THE FEATHER SKIRT OF NĀHIʻENAʻENA:
AN INNOVATION IN POSTCONTACT HAWAIIAN ART

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Recent study has focused on the meaning and symbolism of Hawaiian featherwork and on individual pieces as possible examples of the postcontact transformation of artistic forms. A difficulty for this study has been the problem of dating cloaks and connecting their symbols to surviving Hawaiian traditions.

There is, however, one example of a major innovation in Hawaiian featherwork that is firmly dated and placed, for which we have contemporary sources, and which can be associated with Hawaiian literature. The feather pāʻū ‘skirt’ of Nāhiʻenaʻena (1815-36 or 1837) was created for that princess in Lahaina, Maui, to wear at the reception of her brother, Liholiho, King Kamehameha II (1797-1824), on his return from England in 1825.2

The feather skirt excited much admiring comment among contemporaries. The missionary, Hiram Bingham, describes it on the occasion of its first use, the reception in Honolulu on May 7, 1825, for the officers of the Blonde, the British ship that returned to Hawaiʻi the corpses of the king and his queen, Kamāmalu, who had died in England:

> a splendid yellow feather pau, or robe, nine yards in length and one in breadth, manufactured with skill and taste, at great expense . . . In its fabrication, the small bright feathers were ingeniously fastened upon a fine netting, spun without wheels or spindles, and wrought by native hands, from the flaxen bark of their olona, and the whole being lined with crimson satin made a beautiful article of "costly array," for a princess of eight years.3

In 1829, at a reception for the officers of the Vincennes connected to the dedication of Kawaiahaʻo church, Nāhiʻenaʻena wore the pāʻū and was vividly described by the missionary C. S. Stewart:

the opportunity was taken of exhibiting so much of their former style of dress, etc., as would be consistent with modesty of person and propriety of deportment . . . That there might be as little departure as possible from the primitive dress, without a sacrifice of modesty, the princess wore only a loose slip of black satin, made close in the neck, with long sleeves; over which, from the waist down appeared, as she was seated in the Turkish attitude, the most beautifully wrought and splendid article of
feathers ever made at the islands — a pau or native petticoat of yellow, edged with alternate points of black and scarlet, and lined with crimson satin — covering, not only the lower part of her person, but spreading widely in rich careless folds, over the whole of the platform. A beautiful feather cape, in a pattern of black and crimson on a yellow ground, hung from her shoulders; around her neck were several wreaths, and upon her head a triple coronet of yellow and crimson of the same material.  

In this paper, I shall attempt to arrive at an understanding of the pā'ā of Nāhiʻenaʻena from artistic form, historical documents, cultural accounts, and Hawaiian-language literature. 

I shall first sketch some general points about featherwork, which differ in emphasis from others recently expressed. Although war was one of the main occasions for wearing feather cloaks and helmets, their form is the only basis for an argument that use in battle was their original or primary function. Feather cloaks and helmets were practical against stones and blows (Joppien and Smith 1987b:542f.), but could be pierced by spears (Brigham 1899:7; 1903a:16). The widespread practice of collecting as booty after battle the feather garments of the slain must have qualified the general sense of their protective value.

I shall argue that, by the time of the visit of Captain James Cook in 1778, feather cloaks and helmets were being used on various occasions: “they are only used on the occasion of some particular ceremony or diversion, for the people who had them always made some gesticulations which we had seen used before by those who sung”; “appropriated to their Chiefs, and used on ceremonious occasions”. A red helmet is worn by a boxer during the makahiki games conducted for Cook (Joppien and Smith 1987b:532). A cloak and helmet appear in Webber’s print of a village in Waimea in a situation that seems neither warlike nor ceremonial (Joppien and Smith 1987b:414f.). One might argue that all the above occasions were considered dangerous by the Hawaiians — for instance, that the chief depicted at Waimea was accompanying the visiting party of foreigners and felt he needed protection — but the word “diversion” is harder to interpret in this way.

In Hawaiian literature, cloaks can be worn on a variety of occasions and can be used in different ways; for instance, they can be wagered. I have not found texts in which they were bartered, as was done during Cook’s visit. The famous runner, ‘Ele‘io, wears a feather cloak while delivering it to a chief and saves himself by jumping with it into a fire lit to kill him (Fornander 1916-7:485). A feather cloak and a lei niiho palaoa are hidden under a woman’s sleeping-place (p.497). A full review of Hawaiian literature is needed before the significance of cloaks and their uses can be adequately defined. Cloaks and helmets were, of course, worn on a variety of occasions after Cook.
The use of featherwork to express status seems as important as protection in the journals of the Cook voyage, which clearly describe cloaks as signs of prestige, further differentiated by variations in materials and size: “these cloaks are made of different length in proportion to the rank of the wearer... The inferior chiefs have also a short cloak... made of the long tail feathers of the cock...”12 Similarly, the kähili ‘feather fly-whisk’ can ‘kuhikuhi’ betoken the chief (Malo n.d.:XXII:6).

As to the continuing religious significance of feather objects, I shall argue that Nāhi‘ena‘ena’s skirt can be understood only from Hawaiian religious concepts. Hawaiian texts as late as the 20th century demonstrate the dependence of the ideology of leaders on elements of traditional religion (Charlot 1985). In the 1820s, the emphasis on kapu and genealogical rank was marked, with the further complication that two systems were used. The children of Keōpūolani (1780-1823), wife of Kamehameha I, and of undoubted high rank in the traditional system, based their rank primarily on their mother, while a tendency began among the other chiefs to base theirs on closeness to Kamehameha I (Charlot 1985:5f.). Finally, the sense of special clothing as protective can be found among Hawaiians today.

I believe also that we currently know too little about the symbolism of Hawaiian featherwork to judge whether it was abandoned in the postcontact period. A contrary indication is that the introduced art form of quilts was endowed with much of the significance attached to cloaks: they were given names, patterns became family property with kaona, and classical religious practices were applied to them (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1972:192, 202f.). Similarly, quilts were given some of the same functions and social purposes as kapa (Handy and Pukui 1972:44).

Finally, in Hawaiian culture of all periods, religion, politics, and aesthetics cannot be separated without distortion. War itself was an artistic activity with chants of taunting and boasting, hand gestures, the twirling of clubs and spears, the parading of chiefs in their cloaks and helmets, and the lifting of the feather gods. Certainly, Hawaiian literature emphasizes the beauty of the cloaks rather than their protective function. A cloak is perceived as keia mea ulaula maikai ‘this good, glowing-red thing’ (Fornander 1916-7:485). In the famous chant of Kūali‘i, the chief is described in battle as an iridescent vision:

\[\text{Komo Kū i kona ahuula,} \quad \text{Kū comes in his glowing red cloak,}\
\[\text{Kawela o ka ua i ka lani} \quad \text{The heat of the rain in the sky/on the chief,}\
\[\text{Ka la i Kauakahihale,} \quad \text{The sun at Kauakahihale} \]
Moreover, beauty has religiopolitical significance in Hawaiian culture; it is not superficial, but a fundamental category and concern of thinking and practice. In a genealogical cosmic view, beauty is an essential element of the sexual dynamic that impels and perpetuates the universe. A successful ceremony is called nani ‘beautiful’ (Malo 1951:185 [Emerson]; Fornander 1919-20:20-37). Hula shows forth the power of the god (Pukui and Korn 1973:44); a chief is exalted by the beauty of the chants composed for him. The role of beauty in Hawaiian affairs continues until today (Charlot 1985:29f.). Indeed, the effective use of aesthetics and display for purposes of rank, power, and politics is found often in history (and was probably also ultimately connected to religious and “protective” elements). Featherwork clearly impressed Hawaiians and foreigners alike; it is, in fact, the one Hawaiian art form — perhaps the one element of traditional Hawaiian culture — that the missionaries praised without condescension. Featherwork also gave foreigners some affective sense of the exalted place of chiefs in Hawaiian society.

I conclude, therefore, that the function of featherwork to beautify, exalt, and glorify the chief is at least as equally important as that of protecting him or her (the two functions certainly do not exclude each other). In this, I am following the emphasis of Hawaiian texts in which all the chiefly regalia — which are usually practical objects given a special form — contribute to the elevation of the chief in the public eye. In discussing birds, the feathers of which were used for cloaks, Kepelino writes: A ua tapaia teia mau manu etolu, he mau manu ali'i, no to latou nani i tanana 'tu ‘And these three birds were called chiefly birds because of their visual beauty’ (Kepelino 1859:24). Hawaiian featherwork has a number of meanings and uses, and the interpretation of any one object or use must be supported on as broad a basis as possible.

The above remarks can be used to criticise Brigham’s very general, tentative description of the historical place of Nāhi’ena’ena’s skirt:

It perhaps marks the transition from a war robe, suitable only for warriors, to a state decoration and mark of high rank which the feather garments assumed in later days.

Nor can the skirt be described simply as “the female equivalent of the ahuula” or feather cloak (Brigham 1903b:15; also Bishop Museum Handbook 1915:12). That a distinction was felt between the two garments can be
seen in the fact that, although Nähi ‘ena’ena refused to wear the pā‘ū at the Blonde reception, she was portrayed shortly thereafter wearing a feather cape by Robert Dampier, the ship's artist. Moreover, feather skirts were never adopted as a general fashion by noble women. Only one was ever made and that in a particular place for a particular person to be worn on a special occasion. No interpretation is adequate that does not account for these facts. As Jean Charlot writes (1958: Preface), “The scope of Hawaiian art history is not so vast that one can lose sight of personalities in the esthetic quest”.

**THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

An understanding of the historical context of the skirt is essential. The arrival of Cook in 1778 opened a new period in Hawaiian history and culture. Kamehameha I (1736?-1819) and his allies unified the islands (Kaua‘i only nominally) and restructured the religion, government, and society. This period is the one experienced and arguably described by the earliest Hawaiian writers on their culture, and to project its innovations into an earlier period is to commit an anachronism.

In religion, Kamehameha’s policy was to unite the different important local and family gods into a national pantheon connected to his court; composite rituals were devised and conducted that related to the nation as a whole. He also exalted the members of his family, helping to introduce, as I have argued, the common use of akua ‘god’ for living chiefs. In order to found a dynasty of the highest possible rank, he married the genealogically highest ranking woman of her time, Keōpūolani, who had that position because she was the child of a brother-sister marriage, the highest form in the Hawaiian system. Chiefly families were traditionally anxious to preserve the highest possible rank by such sibling marriage. This practice was not merely for purposes of prestige, but was connected to the religiopolitical system in which the chief links the universe, the gods, and the community for their mutual perpetuation and well-being.

By Keōpūolani, Kamehameha had three children: Liholiho, Kauikeaouli (later Kamehameha III; 1814-54), and Nähi ‘ena’ena. Since rank was most clearly and securely established through the mother, and Keōpūolani outranked her husband, these children of Kamehameha had a higher genealogical position than their father and were treated accordingly. They also had the highest kapu — expressed as burning or fire and found in the names of Liholiho and Nähi ‘ena’ena — of which they and others were intensely aware. In a chant by Nähi ‘ena’ena herself appears the line He ho’omokapu honua i ola he ‘A separation kapu of the earth in order to live’.

Although a “usurper” against a relative of higher rank, Kamehameha had managed to produce a dynasty of the highest existing genealogical rank according to the traditional system. He did this through Keōpūolani, who, thus, enjoyed
a unique importance and influence among Hawaiians.26 She had perpetuated the
system on the highest level for one more generation — a main theme of Hawaiian
thinking — and had done this in a period of particular worry, as can be seen from
the birth chant of Kauikeaouli.27 That worry is evident in two lines towards the
end of the chant:

Pili lāua, ua mau paha, ‘oia paha? The two [Kamehameha and
Keōpūolani] clung to-
gether, it has endured
perhaps, it is true perhaps?
Pili lāua, ua mau paha. The two [Liholiho and
Kauikeaouli] cling together,
it has endured perhaps.28

With this highest line secure according to the strict traditional system, the other
children of Kamehameha, as well as other chiefs, began to derive their rank from
a principle that was an innovation in that system: closeness to Kamehameha
(Charlot 1985:5f.).

