people of all walks of life, from the royal court chanters down to the common man.

All poetry contain layers of 'hidden meanings,' sometimes understandable only to those who are sensitized to different levels of subtleties. Hawaiian chants are no exception. A skilled chanter would oftentimes weave kaona or double-meaning creating different levels of possible translation.

So while some may hear the mele and think it means one thing, others more familiar with the context would understand a very different interpretation. It is often said that it is nearly impossible to fully understand the meaning of a chant because of this use of kaona. Only the intended recipient of the composition would be able to grasp its true meaning. (Lenchanko; KSBE)

Music, particularly drumming, was traditionally important in Hawaiian ritual. A drum would have been played as part of hula - a larger version was used in temples.

The seated musician normally played the pahu with one hand and a smaller drum, sometimes tied to the knee, with the other. (British Museum) Hawaiian musical traditions are essentially vocal. Percussive musical instruments are never played alone, but always to accompany chanting and dancing.

Chants - Mele/Oli

Within the overall category of mele/oli there are 1) genealogies, 2) tales of powerful chiefs, 3) stories of the beauty of various lands, and 4) expressions of love to woo a potential lover.

Mele Kāhea

A mele kāhea is usually associated with hālau hula (hula schools) used by the haumana (student) to ask permission to enter the hālau. A mele kāhea could equally be applied to asking permission to enter a person's home, or to entering a forest, the dwelling of the gods. A mele kāhea might also be used before joining a ceremony, or sometimes just to entice a learned person to share knowledge. Mele kāhea were sometimes chanted by the gods themselves whenever they went in search of higher understanding.

Mele Aloha

One of the more broader categories of mele and oli, a mele aloha is composed to show an affection and a bond between the composer and the recipient of the mele. There are many different types of mele aloha which cover a range of levels of affection: love for a friend, love for the ‘āina (land), love for a hoā kipa (guest), etc.

Mele Kū‘auhau & Mele Ko‘ihonua

Mele kū‘auhau and mele ko‘ihonua are two specific categories of chants that facilitate the telling of a person’s genealogy. These chants were sometimes very lengthy and could take hours to perform. As such, a successful chanter of these two types of mele was held in high regard for his/her prowess in the art and was often times a member of the royal court. It was not a task to be taken lightly, for a slight error could cost the chanter his or her life.

Mele ‘Āina

Hawaiian society and religion was largely based on an appreciation for the land on which Hawaiians lived. Hawaiians believe that the ‘āina (land) was an ancestor, constantly providing food and shelter resources for a healthy daily life. Mele ‘āina were dedicated to the land. They speak of the beauty of a place. Because these mele contained layers of kaona, or hidden meaning, the true beauty of the poetry would continue to unfold itself to those who are closer to that particular ‘āina than it would to the general public.

Mele Inoa

Name chants, or mele inoa, were composed for mostly for the chiefly class in ancient Hawai‘i. These chants honor each individual chief or chiefess and their various attributes. By proclaiming the deeds of an ali‘i also would elevate the status of an ali‘i in the eyes of the public. With the use of kaona, sometimes the true message of a mele inoa reveals itself only to the recipient of a mele inoa, thus sealing a bond between the honored individual and the composer. (Lenchanko; KSBE)

Hawaiians consider respect and humility to be an essential quality in approaching any task. So in addition to knowing the words, the chant must be presented with the right ‘ano, the proper spirit and intention. It is possible for one’s request to be denied without the right ‘ano.

kepakepa	<i>conversational style; the most common style in early Hawai‘i</i>
olioli kāholo	<i>oli style where the voice has vibrato at the end of the mele</i>
olioli ‘i‘i	<i>oli style where the voice has vibrato in the first line of the mele</i>
ho‘āeae	<i>oli style in which extra vowel sounds are added to words; for example, to chant “aloha,” the sound might be “alouohaeie”</i>
ho‘ouēuē	<i>oli style that sounds like crying</i>

