

MEI 2015

Mālama Honua Voyage

Kamehameha Schools

Mele – songs and chants – are integral in chronicling Hawaiian events, history, geography, relationships, thoughts, feelings, memories, inspirations, and more.

In honor of our wayfinding heritage, we present chants and songs that range in themes from ancient chiefly migrations to such present day voyaging canoe icons as Hōkūle‘a and Hawai‘iloa. Learn from their texts and translations, and enjoy the accompanying mele recordings. Foster your own relationship with Hōkūle‘a by following the Mālama Honua Voyage online, and consider composing your own mele by learning from older compositions.

Ia Wa‘a Nui

Mary Kawena Pukui Collection

This traditional pule wa‘a or canoe prayer was revived for the 1975 launch of Hōkūle‘a and has become a standard among the ‘Ohana Wa‘a. At the launching ceremony at Kualoa, Hōkūle‘a was hauled into the water, paddled a good distance out, and finally returned to shore. About halfway to shore, the kahuna began this chant and crew members joined in, accompanied by the sound of the paddles against the hull.

“Instructions for the chant rhythm were as follows: ‘The stroke is slow. The paddle is struck a little in front of the paddler on the return of the paddle. The timing is thus: ia wa‘a (thump) nui (thump), ia wa‘a (thump) kioloa (thump), ia wa‘a (thump) peleleu (thump)...” – Polynesian Voyaging Society, pvs.kcc.hawaii.edu

The first ten lines are usually chanted through three times. Then, line 11 releases the kapu with the pre-Christian pule ending, “‘Āmama, ua noa!” In the accompanying audio file, the pule wa‘a text is chanted once.

Ia wa‘a nui	<i>That large canoe</i>
Ia wa‘a kioloa	<i>That long canoe</i>
Ia wa‘a peleleu	<i>That broad canoe</i>
A lele māmala	<i>Let the chips fly</i>
A manu o uka	<i>The bird of the upland</i>
A manu o kai	<i>The bird of the lowland</i>
‘I‘iwi pōlena	<i>The red Hawaiian honeycreeper</i>
A kau ka hōkū	<i>The stars hang above</i>
A kau i ka malama	<i>The moon, too</i>
A pae i kula	<i>And land ashore</i>

‘Āmama, ua noa!

‘Āmama, the kapu is lifted!