The generation of the three Kamehameha siblings represented a great
opportunity. That is, a child of Nāhi‘ena‘ena by either of her brothers would have
been of the highest genealogical rank; a child by Liholiho would have outranked
one by Kauikeaouli because it would have been of the senior rather than the junior
line (McKinzie, personal communication). Any doubt about which brother was
the father would have made the child po‘ōlua ‘double-headed’; that is, it would
have been considered to have inherited qualities and privileges from both
possible fathers. Nāhi‘ena‘ena represented, therefore, the last opportunity for
such a child to be produced. As such, she was considered the Keōpūolani of her
generation and given first her Hawaiian and later her Christian name.29 She was,
naturally, also the focus of the many worries about the perpetuation of the
Kamehameha line, a constant theme until its extinction with Kamehameha V
(1830-72).30 Finally, the general sense of crisis was even more acute than at the
time of the birth of Kauikeaouli; the highest-ranking child possible was needed
now more than ever.

That the traditional genealogical procedure was not followed in Nāhi‘ena‘ena’s
case is due to three major developments after the death of Kamehameha I. First,
during the struggles over the succession shortly after Kamehameha’s death in
1819, the official state temple religion, developed by him from earlier traditions,
was overthrown along with a number of religious practices. This action has been
erroneously portrayed as a destruction of the entire traditional religion, often
called “the kapu system”, and a detailed study is needed to discover just which
elements were discarded and which retained.31 Many traditional beliefs, cer-
emonies and practices were perpetuated into the period under discussion and, indeed, continue to the present day. Nāhiʻenaʻena herself participated in a traditional ceremony shortly after October 5, 1824, south of Lahaina. Other such traditional religious activity is reported for Lahaina and its neighborhood.

Second, a new, syncretist religion was established and promoted by the ruling dynasty in order to replace the part of the older religion that had been abolished. This new religion, which I would call royalist, was centred on Kamehameha I and his descendants and was expressed in chants, practices and ceremonies. I shall discuss only a few aspects of this movement here. Kamehameha was turned into a god after his death and was used in various ways as the basis of new religious teachings. His death was commemorated, first monthly (Missionary Herald [hereinafter MH] 1821:133; Bingham 1981:144f.), and then annually; the anniversary of his death was established as the major religious festival of the year in feasting and rituals that combined elements that were old and new, native and foreign. The ceremony of 1820 was described as similar “to that which commemorates the birth of American Independence. The chiefs, on such occasions, take pride in dressing themselves, eating, drinking, firing cannon, and displaying their banners from a lofty flag” (MH 1821:133). In 1821, Liholiho asked the missionaries, “Why did you not come to my dinner to-day? This is my great day. By good eating and drinking, and firing many guns, I commemorate the death of my father”. The use of anniversaries — Kamehameha’s and others’ — may itself be partially an element of syncretism inasmuch as based on the Western calendar and influenced by Western customs. A parallel could be the continuation of the Hawaiian practice of tattooing as an expression of mourning, but using the calendar date of Kamehameha’s date rather than a traditional pattern (e.g., Byron 1826:136).

These ceremonies seem to have been based in part on traditional mourning customs, which combined intense expressions of grief, disorderly conduct (such as transgressing the kapu on eating), and feasting and merriment. Such mourning practices — “this singular mode of lamentation over the death of a great man” (MH 1821:133) — became a prime target for the missionaries. In 1821 again, Bingham (1981:127ff.) describes several days of mourning and celebration, including hula, on the death of a chiefess. When the missionaries protested against the dancing on the Sabbath, Liholiho responded, “This is the Hawaiian custom, and must not be hindered.” Boki, the governor of O‘ahu, stated, “Dance we will — no tabu”. The missionaries continued their effort: “Believing the dance to be connected with idolatry and licentiousness, and wholly incompatible with Christianity, we spoke to Liholiho and Kamamalu, of the appearance of idolatry, who affirmed that it was play, and not idol worship”.

The word “play” was used later to describe the major ceremony conducted in Lahaina in 1824, discussed below. The feasting, singing and dancing might seem
to justify the description, but the missionaries perceived correctly that the activities were connected to traditional religious practices. Hawaiians seem to have been trying to protect an aspect of their traditional culture by presenting it as innocuous to critical foreigners, as Samoans later did more successfully.\textsuperscript{36}

Two elaborate syncretist ceremonies have been described. The first was held in Honolulu in 1823 by Liholiho, “an annual feast in commemoration of the death of Tameha-meha, and of the accession of Riho-riho to the throne” (Stewart 1970:114). It began on April the 24th and culminated in a procession on May the 15th.\textsuperscript{37} The two missionaries who described the ceremonies considered them the last major manifestation of a religion on the brink of replacement. Bingham writes that the king:

never renewed them, and probably his successors never will. As a demonstration of the ingenuity of some their ancestors, and as a remembrancer of the glory of departed chieftains, this exhibition may have been, in some sense, useful, though ‘vanity of vanities’ was inscribed on all.\textsuperscript{38}

However, a ceremony of the same syncretist type was conducted in Lahaina on September 6, 1824, to commemorate the death of Keōpūolani on September 16, 1823: a procession featuring Nāhi‘ena‘ena borne aloft behind Kauikeouli and involving feasting, chanting and dancing. In the words of the missionary Stewart, “the more innocent ceremonies were giving place to songs and dances of licentiousness . . . scenes of dissipation and debauchery. Many thousand persons were assembled to witness the celebration, and join in the most heathenish parts of it”.\textsuperscript{39}

Several sources can be suggested for these elaborate ceremonies. For instance, the chiefs were borne in procession similar to the way god images had been carried in the temple ceremonies described for earlier times; this might be an expression of the chiefs’ status as akua. Also, a similar celebration is reported to have been given by Kamehameha I for Ka‘ahumanu and his other wives.\textsuperscript{40} The exaltation of the queens is emphasised in this account as well as in that of the 1823 ceremony (Kamakau 1868a) and accords with the missionary accounts of royalist ceremonies: an expression in all likelihood of a genealogical theme.

Unlike the 1823 ceremony, however, the Hawaiian chiefs were divided in 1824 between participants and nonparticipants. Ka‘ahumanu, Hoapiliwahine, and others refused to dress for the ceremony and downplayed its significance to the missionaries, calling it “the play of children”. Stewart reports that the chiefs of Christian leanings “fully condemned the proceedings on this day. Many of them were evidently much dispirited by them, but said, ‘The prince and princess had no superiors, and could not be controlled in their amusements’”. Stewart’s
description of the organisers of the ceremony is couched in the habitual polemic used against the traditionalist, royalist circle around Nāhīʻenaʻena: "the whole arrangements were under the direction of persons least calculated to conduct them with propriety . . .".  

The reason for this division was the third major new factor in the historical situation in Hawaiʻi: the arrival of the missionaries in 1820. The history and evaluation of the Christianisation of Hawaiʻi are extremely complicated, and I shall discuss only those aspects that are strictly relevant to my subject and period.

Important for our understanding of the skirt of Nāhīʻenaʻena is the fact that three groups were forming among the Hawaiians: a traditionalist party, a pro-missionary party, and a large number of people who were undecided or wavering. Although there were people of conviction in the first two groups, most Hawaiians seem to have had mixed feelings and loyalties. Perhaps the majority of chiefs switched sides at one or more times. Religion and politics were inseparable for all concerned. The high chiefs were a small, intimate group with intense feelings for each other. Nāhīʻenaʻena and Liliha, Boki's wife, were proverbially attached; when Liliha landed from the Blonde in 1825 at Lahaina, "The princess, in utter neglect of all their ancient forms, sprang forward, and . . . threw herself into the arms of Tuini [Liliha], and the latter dropped into the sand, while the tears of the little girl were falling on her breast" (MH 1826:172). Liliha was later buried with the princess. The emotional turmoil of the transition period was correspondingly great.

Nevertheless, contemporary sources speak of the three groups, often in polemical terms. In 1821, Bingham writes of "the circle of the highest chiefs of these islands, balancing, as they were, between idolatry, atheism, and the service of the true God". Kamakau writes, Ua kokuakekahi poe makahana missionari, ao kekahi poe ua lilo maka a o mau o kahoua 'Some people helped with the missionary work, and other people belonged to the perpetuation-of-the-earth side' (Kamakau 1868c). The sense of the traditional phrase mau kahoua is clear from a chant for Nāhīʻenaʻena that will be discussed below: in the Hawaiian ideology of chiefs, the earth endures when the correct chief is generated.

Through missionary sources, much information can be found about those who tended to Christianity. Especially important were the high chiefs of the court and central government, apparently the most organised group. Among Nāhīʻenaʻena's own attendants in Lahaina, the most prominent to lean towards Christianity was Halekiʻi, who moved towards the missionaries before the princess did and was harassed by her former companions, who tried to pull her back into the group. Halekiʻi continued with the Christian party, prayed at meetings, and was described as "instrumental of great good to Nahiʻenaena and others".

Most Hawaiians seem to have been undecided about Christianity in 1824 and early 1825 and were waiting on events. Bingham writes, "Some were, however,
disposed to suspend their opinion on the subject of religion till they should hear a full report, through the voyagers, from England — the land of Christianity and Christian rulers.\textsuperscript{49}

In the traditionalist, antimissionary party could be found a range of types, from adherents of ancient beliefs and rituals to those with loyalty to the Kamehamehas and, thus, to the new royalist religious forms developed by them. In this group can be counted a number of high chiefs at one time or other. One of the most prominent was Boki, whom Laura Fish Judd describes from the missionary perspective:

He wished to crush the rule and influence of Kaahumanu and all her family, as he was averse to the Christian system and the restraint it imposed upon his plans of money-making. He favored rum-selling and immoral practices, used all his powers of persuasion to induce the king to marry his sister, the Princess Nahienaena, according to the old heathen custom.\textsuperscript{50}

In Lahaina, Nāhiʻenaʻena lived in her own circle, which was composed of members of the traditionalist party.\textsuperscript{51} A prominent older member of the circle — or perhaps an outside influence on it — was Wahinepiʻ o, sister of Kalanimoku and Boki, governor of Maui, and thinly veiled opponent of the mission; Nāhiʻenaʻena confessed to the missionary William Richards that she was influenced “principally by Wahinepio, and her guardian Lahini”.\textsuperscript{52} The princess’s circle apparently included in traditional fashion a priest:

She told who were the persons that had heretofore advised her against the Missionaries. And what is a little singular, her priest came to Mr R[ichard]s to acknowledge that he had been bad, that it was he who had induced Nahienaena to sacrifice to the devil, etc.\textsuperscript{53}

I emphasise again that, apart from certain hard-core adherents, the three groups described are loose. Many of the members seem uncertain, even confused, and make many changes over the years. Kekauʻōnohi participates in the royalist, syncretist ceremony in Lahaina in 1824, but refuses to do so in the more traditional ceremony conducted south of Lahaina shortly afterwards.\textsuperscript{54} Kīnaʻu also participates in the syncretist ceremony but later becomes one of the pillars of the church.\textsuperscript{55}

On the other side, Kalanimoku, who, in most reports, is promissionary, seems to be arguing for the sibling marriage in the chief’s council of June 28, 1824. Moreover, Kaʻahumanu and others continued to write classical Hawaiian poetry and to observe some of the kapu. From numerous reports, especially those on prayer — Christians promoted extemporaneous, and Hawaiian religion, memo-
rised (Malo n.d.:XXIV:7) — we can see that the Hawaiians were trying to understand Christianity in a Hawaiian way, that is, as much as possible in accordance with their traditional practices, views and sensitivities. To a certain extent, this was clear to the missionaries, who reacted by restricting church membership and emphasising Western culture along with the Christian religion. The resulting tension led ultimately to the development of distinctively Hawaiian-Christain churches, many of the tendencies of which can be found in this earlier period.

The period under discussion in this article is decisive in the struggle between the traditionalist and the missionary sides. Liholiho will not join the missionaries (Kamakau 1961:255), but leaves for England on November 27, 1823, taking with him an entourage composed of people of different tendencies. The king’s purpose is to see for himself how Christianity operates in a Western nation. Ka’ahumanu is appointed regent, and Kalanimoku, prime minister. In the king’s absence, these two and their allies forcefully promote Christianity (Bingham 1981:205, 212). Christian laws and rules are imposed. On June 22, 1824, Ka’ahumanu’s new laws are promulgated in Lahaina. On August the 27th, she imposes a strict fast and Sabbath-like restriction of activity.56 The traditionalists are waiting for Liholiho’s return to reverse this Christianising movement (Varigny 1874:55), and, as seen above, some of the undecideds are waiting for the king’s report. Instead, in March 1825, news arrives of the death of Liholiho and his queen. The British ship Blonde arrives in Honolulu on May 6, 1825, with the bodies of the royal couple. After Liholiho’s death, Kauikeaouli, now Kamehameha III, dedicates the country to God (Kamakau 1868b), and the Christianisation of the country proceeds rapidly.57

From previous references, Lahaina appears clearly as an important battle ground for the two sides. Lahaina was the regular residence of a number of chiefs.58 The town could also serve as the seat of government and was used for the important conference of June 28, 1824, for which “Most of the principal Chiefs from all the islands now here” (Loomis n.d.:15, June 26, 1824).