Missionaries Introduce Harmony and Choral Singing (and New Instrumentation)

“As the Hawaiian songs were unwritten, and adapted to chanting rather than metrical music, a line was measured by the breath; their hopuna, answering to our line, was as many words as could be easily cantilated at one breath.” (Bingham)

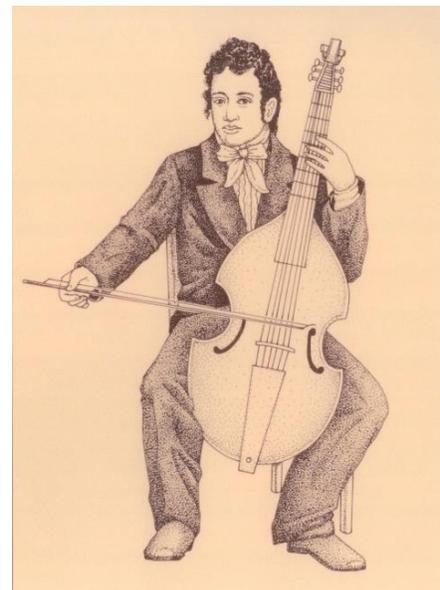
The Pioneer Company of missionaries (April, 1820) introduced new musical traditions to Hawai‘i - the Western choral tradition, hymns, gospel music, and Western composition traditions. It was one of strophic hymns and psalm tunes from the late-18th century in America. The strophic form is one where different lyrics are put to the same melody in each verse. Later on, with the arrival of new missionaries, another hymn tradition was introduced was the gospel tune with verse-chorus alternation. (Smola)

When the American Protestant missionaries first arrived in the Islands, they broke into song. Hiram Bingham notes that on April 1, 1820, off Kawaihae, Kalanimōku came onboard their boat. “Then, ere the excitement of the chiefs' visit was over, Mr. Thurston and his yoke-fellow (Bingham speaking of himself) ascended the shrouds ...”

“... and, standing upon the main-top (the mission family, captain and crew being on deck), as we gently floated along on the smooth silent sea, under the lee of Hawaii's dark shores, sang a favorite song of Zion (Melton Mowbray), which they had sung at their ordination at Goshen, and with the Park St. Church choir, at Boston, on the day of embarkation.”

Once established in the Islands, missionaries used songs as a part of the celebration, as well as learning process. “At this period, the same style of sermons, prayers, songs, interrogations, and exhortations, which proves effectual in promoting revivals of religion, conversion, or growth in grace among a plain people in the United States was undoubtedly adapted to be useful at the Sandwich Islands. ... some of the people who sat in darkness were beginning to turn their eyes to the light”. (Bingham)

The missionaries also introduced new instrumentation with their songs. Humehume (George Prince, son of Kauai’s King Kaumuali‘i) was given a bass viol or ‘Church Bass’ (like a large cello) and a flute that he had learned to play well. He returned to the Islands with the Pioneer Company. Later, church organs, pianos, melodeons, and other instruments were introduced to the Islands.



When the missionaries first arrived at Kailua-Kona in 1820, King Kamehameha II and his entourage came aboard the Brig Thaddeus and listened to the hymns sung by the missionaries.

“Our singing, aided by the bass viol, on which G. P. Tamoree (Humehume) played, was pleasing to the natives, and will probably have a salutary influence in winning them to approve and to engage in Christian worship.” (Journal of the Mission, Missionary Herald, May, 1821)

It has been stated that formerly there was no word in the Hawaiian language for singing as we know it. The modern term is hīmeni an adaptation of the word hymn. The native Hawaiians first obtained an idea of real melody from the hymn singing of the missionaries. (Roberts)

Western string instruments and Christian hymns (hīmeni) transformed earlier forms of Hawaiian music and provided ingredients for new musical forms.