Traditionalist and syncretist religion was practised in Lahaina and its area. Lahaina had also been a centre of a Christianising effort since the establishment of a mission on May 31, 1823. For Hawaiians, perhaps even more important was the fact that Keōpūolani was a Maui chiefess, and the island and its people were her charge; she had therefore made a special effort to convert the island and especially Lahaina.59

In 1824 and 1825, the main reason for the town’s importance seems to have been that it was the residence of Nāhi’ena’ena and her circle. For at this time, of all the points of conflict between the traditionalist and the missionary parties — clothes, dance, drinking, and so on — the crucial one was the proposed sibling marriage between the princess and Kauikeaouli. Despite all previous missionary
work, this was the subject of the major meeting in Lahaina of the chiefs’ council on June 28, 1824. The report of Elisha Loomis deserves to be published at length:

Having occasion to go into the village in company of the Chiefs this morning, I found them discussing the propriety of a marriage between the prince and princess... Karaimoku asked me if it was proper for a brother and sister to live together as man and wife. Of course I told him it was not. He said it was a common practice in this country. I informed him and the others present that it was forbidden in the word of God, it was disallowed in civilized communities, and that barreness or weak and sickly children were effects of such improper connexions, an effect which might be noticed even in the beasts of the field. They all seemed to admit of the correctness of these remarks.

In the afternoon the Chiefs had another consultation on the subject of the prince and princess. Hearing of this, Mr. R and myself went immediately to the place where they were assembled. They feel a difficulty in regard to the case in hand. There are no two persons of suitable age of equal rank with the princess in the nation to whom they might be united; though the daughter of Gov. Adams is of suitable age and of a rank not much inferior to the prince. Käikeoeua [Käikio‘ewa] said the offspring of two such Chiefs as the prince and princess would be an “ari nui roi,” a very great chief. We replied, “True, but if they (a brother and a sister) are united, it is highly probable they will have no children.” We asked them if they had ever known an instance where children had sprung from the union of a brother and sister. They mentioned Keopuolani, mother of the prince and princess, she being the child of parents who were brother and sister. We told them we knew of that fact, but that Keopuolani was an only child and weakly. She finally died at an early age. The prince is looked upon as successor to Rihorih and it is thought desirable he should have a wife of high rank, that the royal blood may not be contaminated. 60

The arguments being used on the Hawaiian side are those of the traditionalist party; Keöpuolani is the model for Nahi‘ena‘ena. However, although rank is mentioned, the ideological, religious context of Hawaiian rank — its connection to the perpetuation of the cosmos and society — is not presented to the missionaries. Loomis and Richards did see, however, what an important problem the sibling marriage was to the chiefs. Kalanimoku, usually identified with the promissionary party, and Käikio‘ewa, at this time probably identified more with the traditionalists, had assembled with other chiefs to discuss the matter; and Kalanimoku seemed to be leaning towards the marriage.

In this context, the syncretist, royalist ceremony conducted shortly afterwards
in Lahaina takes on the character of a demonstration. For the traditionalists, the sibling marriage was crucial to the perpetuation not only of their cause but also of their cosmos, as will be clear from the chants studied below. Indeed, that marriage had long been planned, conform to Hawaiian custom, and may have seemed to many already to have been consummated. The love of the two siblings for each other was well known at the time and has assumed a legendary quality that persists today. Loomis reports:

It is well known here that the prince and princess for a considerable time past have lived in a state of incest. This would appear extraordinary in America, as the prince is but ten years of age and the princess less than 7 or 8. It should be remembered, however, that the persons arrive at the age of puberty here much sooner than in a colder climate. Chastity is not a recommendation; the sexes associating without restraint almost from infancy.61

The relation between the siblings was publically expressed by their being seated together at receptions and at the syncretist religious ceremonies.62 The struggle between the traditionalists and the missionaries thus focuses on Nāhiʻenaʻena. Already in 1823, Bingham (1981:192) writes:

The missionaries and their wives earnestly desired to withdraw her from scenes of heathen corruption, and throw around her daily the protecting shield of Christian families. But this could be accomplished only in part, as in that state of the nation she could not well be detached from the native community.

In mid-1824, Nāhiʻenaʻena, Kekauʻōnohi, and Halekiʻi are studying English with Mrs Richards (A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 126, pp.4f. [Richards]).

In early 1825, Nāhiʻenaʻena begins to move towards the missionaries. On February the second, she asks Mrs Richards to receive her again as a pupil of English, a study she had been neglecting for some months (A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 129, p.2). On the 18th, she surprises the missionary group by attending a prayer meeting (MH 1826:143f.). When asked by Hoapiliwahine what induced her to come, she answers:

You have always told me to be strong, to cast off the old way & to walk in the straight path. Your husband has always told me so too: & I remember the words of my old mother Keapuaanif[,] She told me it was a good thing to learn the new way — she told me to love God & Jesus Christ — she told me to mind the word of God — to mind the instructions of my good teachers, to keep the sabbath day & to pray to God. She told
me not to walk with bad companions, not to go in the ways of wickedness. She told you also to watch over me, & counsel me, and give me good instruction. I remember all these words of my good mother & I desire to obey them & therefore I have come here today (A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 129, p.9).

In an important conversation on April the 26th with Richards, she states that people are giving her contradictory advice; she is now tending towards Christianity, but Richards cannot see any particular reason for her move. A partial reason can certainly be found in Nähi‘ena‘ena’s words: her attachment to her mother, who on dying in 1823 had requested “particularly that Nahienaena might be trained up in the habits of Christian and civilized females, like the wives of the missionaries” (Bingham 1981:183; also p.195). Educated to take Keōpūiolani as her model, the princess was, in all likelihood, impressed by her mother’s devotion to the missionary cause. Once Nähi‘ena‘ena moves to the Christian side, the missionaries report favourably on her progress.63

Nähi‘ena‘ena’s joining the promissiory party had a major effect on the Christianisation of Lahaina. In early 1825, Richards told Hoapiliwahine that they should invite to a prayer meeting “‘Those who have cast off their old practices, and have become good.’ She said, ‘There are not many such in Lahaina’” (MH 1826:143). About 10 were eventually invited. After the princess’s adhesion, Hawaiians began to join the missionaries in large numbers, attributed by them to an “effusion of the Holy Spirit”.64

The details of this movement are important for understanding the role of chiefs in the Christianisation and are, I would argue, evidence of some of the first attempts to create a truly Hawaiian form of that religion. That is, Nähi‘ena‘ena started her own prayer group, which apparently began with members of her own circle or court and quickly grew in numbers.65 Toteta, a Tahitian Christian convert and missionary aid, could write: “All the fathers and mothers of this land are ignorant and left-handed; they become children in the presence of Nahienaena, and she is their mother and teacher” (MH 1826:171). Indeed, his journal concentrates almost exclusively on the princess, a tribute from a fellow Polynesian to her importance and rank, an important difference in attitude from that of the American missionaries, whose policy was to de-emphasise nobility (Sinclair 1976:65ff).

Significantly, Nähi‘ena‘ena and her companions had first tried to join Mrs Richards’ prayer group, but, when that missionary wanted to control the membership, they approached a missionary helper, the Tahitian woman, Kaamoku, who allowed them “to meet by themselves”, which they did “under the superintendence of the two Tahitian females, Tauawahine and Kaamoku” (MH 1826:146). In late April, Nähi‘ena‘ena’s meetings were made more official.66 The issue
involved was the control of Christianity in Hawai`i, and the American mission’s policy of only slowly admitting Hawaiians to church membership and even more hesitantly placing them in positions of authority was much criticised both by Hawaiians and by other missionaries.

The efforts of the traditionalists to recover Nāhi`ena`ena are described in the journal of Toteta. The traditionalists consist of “Chiefs, male and female, their friends, their stewards, their attendants, and servants of their attendants”, who “desire to turn her back again to the old way, that they may sin and die together”; to “induce Nahienaena to return to her old sports and plays, and to the pleasures of this world”; “It was by the malicious of the people, old and young, that she was formerly led astray . . . They have given her no rest; but have presented every argument before her that this world could present to win her over to them”.

Nāhi`ena`ena’s emotional state at this time and somewhat earlier can be described only as perturbed. On March the 28th, she rises at midnight to pray and wants to go to the chapel to drive out the “wicked people” she feels are there (MH 1826:145).

In these reports, she speaks of her great fear because of her past un-Christian actions, a theme found in the statements of many converts at the time. Fear was an important aspect of traditional Hawaiian religion, and Christian preachings of an almighty and angry God must have been effective. In Nāhi`ena`ena’s conversation with Richards on April 26, 1825, she refers to a precise object of her fear, clearly a focus of her inner tension in the conflict between traditionalist and Christian ideas. Richards had argued against making a distinction between chiefs and people. Nāhi`ena`ena responded, “I am exceedingly afraid of the feather pau that is making for me — It is a thing to lift up one’s heart”.

This is the context for her reaction when asked to wear the pāʻū at the reception for the officers of the Blonde on May the 7th. Stewart reports:

This article . . . was made at great expense of time and labour during the past year, and designed to be worn by the princess as a pau, or native female dress, at the reception of her brother Rihorihoi, on his expected return. It was the desire of the chiefs that she should wear it, with the wreaths for the head and neck, necessary to form the complete ancient costume of a princess at this interview; but as it was necessary, in order to this [sic], that she should be naked to the waist, nothing could induce her to consent. To escape importunity, she fled to the Mission House early in the morning. She wept so as scarcely to be pacified by us, and returned to the chiefs only in time to take her seat, and have it thrown carelessly about her over her European dress . . .

Stewart emphasises modesty as he does in his description of the later reception for the Vincennes, cited above. But others gave a religious reason. The pāʻū was
too closely identified with Hawaiian religion: "She had, however, some scruples
of conscience about appearing in the ancient style, with feather paus and kahires,
lest God should be displeased with her for seeming to sanction their former
heathenish customs."

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The feather pāʻū was obviously a meaningful object identified with Hawaiian
traditions, and to wear it was a significant act. What, then, was that meaning?
Identifying the source of the pāʻū is important. It was made in Lahaina and,
in view of the great labour and resources involved, by a group with sufficient
manpower to accomplish the work in such a short time and wealth to acquire the
needed number of feathers. This group was obviously not the pro-missionary
party, because the skirt evoked fear in the princess when she moved towards
Christianity. The undecideds were not an organised group. The remaining
possibility is the traditionalist, royalist group, most likely the one centred on
Nāhiʻenaʻena before she joined the missionaries. The chief's residence was, in
fact, the traditional place where such work would be done.

Moreover, Stewart's statement of May 7, 1825, that the skirt had been made
"during the past year", dates the beginning of the work to early May 1824. May
the 8th was the anniversary of the death of Kamehameha I and the occasion of
the major annual celebration of the royalist religion. Moreover, the summer and
early autumn of 1824 was a period of active competition between the tradition-
alist and the missionary groups in Lahaina. As seen above, Kaʻahumanu's
laws were promulgated on June the 22nd; the conference of chiefs took place on
the 28th; on August the 27th, Kaʻahumanu imposed a strict fast on Lahaina; on
September the 6th, a major syncretist, royalist ceremony was conducted, and a
more traditional one in early October south of Lahaina.

The creation of the skirt can, therefore, be ascribed to the traditionalist, royalist
circle around Nāhiʻenaʻena that was, in all likelihood, also responsible for the
syncretist ceremony of 1824. The work itself expressed the ideology of that
group, particularly in its innovation. To make a pāʻū of feathers was to exalt an
article of clothing to a hitherto unattained height and to designate its wearer as
peerless. The very innovation of the art work increased its impact.

Although not a mere equivalent of a feather cloak, the skirt was clearly related
to that art form as a symbol of nobility and, thus, an expression of the traditional
ideology of chiefs (it may also have been endowed with the qualities and powers
associated with cloaks). This was clearly perceived by the missionaries and by
Nāhiʻenaʻena herself, as seen in her conversation with Richards of April 26, 1825.
Reducing the chiefs' consciousness of their rank was a goal of the American
mission. The princess, as reported by Toteta, "desires now to make herself very
low. She does not wish to be exalted by men".
The colour of the cloak is also significant. Kamehameha I had used an all-yellow cloak of precious *mamo* feathers (with some sprinkling of red to enliven the field). This was itself a famous innovation from the traditional use of red. The predominant use of yellow in Nāhī‘ena‘ena’s skirt connects it to the Kamehameha tradition, which was a major ideological factor of the time.

The *pāʻū* as an article of clothing was itself significant for the traditionalists. It had long been outmoded, especially among the chiefs. In 1816, the artist Louis Choris was unable to find a chiefess willing to pose in anything but Western dress; his famous print of a bare-breasted chiefess was a composite of one sketch of a noble in a high-necked dress and another of a commoner in a poor quality *pāʻū* (Jean Charlot:1958:1-7). By the mid-1820s, chiefs usually wore Western clothes, and commoners rag-tag collections of Western and traditional. Most featherwork was reserved almost exclusively for ceremonial occasions. Hawaiian women were very fashion-conscious and assumed Western clothing as soon as possible after contact. But clothing was also an emphasis of the missionary effort to replace Hawaiian culture with Western. The use of the *pāʻū* was, therefore, a revival of a precontact practice with a traditionalist point.

*Pāʻū* are, in fact, a prominent feature of the ceremonies of the syncretist, royalist religious movement. In the ceremony of May 15, 1823, “The only dress of the queen was a scarlet silk *pau*, or native petticoat, and a coronet of feathers”; “The young prince and princess wore the native dress, maro and pau, of scarlet silk.” Some innovation in the *pāʻū* form may be seen in the gigantic cloth skirt of one of the queens-dowager (Stewart 1970:118f.); found also in the ceremonies of 1820 (Thurston 1934:41f.) and 1822 (Tyerman and Bennet 1832:2:64). At the 1824 ceremony in Lahaina, *pāʻū* were also prominent, and the use of tapa was probably also traditionalist (Sinclair 1976:61). *Pāʻū* could also be used on other official occasions, for instance, at a *hoʻokupu* or offering to the chiefs (Sinclair 1976:18). Rituals often preserve older forms of clothing, and people in an earlier period prepared a good *malo* or *pāʻū* for a ceremony.

The *pāʻū* was obviously meaningful for the traditionalists, but the full meaning can be understood only in the context of Hawaiian ideas and practices connected to clothes. Especially important is the *kapu* ‘ili ‘the skin tabu’ practised by many Hawaiians up to the present day: “Clothing, because it touched the body, contained some of the wearer’s *mana*. A garment in close body contact contained more *mana* than an outer wrap...it, like hair or fingernails, could even become bait...for sorcery.” As a result, there were strict regulations about who could wear whose clothing. Moreover, since the body had different parts with different powers, a piece of clothing used for the lower part of the body should not be used for the upper. Such regulations were followed with special strictness in families of chiefs and priests. The *kapu* ‘ili is the context for the well-known tabu against putting on the *malo* of a chief: *Inā i hume ke kanaka*
i kō ke ali‘i malo a ‘ahu i ke kapa paha e make nō (regularised text) ‘If the commoner girded on the malo of the chief or perhaps put on his tapa, he would die indeed’. This kapu applied also to the paʻū of a chiefess (Beckwith 1932:101). Nāhiʻenaʻena’s own at least partial belief in the kapu ‘ili is demonstrated by the fact that it was the reason for conducting the traditional ceremony in early October, 1824, south of Lahaina; she was afraid that some of her clothing might be used for sorcery against her (Sinclair 1976:62).

An article of clothing was, therefore, closely connected to an individual person and — since there was no mass production and clothing had to be fitted — was, in all likelihood, made specially for him or her, just as was Nāhiʻenaʻena’s feather skirt. As a result, people could recognise their own and each other’s articles of clothing even years after seeing them. In Hawaiian literature, especially in stories connected to love affairs, clothes are often used as recognition tokens, the most famous example being the malo of Līloa in the story of ‘Umi.66

A piece of clothing was also connected to the particular part of the body it covered. The connection of the paʻū to a woman’s genitals is clear in several Hawaiian texts. Malo (n.d.: XXII, 16) writes: O ka pau kekahai waʻai, he mea huna i ko kawehine mai ‘The skirt was another valuable item, something to hide the woman’s genitals’. Similarly, in the line of a chant performed while the hula dancer puts on her skirt, I hookakua ia a paa iluna o ka imu ‘The paʻū ‘is wrapped round till secure above the earth oven’. 87

In a culture that considers generation the central power of a universe that has developed as a family line, genitals are of central importance in thinking and practice.88 From infancy they are moulded to increase their fertility, beauty, and pleasurableness and are objects of ritual activity. Genitals are named, and special mele ma‘i ‘genital chants’ are composed in their honour. Such chants also confer to the genitals the “mana of charm and potency”.89 In genital chants and a saying (Pukui 1983: number 848), the strength and power of women’s genitals are emphasised.

Bared genitals can have several meanings in Hawaiian culture.90 Male and female nudity can be a protection against sorcery (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:107). Female genitals can be used in an apotropaic gesture. For instance, a goddess bares her genitals to drive off a spirit chasing her brother: wehe i ke kapa a kuu i ka mai, hitahila ke akua a haalele ia Eleio “[she] opened her tapa and let out her genitals; the god was shamed and let ‘Ele’io go”.91 The powers of attraction, fertility, and generation of women’s genitals are clear from the chants referred to above. The story of Kapokohele ‘Kapo of the Flying Vagina’ combines both the protective and attractive powers.92

In Hawaiian thinking, the powers of a woman’s genitals are transferred to her
pāʻū. The apotropaic can be seen in skirts so powerful that they can be used as weapons in battle, such as the famous pāʻū o Hiʻiaka ‘skirt of Hiʻiaka’, the sister of Pele.93

Both malo and pāʻū were connected to the powers of fertility. The malo was, in fact, assumed at sexual maturity (Pukui 1983: number 2557; compare 1308). A symbolic expression for having a successfully fertile mating can be found in the passage, A o ka malo o Kahekili i pulu i ka wai o ke kiowao kapu ‘And the malo of Kahekili was wet with the fluid of the sacred mountain rain’ (McKinzie 1983:88; her translation).

In the chant, “Keohokalole”, by Makue, lines 1-6 seem to be referring to the famous feather malo of Līloa:

\[
\text{O ke Kaailani kapu na he 'līi} \quad \text{Ka‘ailani[heavenly/chiefly loin binding] is tabooed for a chief.}
\]

\[
\text{Kaa mai Līloa ke kaa i itua nui} \quad \text{Līloa bound it on, a binding that led to great increase,}
\]

\[
\text{O ke kaa mawaho o Umi ke 'līi. The binding around 'Umi the chief,} \quad \text{The binding around 'Umi the chief,}
\]

\[
\text{Na 'līi lau manamana i unī} \quad \text{Chiefs branching out multitud-} \quad \text{Chiefs branching out multitud-
\]

\[
\text{ka pua} \quad \text{inosuly to tenfold offspring,} \quad \text{inosuly to tenfold offspring,}
\]

\[
\text{He mau pua wae ia no} \quad \text{The many offspring selected for} \quad \text{The many offspring selected for}
\]

\[
\text{Kanikawi,} \quad \text{Kanikawi,} \quad \text{Kanikawi,}
\]

\[
\text{Nona na kupuna ahi eha.} \quad \text{For which are the four fiery ancestors.} \quad \text{For which are the four fiery ancestors.94}
\]

A chant for clothing a statue of a god with a malo during a temple ceremony includes the lines:

\[
\text{Eia la he malo kapu, he oloa!} \quad \text{Here is the kapu malo, made of 'oloa 'a thin, white tapa'!}
\]

\[
\text{Oloa lani ke ola o na līi wahine. Chiefly/heavenly 'oloa, the} \quad \text{Chiefly/heavenly 'oloa, the}
\]

\[
\text{life of the chiefesses} \quad \text{life of the chiefesses}
\]

\[
\text{(Malo 1951:187).} \quad \text{(Malo 1951:187).}
\]

In the same chant can be found the connection between the malo and fertile wetness (see note 127).

The connection of the pāʻū to fertility is expressed in several ways. The skirt covers the pūhaka ‘loins’, which, male and female, are said to produce the child (e.g., Malo n.d.:XXII:15f.; Kamakau 1869b). In a chant performed on putting on the pāʻū hula, the dance skirt is connected to water, mists, and cold throughout, all traditional sexual symbols.95 The sexual meaning is especially clear in the use of huʻa ‘foam’, a sexual cliché (Charlot 1983a:87ff.): Ku ka huʻa o ka pali o ka wai kapu ‘Rises up the foam of the cliff of the tabu water’ (line 4); Huʻa lepo ole
"ka pa'ū" 'The skirt foams without silt' (line 24), a possible reference to the fringe of the dancer’s pāʻū. In another hula ceremonial chant, the dancer puts on the pāʻū for her laʻūniki ‘graduation day’ in order to show forth the goddess and ka mana o ka Wahine ‘the mana of the woman’, which, joined to the male, is the power of sexuality and fertility.

In the former hula chant, the beauty and preciousness of the pāʻū are emphasised: it is perfumed, attractive, and the result of much effort and ingenuity. The frequent connection of the skirt to the pali ‘cliff’ lends it monumental, even majestic beauty. Moreover, the pali is a traditional symbol for a handsome person. In the humorous passage about the falling of the pāʻū, the connection between the pali and the dancer’s genitals is made explicit: Ka‘aka ‘ope ‘ope, ‘ula ka pali (regularised text) ‘The wrapping rolls down, the cliff is red.’ Indeed, a pali itself can symbolise female genitals (Pukui 1983: No. 22), perhaps especially the mons pubis. The pāʻū hula is, therefore, very attractive to the men in the audience (lines 6f.):

... Hono-kane. ... Kāne’s Bay [can also mean circle of men].
Mālama o lilo i ka pa-ū. Be careful or he/they will be lost in fascination with the pāʻū.

A general connection can, in fact, be made between beautiful clothing and love: He ali‘i ke aloha, he ‘ōhu no ke kino “Love is chiefly, an adornment for the person.” Kepeleio describes how the people at the hi‘uwai ceremony are excited by the beauty and fragrance of the decorated clothes, feather leis, and ornaments they are wearing: they burn, enaena, as if drinking rum; they become hot one for the other, ua wela kekah i kekah; and sexual activity is apparently the result (Beckwith 1932:97). This connection between apparel and sexual attraction is the basis of perhaps the only literary allusion to the pāʻū of Nāhī‘ena’ena, found in a chant for her official husband, William Pitt Leleiohoku:

He inoa keia la no Hoku. This is a name song for Hoku.
Laiʻeikawai ka i olelo mai Lāʻieikawai was the one who said
I kapa hulumanu koʻu. “May he be my bird-feather tapa”.

Clothing participates in the power of attraction of the female body itself.

Many of the themes and points discussed above can be found in two important chants, “Hoolea ia Liholiho” and “Nahienaena”, which are prime sources for our understanding of the significance of the pāʻū. Literature was a principal activity of court life; O kahana mele, i kainoa o na li‘i kahi hananui o nāwāhine
wahi ali`i, e kāheanō i kapō aao ‘Work on chant, on the name chants of the chiefs, was an important work of the women at the chiefly residence; they were chanting them indeed night and day’. Such activity is documented for Nāhiʻenaʻena’s traditionalist circle in Lahaina:

The old people, who are acquainted with the genealogy of the Hawaiian kings, spend much time in rehearsing their names, and deeds of valor in presence of the prince and princess, for the purpose of awakening their pride, and thereby procuring favor.

Significantly, when the princess later formed her prayer circle, she made the ability to read hymns the criterion of entry. In a countermovement, Wahinepiʻo, one of Nāhiʻenaʻena’s principal traditionalist advisers, “is angry, and has forbidden any to enter her house, who are not skilful in the hurahura [dance]” (MH 1826:145). Nāhiʻenaʻena was replacing a traditional activity with its nearest equivalent in the new culture. She herself was an accomplished poet in the court mode.