Bingham and others composed Hawaiian hymns from previous melodies, sometimes borrowing an entire tune, using Protestant hymn styles. In spite of the use of English throughout Hawaii, the Hawaiian language continues to be used in Bible reading and in the singing of himeni (hymns) in many Christian churches. Himeni still preserve the beauty of the Hawaiian language. (Smithsonian)

“Before the year 1823 had closed (Bingham and missionary William Ellis) had prepared a small hymn book of sixty pages, of which 2000 copies were printed in December. Mr. Ballou says: ‘A large proportion of the hymns were original, but among them were translations of Watt's 50th Psalm, Pope's 'The Dying Christian to his Soul,' several choruses from Handel's Messiah.’”

“This book also contained a translation of more than forty select passages of Scripture.” It was called Na Himeni Hawaii; he me ori ia lehova, ke Akua mau’. “Literally-translated the title reads thus, ‘The hymns Hawaiian for the praise of Jehova the God continuing’”. (Westervelt; Thrum)

On October 23, 1823, missionaries wrote: “We are about to put to press within a few days an edition of twenty hymns prepared principally by Mr. Ellis. We purpose also to print a catechism and a tract.” (Ballou & Carter)

“A large proportion of the hymns were original, but among them were translations of Watts' 50th psalm, of Pope's ode, The dying Christian to his soul, Owhyhee's idols are no more (originally Taheite's), the jubilee hymn, several choruses from Handel's Messiah, &c.” (Ballou & Carter)

This was quickly followed with several editions of the same hymnal with an expanded repertoire, until 1832 when the first children's hymnal was published as ‘Hīmeni Kamali'i’. In 1834, the first Hawaiian language hymnal with musical notation was published, which also included 56 pages of detailed instructions for music teachers to teach Western scales and music as well as 194 hymns; it even included some songs with local place names. (Mission Houses)

“In view of the fact that the best modern Hawaiian music, now known the world over, owes much to the musical form of these early hymns, one wishes that history had been less restrained. Yet, even in default of any direct, consecutive record, one may piece out quite a little of the story of Hawaiian hymns from references in early letters and accounts of their printing.”

“And when one has the good fortune to touch with one's own hands many of the early songbooks printed in Hawaiian, the search toward a complete account of them becomes a fascinating pursuit.” (Wilcox; Damon The Fiend, March 1935)

“When our Protestant missionaries came to hymnody in Hawaiian - as they very soon did - they reared a natural superstructure upon this rich and rhythmical foundation of the Bible. It was a veritable treasure house.”

“But strangely, too, another very deep-seated source of balance and rhythm and figured speech flowed in the cultural consciousness of the Hawaiian people to whom these new Christian messages were being brought. Instinct in the Hawaiian mode of thought was the impulse and the act of prayer, of supplication, of praise.” (Wilcox; Damon The Fiend, March 1935)

Singing Schools

On June 8, 1820, Rev. Hiram Bingham set up the first singing school at Kawaiaha'o Church. He taught native Hawaiians Western music and hymnody. These 'singing schools' emphasized congregational singing with everyone actively participating, not just passively listening to a designated choir.

By 1826, there were 80 singing schools on Hawai'i Island alone. By the mid-1830s, church choirs began to become part of the regular worship. This choral tradition partially grew out of the hō'ike, or examination, when the students being examined would sing part of their lessons.

This later grew into the singing competitions begun in the early 20th-century by Theodore Richards and Rev. FS Scudder at Kamehameha Schools. This is a tradition that still goes on today. Unlike missionaries in other parts of Polynesia, the American Protestant missionaries in Hawai'i taught musical literacy. (Smola)

Hawai'i Aloha - Love always for Hawai'i

He was a citizen of the Islands and fluent in the English and Hawaiian languages; he composed many Hawaiian poems and songs. He wrote a song that expressed his feelings for the Islands; they are shared by many, then and now.