Hooleia ia Liholiho and Nahienaena are unusually similar in style and content, even when compared with other chants for the same subjects. They seem, therefore, to have been composed by the same group or even poet at about the same time. Since they treat Liholiho as still alive, they must have been composed before news of his death reached Hawaiʻi in March, 1825. If Nahienaena lines 28f. refer specifically to the regency during Liholiho’s absence and not to a possible future succession, the poems would have been composed after November, 1823. In view of the princess’s age and the emphasis in the chants on acting now, they could not have been composed much earlier.

An unusual and, thus, distinguishing theme of the two chants is the primary coupling of Liholiho with Nāhiʻenaʻena, instead of with Kauikeaouli, although he is not excluded. Only speculation is possible on why the chants emphasise the princess’s marriage to Liholiho. Nāhiʻenaʻena had not been impregnated by Kauikeaouli, and worries may perhaps have arisen about that possibility. A child by Liholiho would have been higher in rank as a product of the senior line, as stated above. Liholiho may have been considered more firmly traditional and less dominated by the missionary party than Kauikeaouli. Whatever the reason, the point is important for our understanding of the feather pāʻā created for the princess to receive her older brother. I shall argue that the chants and the skirt are making the same point in their respective art forms.

My discussion of Hooleia ia Liholiho will be confined strictly to points relevant to my argument. In both chants, there is a constant emphasis on the rank and kapu of the chiefs as well as play on the names of the king and princess with references to brightness, lightning, fire, glowing, and warmth. Moreover, I shall
argue, the same major and significant Hawaiian chant pattern can be found in each.

In *Hooaleia Liholiho*, the king is placed emphatically above all (lines 1, 71f.). Using a method of dividing the chant into sections similar to that used in the *Mele Hānaunō Kau-i-ke-ao-uli* “Birth Chant for Kau-i-ke-ao-uli”, questions are asked — for whom is the earth, the ocean, the mountain? — and answered, “For the chief”.108

The king’s high lineage is emphasised. He is the special child of Kamehameha I (line 1), who has now gone to the land of the dead (lines 2-5). Liholiho has multitudinous, illustrious ancestors (lines 6-12). Famed in story, they preserved their rank through many generations (lines 30-58). The nearer generations have equally famous names (lines 75-9).

But the current situation is tenuous. Hawai‘i faces a *peapea* ‘obstacle,’ a *peapea kapu no Kalani* ‘a *kapu* obstacle for the chief/an obstacle related to the *kapu* of the chief’ (lines 59f.).

Moreover, *Ke okina pau o ka lani — ua noa* ‘If the chief is finally cut — all will be noa’ (line 29). If the chiefly line is severed, the *kapu* of the highest chiefs will be gone, the sacred link that perpetuates the land. Liholiho and Nāhi‘ena‘ena are (lines 130f.):

*Koena o na muo kapu i ka lani*, The remains of the *kapu* leaf buds in
the sky/of the chiefly line

*I mau i ka ulu...* So that the glowing redness/rank
may endure/be perpetuated [of
the chiefs of old].

*Ekolu wale no lakou* ‘They are only three’ from the same
parent.109

Nāhi‘ena‘ena, thus, has a special place. She is the unique female issue of the
long family line of rank and *kapu* privilege:

*Makahinu i ke kapu o Kalaniopuu* Bright-faced in the *kapu* of
*hou a Nahienaena* Kalani‘ōpū‘u, new to
Nāhi‘ena‘ena

*Kamakua — mai o — e.* The parent for us are you!110

But, the question is asked, *Nawai ka nani o ka hoa waiaakua e* — ‘For whom
will be the beauty of the companion of godly blood?’ (line 116).111 Liholiho and
Nāhi‘ena‘ena are mentioned together (lines 80f.). They have the same mother
and father (line 82). A picture is developed of a man wandering wearily in the
cold, wet mountains (lines 84-108). A woman, a native of the place (*kupa*),
receives him and gives him a place to rest from his stiffness, fatigue, and cold
(lines 105-8); Lala i ke ahi a ka wahine 'To warm himself by the fire of the woman.'\textsuperscript{112} The woman attracts and entices the man in her goodness and generosity (lines 110-5). The poet reminds us that he is really speaking about the chiefs (lines 116f.). They join their breathing (line 118); I\textit{kunia i ke ahi hahana namoku} ‘When the fire has been lit, the islands are warmed’ or even ‘Light the fire to warm the islands.’\textsuperscript{113} The mating of the chiefs causes the prosperity of the land. In lines 120-3, the mating is described. The woman is like an island for the chief to obtain (Kamehameha had called Ka'ahumanu an island in a famous saying). She is new, young flesh for him. Desire flares up inside the male chief; ‘The new fire lit by Nāhī'ena'ena the parent.’ The successful fecundation of the union is expressed in a symbol: \textit{Me he pau hiwa uli la i ka ua} ‘Like a black/precious skirt dark there in the rain.’\textsuperscript{114} The results of their union are the peace, goodness, and fertility of the land (lines 141-4). The chant ends with the exhortation to the two chiefs not to hide their relation: \textit{E hoike mai no ka pono; I nani e— 'Letting it be seen is the right thing to do; it is beautiful'} (line 154).

In Nāhi'enaena, the same themes are found but with different emphases. To express rank, the chant uses polemically the designation of chiefs as gods: \textit{He kua no Kahiki} 'A god from Kahiki' (line 2); \textit{na 'ili kua kahiki} ‘the Kahiki god chiefs’ (line 90); a reference to the legendary homeland.\textsuperscript{115} The aspect of rank that is given new emphasis is that of rule over the land (lines 28f., 31, 138f.). This may be connected to the great emphasis on being \textit{kupa}, a native of the place.\textsuperscript{116}

Moreover, the three siblings are grouped more definitely together and each is given a place of importance. Kauikeaouli is accorded major sections of the chant (lines 28-49, 135-44), in which Nāhī'ena'ena can appear (lines 32, 45). Similarly, the lineage of both Kauikeaouli and Nāhī'ena'ena is emphasised with many of the same themes as in \textit{Hoolea ia Liholiho}.\textsuperscript{117}

In Nāhi'enaena, however, the aspect of the lineage that is emphasised is the descent from Wākea, Papa, Ho'ohokukalani, and Hāloa (lines 71, 78-83, 118-22, 141-4). This theme was merely alluded to in \textit{Hoolea ia Liholiho} (line 36), and even that allusion is not clear. Reference to Wākea, Papa, and Hāloa in genealogical sections of chants is conventional and can be found in the birth chant for Kauikeaouli.\textsuperscript{118} The reason for this emphasis is to be sought, I argue, in the traditional connection between sibling marriage and the story of the primordial ancestors named (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:86). Wākea is married to Papa, but mates with his daughter Ho'ohokukalani and sires Hāloa, the ancestor of chiefs. Hāloa is born defective, is buried, and the taro grows from his grave, so he is the source of not only chiefs, but the primary foodstuff as well.\textsuperscript{119}

Just as, at the beginning, there was one male and two females, so now conversely there are two males and one female. Thus, the chant refers to the mating of Nāhī'ena'ena with both her brothers. In lines 38-75, Kauikeaouli is now the traveller received by the \textit{kupa} 'native of the place', Nāhī'ena'ena (line
45). She comes from a line of women chiefs to mate with her brother so that the highest point of the high chiefs will spread out above.\textsuperscript{120}

The mating with Liholiho is even more emphatic and explicit. Lines 11-14 are a concentrated expression of the whole ideology of chiefly marriage:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{‘O ka lani, kūka‘i ka lani,} & The chief, the chief joins, the \textit{\small mau ka honua} & earth endures \textit{\small Kūka‘i Kalani, mau ka} & The Chief joins, the earth \textit{\small honua iā Lani} & endures by/for the Chief \textit{\small Lani pipili, ha‘amomoe le‘a} & Clinging chiefs, laid down in \textit{\small Pipili Kalani, mau ka honua ia} & The Chief clings, this earth \textit{\small The chief, the chief joins, the} & \textit{\small delight.} & \textit{\small earth endures.}^{121} \\
\end{tabular}

The beginning of the chant develops a grandiose image of the relation of Nāhī‘ena‘ena to Liholiho. In lines 1-5, the princess is depicted beating ‘oloa, a type of tapa. In lines 6ff., she is herself said to be the ‘oloa, explicitly described as a figure of speech. She is that tapa in order to clothe Liholiho as the male or husband reigning above; lines 9f., this is the ‘oloa she is beating preparatory to the mating described in the lines cited above.

As is usual in Hawaiian literature, the image seems to have a number of references, all of which add to the multilevelled density of the passage. The most obvious is that of love as beautiful clothing. But ‘oloa has a special character and uses: “Fine white tapa said to have been placed over an image during prayers . . . Gift to a child at birth” (Pukui and Elbert 1986: 262). ‘Oloa was used prominently in a number of religious ceremonies.\textsuperscript{122} At the makahiki, chiefesses brought a malo to clothe the image of the god in a ceremony called kaioloa (probably ka‘i ‘oloa); the Hawaiian description emphasises nana līi wahine ia hana ‘this work was done by the female chiefs.’\textsuperscript{123} At the major ceremony to dedicate a luakini temple, the commoners brought among their offerings the ‘oloa to clothe the temple images.\textsuperscript{124}

A large malo was a prominent part of a ceremony at the Hale o Papa, the official state women’s temple, that closed the larger luakini ceremony.\textsuperscript{125} One of the principal prayers for the occasion was called ka‘i ‘oloa, and in it the malo is said to be of ‘oloa (which is mentioned also in the prayer of the chief’s wife). The wife of the presiding chief had made the malo herself — the chief calls it kamalo akuu wahine ‘the malo of/my wife’ — for the image of the goddess.\textsuperscript{126} The chiefess offered it with a prayer for ola ‘life’ for herself and her husband and also for a son or for a daughter i kaikamahine maua i kukuoloanou ‘for a daughter for us two to beat ‘oloa for you’ (Fornander 1919-20:29), the next link in the
ceremonial, as well as the genealogical, line. The phrase *kukuoloa* identifies a daughter in the similar ceremony for the safety of an unborn child and appears in the first line of Nahienaena. The chiefess's prayer is for health and fertility, the same themes as those in the prayer said earlier by the priest. Fertility is expressed also, I argue, in the unusual act of girding a *malo* on the image of a goddess: the cloth imbued with male fertility is brought into contact with her loins.

The chant, thus, argues that, just as the genealogy began with incest, so now it should continue by that same means. *Hāloa*, the product of incest, was the beginning and manifestation of chiefs (lines 80f.). Lines 59ff. contain a play on words and the chant-like repetition characteristic of the work, like the repetition of *kawowowo* in lines 17-22. The princess climbs the mountain and rests among the *hala* (pandanus), in the *hala* (sin) that is *hoohalaha* (criticised); a crooked *hala*, a *hala* either of an evil time or an evil disposition. This is a *halai hooki hala* 'to cut or negate hala'. In this typical chant repetition, the point is made that the criticised "sin" of incest is one that negates its fault: it produces good. From that sin came the line of chiefs (lines 62-5). The chanter plays on words to pray for the fruitfulness of the three siblings.

Both *Hooleia Liholiho* and *Nahienaena* are examples of a major pattern in Hawaiian chants: a male god or gods mate with a female god or goddesses, and together they generate the fertility and prosperity of the land (Charlot 1983b). In one such chant, the goddess Kapo adorns herself to meet her lover (Fornander 1919-20:504, line 17):

\[
\text{Pau kahiko Kapo i kona pau} \quad \text{Kapo is perfectly decorated}
\text{in her pā'ū.}
\]

She adds a lei of *lehua* and a lei of *maile* (lines 27, 35). When she is thus adorned, *Ke aloha mai nei ho i ko i po* "The lover is responding with his love" (line 37).

Thus, Nāhi'ena'ena would have been adorned to meet her brother. But, for the first time, all of her clothing without exception would have been exalted by the use of precious feathers: the new pā'ū "with the wreaths for the head and neck, necessary to form the complete ancient costume of a princess" (Stewart 1970:343). As such, she would have presented herself to her brother as the highest, most desirable mate according to the ancient traditions of Hawai'i. The two chiefs — living *akua* according to the new royalist religion — would have produced the child whose sacredness, in a time of troubles, would have ensured the perpetuation of the Hawaiian people and their universe. The feather skirt expressed the peerless power of attraction and generation of the chiefly loins from which that child would come.
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NOTES

1. E.g., Kaeppler 1985, Holt 1985. I have kept my references to a minimum in this article and my analyses of texts concentrate exclusively on relevant points and should not be considered exhaustive. I have tried to document my points and to connect them whenever possible direct to Nāhī’ena’ena. Texts are given in their published or manuscript form unless otherwise noted. Simple glosses and my translations are given in single quotation marks; special glosses from Pukui and Elbert 1986 and the translations of others are placed in double quotation marks. I cite Malo n.d. by chapter (regularised and in Roman numerals) and section numbers, since the manuscript must be consulted for accurate use; Malo 1951 is an unreliable translation, and Malo 1987, although useful as a reading text, contains transcription errors. Jean Charlot 1958: especially 9ff. is a pioneering work on the ideological meaning of clothes in the early postcontact period. All references to “Charlot” will be to John Charlot, unless otherwise noted.

2. E.g., Stewart 1970:343; Sinclair 1976:67. I have not found Sinclair’s source for the manufacture of the skirt in Lahaina, but every indication supports that view. In any case, the arguments given below for the type of group from which the cloak came would still hold, even if that group were located elsewhere.

In the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum 1893.03 (Old Series: 6831) the object is described in the museum’s accession record:
The pa’u of Nahienaena, daughter of Kamehameha the Great. Yellow and black feathers of the oo bird; red triangles from the iwi. Original dimensions: Length 20” 8” X Width 30”. After Nahienaena’s death in 1836 it was cut in half and sewn together lengthwise for use as a royal pall. The dimensions now are: Length 10” 4” X Width 5”. This is one of the four royal robes that came from Iolani Palace to Bishop Museum in April, 1893.

The pa’u has never been exhaustively described. Points of interest for this article are whether the pa’u was a completely new creation or constructed of previous materials (such as a reshaped cloak or sections from older cloaks), whether the yellow fields have sprinklings of red feathers, as does the Kamehameha cloak of mamo feathers, and the use of a Western cloth lining (Stewart 1831:179; Bingham 1891:264; A Preliminary Catalogue 1892:19). Kaeppler 1985:116 states that in a red cloak can be found “yellow tufts of feathers called ‘ula kīna’u’u”. Her source is Pukui. The gloss is not found in Pukui and Elbert 1986: kīna’u; see also a’e’a’e. Any technical differences between this dated skirt and earlier featherwork would be of general interest.

Notices of the pa’u have usually been short (A Preliminary Catalogue 1892:19: Brigham
The Feather Skirt of Nāhī'ena'ena: 145

1899:59, 1903b:15; Bishop Museum Handbook 1915:12f.; Ball 1924:31; Linnekin 1988:270; the longest is by Rose 1978: 57-60. I have found no mention of the skirt in any writings of Peter Buck, although, in Buck 1944:12, he discusses modern uses of feathers; on page 5, his position is clearly overstated: "women were not allowed to wear feather garments", apparently forgetting feather lei and coronets.

Roger Rose has called my attention to another postcontact innovation, an unusual feather hat (Brigham 1918:13ff.), perhaps an attempt to create a replacement for the traditional helmet. Nāhī'ena'ena's death is usually dated December 30, 1836, as stated on the brass plate on her coffin (where her age is given as 22). However, Townsend (1839:270) writes that she died on January 5, 1837, and explains the discrepancy by the "doctrine of the Sandwich Islanders, that a person experiences two deaths; one of the mind, and another of the body. Now the mind of the princess died, i.e., became deranged, on the 30th of December, although her body did not die until the 5th of January".

3. Bingham 1981:264. The accounts of the others at the ceremony show they were equally impressed, e.g., Bloxam 1925:31.

4. Stewart 1831:177f. Kamakau (1961:292f.) mentions the presence of the king and describes the procession as resembling those of the religious movement to be discussed below. See also Sinclair 1976:119f. The pa'i was displayed at Nāhī'ena'ena's wake and burial (Sinclair 1976:159) and was used in 1855 as a pall on the coffin of Kamehameha III (Brigham 1899:18). The use of feather objects was common at the wakes and funerals of the nobility both before and after the death of Nāhī'ena'ena (e.g., Bingham 1981:223). Hawaiian customs were particularly apt to be revived (or unresisted) during mourning.

5. King Kałākaua, on seeing a cloak in England, "promised that the history of this cloak should be copied from the ancient 'Meles' or 'records' (Brigham 1899:72). The statement is surprising, because so little information appears to be available. Certainly much information on cloaks has been lost. But, apart from the few references in Hawaiian narratives or "records", Kalâkaua could have used chants in which feather objects were mentioned by name, as is the molo 'join-cloth' of Liloa in Fornander 1919:20:538. For a discussion of the name of this malo, see Rose 1978:30f.; Linnekin 1988:269. Objects, especially precious ones, were often given names. Feathers: Fornander 1916-7:67. Kāhili: Fornander 1916-7:271 (Eleeleualani); Beckwith 1932:129 (Hawai-i, Eleeleualani); Kamakau 1961:183f., 293. Lei niho palaoa: Rose 1978:33 (Naikōki, a significant name). Cowry shells: Elbert 1959:19. Adze: Elbert 1959:29. Nose flute: Rose 1978:37. A special cord: Fornander 1916-7:553 (Ahaula). The names of several cloaks are known. Kamakau 1961:292, "Halakea-o-'I'ahu (white pandanus of 'I'ahu)". Stokes MS n.d.: the name of a cloak of Kahekili was The Sacred One of Kahekili (informant Julius Kaai). The names of two cloaks given by Kamehameha to Vancouver (Brigham 1899:7f.) are reported in Rémy 1862 (hereafter referred to as Rémy-Dibble):46: Kekupuohi and Keakualapu. Brigham 1903a:15: Eheukani; 1918:52-5: Poomaikalani, Kalakaaua, Kamakahelei, and Apikaila. The cape named for Kalâkaua was made during his reign, in all likelihood, a part of his attempt to revive featherwork. Kumulama may be the name of a cloak in Fornander 1916-7:357. Lack of knowledge of the references of many names used in chants hinders our understanding them. Similarly, we cannot be sure of other types of references to cloaks; for instance, the famous "rainbow" over the shoulders of petroglyph figures may be a depiction of capes.

6. Kaeple 1985:110f., 115f., 118f., 121f., 127; also Linnekin 1988:269f. Kaeple derives the primary meaning of precontact capes from their protective function, which extends to their ceremonial use. Kaeple emphasized in conversation with me that she means a broad range of occasions when she writes "that cloaks and capes were worn only in battle and other
dangerous and sacred situations” (Kaeppler 1985:115). The differences in our presentations seem therefore ones of emphasis. My own view seems closer to Holt 1985:106.

7. Also Brigham 1899:52f; Tyerman and Bennet 1832:2:66. Bingham regularly calls them “war cloaks”.


11. After Cook, e.g., Brigham 1899:7 (1786), “extraordinary occasions”. Rémy-Dibble 1862:130. Many statements, often appearing in literature of later forms, need to be evaluated: featherwork as courting or wedding presents (Beckwith 1919:401, 407, 481, 549 [compare 479]; McKinzie 1986:127, 130; compare Handy and Pukui 1972:105f.); as bed covering (Malo 1951: 86 [Emerson]; Beckwith 1919:479); to cover a door (Beckwith 1919:457). Some of the above seem late fabulations. Nakuina (1904:56) writes of the “queen, Kanikaniaula, who was the first maker of an Ahuula, the famous netted feather capes and cloaks of these islands”. I have not encountered this tradition elsewhere. Contrast Formander 1916-7:482-9. Early statements relevant to the question of whether women made feather cloaks and helmets are frustratingly ambiguous; e.g., Byron 1826:9, 193. However, women are the acknowledged creators of all ordinary clothing, including men’s.

A key Hawaiian-language passage for the question is Malo n.d.:XXII:3, which has been given an interpretative translation by Emerson (Malo 1951:77). The Hawaiian text reads: he mau hulu hana nui ia keia i mahiole no na kua kaa o na lii, he hulu hana nui ia e na lii wahine i lei huli kua ‘These were feathers worked laboriously into feather helmets for the stick images of the chiefs, feathers worked laboriously by the chiefesses into lei huli kua’. Emerson interprets the Hawaiian phrase as a decorated comb and is followed by Pukui and Elbert 1986: hulikua. A lei, however, is not a comb; the object described by Emerson sounds like a 19th century ornament, and the sense he probably learned from his informants may be a later use (interestingly, Pukui, Haertig, and Lee (1979: 292) print “hulu kua” when referring to the Malo text). The older use is, I argue, the one recorded during Cook’s visit by Samwell: “These people wear thick feathered rolls called Ehoretooa round their feathered Caps…” (Joppie and Smith 1987b:428, with illustration). The close connection between the roll and the helmet certainly argues for the lack of prohibition on women’s making at least helmets for male chiefs, and the phrase “by the chiefesses” could be taken to refer to the previously mentioned work as well. A Mrs John Ena made a feather cape for Kalakaua (Brigham 1918:52).


13. Formander 1916-7:385, 387, lines 396-9. The second line, a proverbial saying for chiefs in their cloaks, refers to the beautiful colour effects of the garment, like sunlight playing in the rain (384, note 13; also Pukui 1983: number 1664; compare No. 733). One gloss of ‘owela in Pukui and Elbert 1986 is “glowing, bright, as feather cloaks and helmets of an army”;
compare, ʰāweo, koʻiʻula. See also Formander 1919-20:100, note 22, “Kualii, on one occasion, was called a ‘makole’[mākole ‘rainbow’] for his brilliant robes”. A proverbial description of a rainbow is Ḥaka ʻuila ʻAkane “ʻAkane’s red perch” (Pukui 1983: No. 415). The māmāne can be associated with chiefliness and sexual attractiveness (Pukui 1983: Nos. 227, 408). Compare the description of kalukalu, a type of kapa, in Formander 1916-7:162f.

14. Compare Beckwith 1919:321f.: “The ascription of perfection of form to divine influence may explain the Polynesian’s strong sense for beauty... the delight is intensified by the belief that beauty is godlike and betrays divine rank in its possessor”. I do not agree with Beckwith’s formulation.

15. E.g., Kamakau 1867a (hoʻohanohano, hoʻokiʻekeʻe); 1868a (hanohano). Beckwith 1932:139 — Kepelino emphasises the hanohano nui of the chiefs in procession with their cloaks, helmets, and kāhili; also p.165, hoʻokakahaka; hoke na ʻili a pau i ko lakou waiwai a me ka hanohano nui ‘all the chiefs displayed their riches along with their great glory’. Beckwith 1919:310, 479 (women wearing feather cloaks), 481 (hanohano). Malo (n.d.:XXII:5) seems to differentiate between two occasions of wearing the whale-tooth necklace: ma ka la kaua lei no ke aliʻi i ka niho palaoa, a ma ka wa hookakahaka lei no ke aliʻi i ka niho palaoa ‘on the day of battle, the chief indeed put on the whale-tooth necklace, and in the time of parade/display, the chief indeed put on the whale-tooth necklace’. Canoes also can be decorated for the chief’s display (Malo n.d.:XXII:8 (hanohano); 1951:132, 135); another example of a utilitarian object being used for the purpose of exalting the chief. A malo beautifies and glorifies the temple image of a god (pihano; Malo 1951:187 [Emerson]).

16. Brigham 1899:59; Linnekin 1988:270. This present article participates also in the general reconsideration of the role of women in Hawaiian and Polynesian society by historians and anthropologists (e.g., Linnekin 1988). Curiously — although, in the most studied, discussed, and disputed episode in Hawaiian history, a woman is at the very pivot of the action, changing the direction of a crowd of warriors against the very wishes of her husband — no anthropologist has analysed the role of Kalola, the wife of Kalaniʻōpuʻu, in the events surrounding the death of Captain Cook.

17. A note in the Bishop Museum, “Nahiʻenaʻena and the Cape”, with information provided by Lucy Peabody (HEN [Hawaiian Ethnological Notes] 1:2743), reports: Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III) had his picture made, wearing a feather cape. After it was finished, Queen Kaʻahumanu wanted one made of Nahiʻenaʻena. The Princess agreed but wanted to wear the same cape that her brother was wearing. Queen Kaʻahumanu told her that women did not wear feather capes, but she insisted even so. As they were eager to have the picture made, Nahiʻenaʻena was at last permitted to wear the cape. A small kāhili was placed in her hand, an article she was not supposed [sic] to hold.