"For more than 100-years, love of the land and its natural beauty has been the poetry Hawaiian composers have used to speak of love. Hawaiian songs also speak to people's passion for their homeland and their beliefs." (Hawaiian Music Museum)

Next time you and others automatically stand, hold hands and sing this song together, you can thank an American Protestant missionary, Lorenzo Lyons, for writing Hawai'i Aloha. Hawai'i Aloha has three verses, but most typically sing the first verse and repeat portions of the chorus:

E Hawai'i e ku'u one hānau e
Ku'u home kulaiwi nei
'Oli nō au i nā pono lani ou
E Hawai'i, aloha ē

O Hawai'i, o sands of my birth
My native home
I rejoice in the blessings of heaven
O Hawai'i, aloha

Hui:
E hau'oli nā 'ōpio o Hawai'i nei
'Oli ē! 'Oli ē!
Mai nā aheahe makani e pā mai nei
Mau ke aloha, no Hawai'i

Chorus:
Happy youth of Hawai'i
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Gentle breezes blow
Love always for Hawai'i

[Click HERE for a rendition of Hawai'i Aloha by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole.](#)

Rev. Lorenzo Lyons (Makua Laiana 'Father Lyons') and his wife Betsey arrived with the Fifth Company of American Protestant missionaries on May 17, 1832. He was stationed at Waimea, Hawai'i Island; he was a translator and lyric poet. By 1837, he was listed as editor, author, or translator of many hymns. Lyons was also instrumental in the development and publishing of "Ka Lira Hawai'i: (The Hawaiian Lyre) which included 226 "standard church tunes" and 95 "chants in common use in Hawaiian Churches". (Smola)

Nā Lani Eha

In May, 1839, King Kamehameha III and the Chiefs presented a letter to the Hawaiian Board of Missions requesting that a separate school be established for the education of the Chiefs' children. He petitioned the General Meeting then in session to assign Mr. Amos Starr Cooke and his wife, Juliette Montague Cooke to do this work.

In a letter requesting the Cookes to teach and Gerrit P Judd to care for the children, King Kamehameha III wrote:

Greetings to you all, Teachers - Where are you, all you teachers? We ask Mr. Cooke to be teacher for our royal children. He is the teacher of our royal children and Dr. Judd is the one to take care of the royal children because we two hold Dr Judd as necessary for the children and also in certain difficulties between us and you all.

The main goal of this school was to groom the next generation of the highest ranking chief's children of the realm and secure their positions for Hawaii's Kingdom. Seven families were eligible under succession laws stated in the 1840 Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai'i; Kamehameha III called on seven boys and seven girls of his family to board in the Chief's Children's School.

The students ranged from age two to eleven, and differed widely in their temperaments and abilities, goals and destinies. But they all had one common bond: their genealogical sanctity and mana as Ali'i-born.

The Chiefs' Children's School was unique because for the first time Ali'i children would be brought together in a group to be taught, ostensibly, about the ways of governance. The School also acted as another important unifying force among the ruling elite, instilling in their children common principles, attitudes and values, as well as a shared vision.

In this school were educated the Hawai'i sovereigns who reigned over the Hawaiian people from 1855, namely, Alexander Liholiho (King Kamehameha IV,) Queen Emma, Lot Kamehameha (King Kamehameha V,) King William Lunalilo, King David Kalākaua and Queen Lydia Lili'uokalani. No school in Hawai'i has ever produced so many Hawaiian leaders in one generation.

While they boarded at the school, Mrs. Cooke became the 'mother' of these royal children and was responsible for all facets of their upbringing and education. She loved to read, and encouraged the children to read also. Although the children had to be encouraged to speak English, she knew the Hawaiian language very well and spoke fluent Hawaiian. Above all, she was an excellent musician, and introduced them to the joy of singing.

Since chanting had been the tradition in Hawaiian culture, a latent natural talent was released when the Hawaiians were introduced to the phenomena of melody and harmony. The children at the Chiefs' Children's School embraced their music lessons with verve and enthusiasm. Singing came to them naturally, and they loved their music lessons. (Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame)

In 1995, when the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame selected its first ten treasured composers, musicians and vocalists to be inducted, 'Na Lani Eha', (The Royal Four), were honored as the Patrons of Hawaiian music.