This was the only picture of the Princess — wearing a feather cape. This account is, however, difficult to reconcile with that of Dampier 1971:43. Silverman (1987:62) appears to be in error in describing Kaʻahumanu wearing Kamehameha’s cloak and helmet on an earlier occasion. All the sources she cites refer to Liholiho as the wearer of a cloak and helmet not identified explicitly as that of his father.

18. Charlot 1983a:26-9 (also 144-8); 1985:5 (with references), 34f. Valeri 1982 addresses itself to this period, but is marred by the inaccurate use of sources and faulty arguments I have noted elsewhere in Valeri’s work, resulting in an inadequately based theoretical construction (Charlot 1987b; his reply, Valeri 1987). Characteristic of Valeri’s approach is his statement that Kamehameha acted “somewhat perversely” at his death in making a major policy decision that did not fit Valeri’s theory (p.31; on the Hawaiian background of the decision, see Charlot 1985:55).

19. For instance, Kamakau (1964:19f.) includes among Kamehameha I’s makahiki innovations the procession around the whole island and the use of Lonoikamakahiki. Before such
statements can be properly evaluated, a complete collection must be made of the numerous Hawaiian-language historical and cultural accounts; their interdependence must be defined (e.g., Kamakau on Malo); their disagreements identified; and comparisons made with foreign sources.

20. Charlot 1985:31-5. I have recently found more information on the akua-kanaka distinction, which I plan to present in a future publication.


23. Rank through the mother: Rémy (1959:9 f., 10) quotes the Hawaiian saying, Mao popo ka machuahine, 'aole maopo popo kamakuakane 'the mother is clear; the father is not clear'; also Malo 1951:265 (Emerson). Outranked father: McKinzie 1983:28. Nevertheless, Hawaiians definitely felt that Kamehameha had a special, uncanny character; and the thesis could be developed that the combination of Keōpūolani and Kamehameha had produced children that were beyond the norms of the traditional system. The special quality of Kamehameha may be one of the sources for the rank system based on genealogical proximity to him.

24. Pukui and Elbert 1986:liholiho, "Ka-lani-nui-kua-liholiho-i-ke-kapu (name for Ka-mehameha II), the great chief with the burning back taboo [he could not be approached from behind]". Nāhī'ena'ena means 'the blazing fires'. McKinzie (1983:94) quotes a Hawaiian text, nakeiki kapu ahi a eanea a he kapu aku 'the children of the fire kapu so intense it blazed and a godly kapu'. Compare the chant in Pukui and Korn 1973:5; Kepelino, He ahi, he wela; he hahana (Beckwith 1932:131). Light is a symbol for government, rule, and authority in dream interpretation (Fornander 1919-20:129ff.).

The awareness of rank and kapu derived from ancestors is clear in chants composed by and for the family; e.g., in Buke Mele na a Moi H. M. Kalakaua n.d.:22-47, kapu privileges and ancestors are mentioned in the opening of each of the poems in the series. A chant for Nāhī'ena'ena asks:

Nawali la, e, ke kapu? By whom then the kapu?
No Nāhī-'ena-'ena. For Nāhī'ena'ena.

Emerson 1909:209.; Sinclair 1976:4. See also the chants discussed below.

25. Buke Mele na a Moi H. M. Kalakaua n.d.: 1, line 16. In the version published in Nahienaena 1867, the line reads He hoomokapu honua i ola honua 'A separation kapu of the earth in order for the earth to live'. Both versions express the role of chiefs in the perpetuation of the life of the cosmos.

26. E.g., Kamakau 1868b, from her apukama'i 'came forth' the three siblings. McKinzie (1983:28): Keopuolani, nonake kapu niaupio, ke aliwahine kapu kiekie loao nawahihe a Kamehameha I, a oia no hoi ka moiwahine niaupio hope loa o Hawaii nei. Nona, mai ke kumu o ke kiekie loa o na kapu o [the three siblings] Keopuolani, hers was the ni'aupi'o kapu [that of the product of a sibling marriage], the noble female of the highest kapu among the wives of Kamehameha I, and she was indeed the last ni'aupio'o queen of Hawai'i. From her is the source of the great highness of the kapu of [the three siblings].


28. Pukui and Korn 1973:19. Mau is a key term in the discussion on the perpetuation of Hawaiian sovereignty and culture and is used in a number of texts discussed in this article. Pili can have a sexual sense, as in the first use, and a nonssexual, as in the second.

29. Loomis n.d.:15, writes on June 28, 1824, "Nahienaene, or as she is now called, Keopuolani", The Christian name was Harriet: Hariata or Harieta in Hawaiian. At a meeting of the council of chiefs on June 28, 1824, Keōpūolani was clearly being considered the model for the
proposed sibling marriage of Nāhi'ena'ena (Loomis, n.d.: 16; discussed below). Names are significant in Hawaiian culture, and taking or being given a person’s name has a number of implications, such as assuming his or her role and responsibilities (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1972:94-107, 151; 1979:290). Nāhi’ena’ena was taken, in turn, as a model for understanding the position and arguably for planning the marriage of Victoria Kamāmalu (1838-66) (ʻĪt June 16, 1866; 1959:174). Some of the relevant passages in ʻĪt’s Hawaiian text were not published in the English translation. I have consulted in the Bishop Museum the typescript of Mary Kawena Pukui’s translation of the text, which is patient of two widely differing interpretations, depending on the translation of the word hoa-hēna as either ‘near relative’ or ‘church member.’ Compare ʻĪt June 30, 1866; July 14, 1866; 1959:163. The two chiefesses were apparently considered to have a living personal connection (ʻĪt June 2, 1866; 1959:169).

30. Townsend (1839:266) spoke with Kamehameha III at the time of Nāhi’ena’ena’s terminal illness and reported “the deep interest and attachment with which he regards the last scion of his noble house. Should Harieta die, the royal Hawaiian line will be broken for ever [sic], the insignia of Sandwich Island rank will be buried in her tomb, and the children of her reigning brother will not inherit their father’s rank”. Kāhili were buried with the princess. Hawaiians worried because many of the high chiefs were dying along with their kapu (e.g., Pukui 1983:2602). Special concern was often expressed about the Kamehameha dynasty. Compare the later text (McKinzie 1983:95), which states that Kīniliōkea would be considered a continuation of the line if Hawaiian, not Christian, principles of legitimacy were followed; he was reportedly an extramarital son of Kamehameha III. Hawaiians rejoiced when Kīna’u (1805-39) had children; Kamakau 1869b: a mai loko mai o Kīna, ua ho'okawowowia na mōopuna o Kamehameha. Ua hauoli maoli kalahi holooko ma o Kīna la, no kapu a makawalu ana mai o na kamaʻe ali'i. And from the inside of Kīna’u was made to thrive the grandchildren of Kamehameha. The whole people was truly happy because of Kīna’u on account of the numerous and wonderful births of the beloved chiefly children’. See also Judd 1928:47. The terms ho'okawowo and pu'ua are found in some of the texts discussed in this present article.

31. Kaeppler (1985:108) emphasises that not all traditional Hawaiian religion was overthrown, but just “the kapu and the akua ‘state gods’.

32. MH1826:39, 149 (conversation with William Richards, “and among others [sins], spoke of her sacrificing to her old gods”). Sinclair 1976:62f. The visit of Kamehameha III and Nāhi‘ena‘ena to Kiʻalauea, the home of the goddess, may have had a religious aspect; certainly the “lascar” who preceded them followed Pele ritual in his descent into the volcano (Kamakau 1868c; 1961:284).

33. Pele worshippers were active (MH 1826:241ff.; Stewart 1831:106ff.). Bingham (1981:252) reports that, in 1825, Puaaiki went to Lahaina, “after a heathen sacrifice by some of the opposers of religion”.

34. Charlot 1985:6ff. Kamakau (1867b) provides arguments based on Kamehameha for the religious innovations; for instance, Kamehameha in death became a sacrifice that lifted the old kapu. I shall discuss only a few points of this religious movement that are relevant to the subject of this paper. Compare Webb 1963:31-4.

35. Bingham (1981:129, compare p.174) notes that, at the death of an important chief on Kaua‘i, “heathen rites” were conducted for seven days, “using incantations, offering sacrifices of hogs, dogs, and fowls”. For a discussion on the custom of a feast on the first anniversary of a death to make the spirit of the deceased happy, see Handy and Pukui 1972:156ff.; Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1972:139.

For the 1822 ceremony, see Tyerman and Bennett 1832:2:30, 61, 63f. Kamehameha III later made the anniversary of Nāhi‘ena‘ena’s death a major official
government holiday (Kamakau 1869a). Kamakau is in error when he says this was the first time this was done.

36. Charlot MS. Significantly, Kamakau (1867b) connects the lifting of the kapu on eating — an important part of the religious revolution after Kamehameha’s death — to the mourning ceremonies for that king. During mourning, while people were minamina ‘regretting’ the dead chief, they would transgress the eating kapu. When their minamina was finished, the kapu would be reimposed. But the minamina for Kamehameha seems to be presented as perpetual and is, thus, one of the kumu ‘sources’ for the abolition of kapu.

37. Bingham 1981:183-6; Stewart 1970:114-20. There is a short mention in Kamakau 1868a; 1961:255. Further evidence, if needed, of the religious character of the ceremony can be found in the fact that it incorporated a sacrificial, or perhaps apotropaic, ceremony conducted by Pauahi.

38. Bingham 1981:186. Stewart (1970:116) writes, “The most intelligent and influential of the chiefs and people, already speak of the ‘time of dark hearts’; and I believe are sincerely desirous of abolishing every unprofitable practice which had its birth in the ignorance of former days. In this abolition, much connected with the late celebration will be included . . . ‘”. Stewart is usually more positive and appreciative of Hawaiians and their culture than Bingham, and he especially William Ellis seems fair in their reports of conversations with their opponents, whereas Bingham’s and William Richards’ interlocutors always seem to grovel. Missionary records are, however, a treasure trove of information on the cultural practices of the Hawaiians and their positive and negative responses to Christianity.


40. Kamakau 1867a; 1961:183f. Kamakau does not seem to be projecting back one of these later ceremonies into the earlier period, as Kepelino and others seem to do elsewhere (Beckwith 1932:165; Holohaki 1865). Processions of various forms continued to be important in Hawaiian culture (e.g., Kamakau 1961:292f.; Kekoa 1865, newlyweds were borne aloft on litters). Indeed, the role of pageants can be followed from precontact ceremonies up until the present in such celebrations as Kamehameha Day. A full-scale study is needed, especially of the Hawaiian-language pageants of the late 19th and early 20th century.

41. MH 1826:37f. I disagree with the suggestion (Sinclair 1976:59f.) that Ka‘ahumanu and the other missionary chiefs organised the ceremony.

42. Chamberlain (n.d.:56) describes the reception of the chiefs returning from England in 1825: “They seemed carried away by the excess of their feelings as they in succession embraced their friends & joined noses — one or two of them seemed almost exhausted & could hardly stand . . .”. E.g., Bingham 1981:262; Kamakau 1869b.

44. Bingham 1981:149. By “atheism”, he may mean scepticism or lack of any religious commitment. See also Bingham 1981:174, at the beginning of 1823, “we had among our pupils, besides Liholiho and the young prince, twenty-four chiefs, twelve male and twelve female, who, in some sense, acknowledged Christianity. While some of these seemed to be seeking the things above, others clung to their vices as firmly as ever, and not a few in the nation were evidently hankering after their old idolatry, or felt themselves bound by its long-riveted fetters”. The adherence of the king and prince was obviously tentative.

45. Charlot 1985:2. Pukui’s translation of the phrase in Kamakau 1961:283, reads “and others lived like any of the people”.