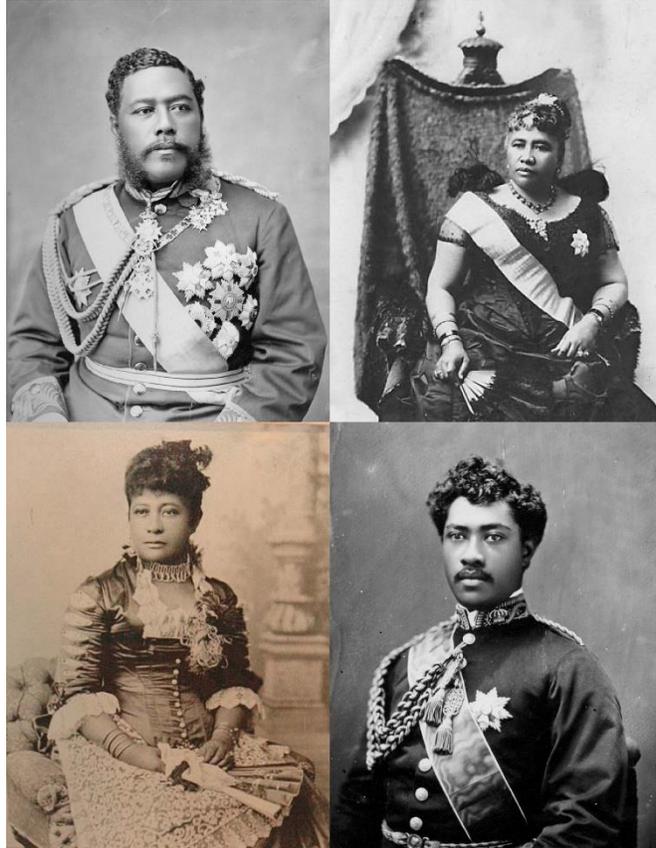
‘Na Lani Eha’ comprises four royal siblings who, in their lifetimes, demonstrated extraordinary talent as musicians and composers. They were, King Kalākaua, his sister, Hawai‘i’s last queen, Lili‘uokalani, their brother, the prince, Leleiōhoku, and their sister, the princess, Likelike, mother of princess Ka‘iulani.

In August 2000, ‘Ka Hīmeni Ana’, the RM Towill Corporation’s annual contest at Hawai‘i Theatre for musicians playing acoustic instruments and singing in the Hawaiian language, was dedicated to missionary Juliette Montague Cooke, the Chiefs’ Children’s teacher and mother.

Said John Montague Derby, Sr., who accepted this honor for the Cooke family, “(it is) with gratitude for the multitude of beautiful Hawaiian songs that we enjoy today which were composed by her many students.”

The best known of the songs composed by The Royal Four are:

- King Kalākaua’s Hawaiian Anthem, "Hawai‘i Pono‘i", "Koni Au I Ka Wai", and "Ninipo"
- Queen Lili‘uokalani’s "Nani Na Pua" (which is thought to be the earliest published Hawaiian song), "Aloha Oe", the "Queen’s Jubilee", "Ku‘u Pua I Paokalani", and "Ke Aloha O Ka Haku", (the Queen’s Prayer)
- Prince Leleiōhoku’s "Adios Ke Aloha", "Hole Waimea", "Moani Ke ‘Ala", and "Nani Waipi‘o"; and
- Princess Likelike’s "‘Āinahau", "Ku‘u Ipo I Ka He‘e Pue One", and "Maika‘i Waipi‘o" which was Princess Ka‘iulani’s favorite song. (Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame)



*Kalākaua
Likelike*

*Lili‘uokalani
Leleiōhoku*

Missionary Period

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 184-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai‘i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands.

Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)