When, after the reception of the Blonde in 1825, Kamehameha III dedicated his kingdom to God, he stated: O ke aliʻi pono, o koʻu aliʻi ia, o na keiki a na makaʻainana i malama i ka pono,
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The Feather Skirt of Nāhī'ena'ena. O ke alihi hewa a me ke kanaka hewa, aohe no'u ia kanaka; O ko'a aupuni, he aupuni ao palapala ko'u. "The pono chief, he is my chief. The children of the commoners who guard the pono, they are my people. The hewa chief and the hewa commoner, these persons are not mine. My government is a system of learning writing" (Kamakau 1868b). He contrasts two sets of people—pono 'right' and hewa 'wrong' (Charlot 1985:2ff.). Also, his use of palapala 'writing, document' is significant; kanaka palapala was a pejorative term for missionary sympathisers and has remained a loaded word today (Charlot 1985:27). Kamakau's further statement, O Kaahumanu a me Kalanimoku kekahi i kokua i ko ka Moi mana'o 'Ka'ahumanu and Kalanikou were some who helped with the king's opinion', is a clear reference to the missionary party. Kalanikou is also called Kalaimoku.

46. MH 1826:71, provides a list for 1825: Ka'ahumanu, Kalanikou, Kapiolani, Tapule (former wife of Kaumuali'i), Keali'iiahonui, Kanui and Opi'a (Kekaiapia'; the last two are identified as former wives of Kamehameha I), Ka'i'u, La'ana'i, Richard Kariulul; see also 72ff., 108, 134, 142, 310. Kuakini explicitly does not belong to this group in 1825 (p.72).

47. MH 1826:142 ("the people were very angry with her, because, at a recent funeral, she did not walk according to their ancient custom; and on this account they are so constantly teasing her that she can find no rest"); 143 (she has "cast off all habits of immorality, and strenuously opposes the evil practices of her associates — On this account, they have combined together for the purpose of leading her into temptation"); 146 ("Her associates still continue to revile and persecute her. They are constantly laying their plans to lead her astray, and draw her back to their own evil practices").

48. Prayed: MH 1826:146, 149. Instrumental: pp.171f. In a letter of 1828 by Nāhī'ena'ena to Stewart (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 218), Henrietta Haleiwi's death is announced. Stewart footnotes: "bosom companion of the Princess". In the same collection of letters, under number 211, is a translation of Halekii'i's composition for a school examination on July 20, 1825: "I was a prisoner of the devil. I am from within his kingdom of death. I have just escaped from the arm of the devil. The right hand of Jesus Christ has secured me".

49. Bingham 1981:205; the statement is made at the time the missionary party in the government is pushing the country forcefully towards the new religion. The undecideds were never completely converted. In the middle of the 19th century, the expression used for chiefs who had not entirely embraced Christianity was kū i ka wā 'standing in the space between' (Rémy 1859:9, "ku i ka va, c'est-à-dire indépendant en fait de religion"); the phrase refers, I believe, to being between Hawaiian religion and Christianity.

50. Judd 1928:42 (the date of this activity is not clear; p.43, Lilihā is an ally of her husband [speaking of later period]). Boki argued for the sibling marriage in 1825 (Kamakau 1868d; 1961:286f.). But he changed his position several times; e.g., on returning from England he argued in favour of Christianity (Loomis n.d.:34f.). Rémy-Dibble 1862:240 notes that traditional religion was later revived under Boki. The tone of Judd's remarks is typical of the polemics of the time. Duhat-Cilly (1835:2:289) was apparently told that Ka'ahumanu had opposed the marriage of the siblings for political rather than religious reasons: "Kaou-Manou redoutant le pouvoir et l'influence d'une reine jeune et belle, s'est servi du pretexte de la religion pour déconcerter cette alliance" 'Ka'ahumanu, fearing the power and influence of a queen who was young and beautiful, used religion as a pretext to frustrate this alliance'.

51. MH 1826:39. Stewart writes, "She is so young, however, that her actions are rather to be attributed to her wicked household, than to herself"; p.142, Richards's letter of February 2, 1825: "She is an interesting girl, and when she is not under the influence of bad advisers, listens to instruction with all desirable docility"; p.149.
Gilman (1906:171) describes Nāhiʻenaʻena’s house in Lahaina, probably the one used during the period discussed:
This was one of the finest straw houses in the village, erected in a plot of ground partly reclining from the beach with sea walls in front and planted with kou trees. The house was some thirty by forty feet in dimensions. The interior was lined by dry banana stalks and had hard earth floors covered with fine mats. It was a very commodious and comfortable house for the climate.

Some time after joining the missionary supporters, Nāhiʻenaʻena went to live with the Christian Chief Hoapili (Byron 1826:105).

52. On Wahinepiʻo, see A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 127, p.3 (August 13, 1824); number 130, p.2 (her husband is equally hostile); 1828-30: No. 236, pp.2f., 12; No. 237, pp.4f. (blames her for influencing Nāhiʻenaʻena to participate in traditional ceremony south of Lahaina). The prostitution case described by Sinclair (1976:89f.) is the subject of Nāhiʻenaʻena’s deposition (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 218; the deposition is one of several gathered under that number, which contain the information given below). The girl sold as a prostitute was Leoki, Wahinepiʻo’s kaku ‘attendant’; she was reportedly leaning towards Christianity and was greatly distressed by the situation. The money was being kept by a Kekeli (sic), also known as Kaukuna; he was the husband of Wahinepiʻo. Wahinepiʻo seems to have pestered the princess on the matter in a way reminiscent of the treatment of Halekiʻi. She claimed the money belonged to Liholiho. MH 1826:145 reports that, when Nāhiʻenaʻena went over to the missionaries and started her own prayer group, excluding those who could not read the hymns (quite a select number of attendants), “Wahinepio is angry, and has forbidden any to enter her house, who are not skilful in the hurahura [dance]”. She was a general patroness of the hula (A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 129; 1828-30: No. 237, p.2).

Wahinepiʻo and her husband continued to resist the mission even after the death of Kamehameha II. Richards writes to Levi Chamberlain on July 25, 1825: “while some of the chiefs are evidently desirous of having every thing bend to the palapala & the pule ['prayer'], others are desirous, or are actively exerting themselves to oppose everything that is good. Wahine Pio has recently written to her husband that she shall by no means regard the new system. ‘Aore au tabu, aore roa. Aore au tabu me ke arii, a i hoi au i Lahaina, aore au tabu’” (MS. letter, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library). The letter continues with a description of her husband’s disruptiveness; Kahelaia [Kalai‘a Luanu'u?] in Honolulu is also mentioned as antimission. I prefer to translate the Hawaiian text from Wahinepiʻo’s letter thus: “I will not impose the kapu, no indeed. I will not impose the kapu like the chief, and when I return to Lahaina, I will not impose the kapu”. The kapu referred to may be the one against prostitution mentioned as particularly troublesome in Richards’ letter to Chamberlain of November 18, 1826 (MS. letter, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library). If so, her remarks would bear directly on the case described above.


Edith McKinzie (personal communication) is my source for the glottal stop in Wahinepiʻo’s name.

53. Loomis n.d.:35. Bingham (1981:252) reports the words of an adviser, “One who had been distinguished for opposition to the missionary cause”: “I have been hostile to you; lied about you and scoffed at your good words. I have led the young chief into evil; have sacrificed to our old gods". Bingham bases this passage on MH 1826:148, in which it is said that the conversation took place in Lahaina. All such converts show a great fear of the angry god of
the missionaries.
54. MH 1826:38; 39, she and others sang hymns and said Christian prayers during the traditional ceremony.
55. See note 54 and Kamakau 1869b. The chief, Kaikio‘e wa, mentioned with Kina‘u in Kamakau 1869b, follows the same path, but is found in 1834 composing a chant honouring the marriage of Kamehameha III and Nāhī‘ena‘ena (Luomala 1984:129ff.).
56. MH 1826:36f., 240. Kapi‘olani is also active there in the Christian cause.
57. E.g., Bingham 1981:268-71, 278-82; MH 1826:70f., 134, 173f., 176f. Boki’s favourable report on England was influential. The high point of the Christianising movement is reached in 1831-2, followed by a two-year, antimissionary resurgence of Hawaiian culture. Hawaiians have continued until today to swing between Christianising and nativising movements.
58. Chamberlain n.d.:39 notes that official notices of Kamehameha II’s death are sent out, “one for Nahienaena & the chiefs at Lahaina”. Kamakau 1868c:Kamehameha III wants to go to Lahaina a halawai pu me Nahienaena, me Keakawono hi, me Hoapili ma, Koheki li, Kaukuna, me na ‘Lii a pau o Lahaina; translation in Kamakau 1961:283.
59. MH 1826:149; Kamakau 1869a. “He Moolelo no Akula Moku” 1862 provides a biographical notice of Akula Moku, a member of Keopūolani’s court who turned to Christianity in 1863. Sometime after that chiefess’s death, he joined Nāhī‘ena‘ena and worked as a teacher. Interestingly, the traditional ceremony attended by Nāhī‘ena‘ena in early October, 1824, was held south of Lahaina since “The priest would not sacrifice at Lahaina, because, to use his own words, there was ‘too much praying to Jehovah there’, for the success of his rites” (MH 1826:39).
61. Loomis n.d.:16; Sinclair 1976:58f. Missionary publications were more circumspect than Loomis: In Bingham 1981:192, Nāhī‘ena‘ena is “surrounded with heathen pollution”. Bloxam (1925:31) thought the princess was “rather older” than the prince.
   At the dedication of Kawaiaha‘o church in 1829, the king was seated somewhat behind the princess (a new arrangement?) (Kamakau 1961:292f.; Stewart does not mention the presence of the king at the connected reception for the officers of the Vincennes).
   The later history of the relation was tragic. After conforming to Christian law for a time, the siblings married in July 1834, a marriage ignored by the government (Luomala 1984:12 ff.). Nāhī‘ena‘ena married Leleiōhoku, Kalanimoku’s son, in 1835 and bore a short-lived baby in 1836 amid rumours that the real father was Kamehameha III (Kamakau 1869a; Sinclair 1976:155ff.).
63. MH 1826:40, 70, 142, 144, 145 (March 23, 1825), 148. Chamberlain n.d.:34 (February 25, 1825), “Nahienaena was also present[,] She is said to be itaita in the pule". A translation of a later address by Nāhī‘ena‘ena is given in a letter of William Richards dated December 10, 1827 (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 140).
64. MH 1826:144; also pp.148f. Loomis (n.d.:35) notes that “Mr. Richards says he has never witnessed a revival of religion in America where more zeal was manifested and greater evidences of piety given, than at Lahaina at this time. The young princess Nahienaena is one who has recently turned her mind wholly to the subject of religion”.
65. MH 1826:145; 146 (April 6), 27 people; 148, 31 people out of three prayer groups totalling approximately 60 people; A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 237, p.2, 270 scholars in Nāhī‘ena‘ena’s school out of 400 in all the schools. Richards reports, in a letter to Levi Chamberlain of
November 17, 1825: “The attention to the palapala by no means diminishes. Capt Staunton [?] has been much with the missions at the Society Islands, but he says that he has seen nothing there that near equals Nahienaena’a’s school” (MS. letter, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library).

The missionaries naturally understood the importance of the chiefs’ influence (e.g., Tyerman and Bennet 1832:2:35, 60) and used it, for instance, by publishing Ka Mana o na Alii 1827, to which Nähi‘ena‘ena contributed (p.7). The publication can be corrected against the manuscript in the Hawai‘i Mission Children’s Society Library.

66. MH 1826:148; 39, 70, describes an earlier group called the po‘e pule by other Hawaiians, about 12 men and boys and one woman who had been saying Christian prayers in secret in family circles. They had learned about Christianity from earlier missionaries, but had not yet made contact with the later ones. When Stewart heard of them, he sought them out, and brought them into a more official relation to the mission.

67. MH 1826:170f. Does “plays” refer to the syncretist ceremonies? I do not discuss the arguments presented by the traditionalists and the missionary sympathisers, about which much important material is available.

69. MH 1826:149; Sinclair 1976:67f., 149.

70. Stewart 1970:343. According to Byron (1826:113f.), “On an elevated space at the northern end of the house the young king and princess were placed on a cane sofa. They were dressed in European suits of mourning, and seated on a beautiful feather garment, which some of the affectionate natives had woven for the princess Haenaihaeina, in hopes that she would wear it as a pau on the return of her brother Riho from England. However, the little girl has been so long under the tuition of the missionaries, that she has thoroughly imbibed all the womanly feelings of civilised decency, and absolutely refuses ever to appear in the native costume; so that the pau was used to-day merely as a covering for her seat”. In a note (p.113), Byron mentions that the skirt “cost one year’s time in making”. See also Sinclair 1976:81f. On the ceremony, see also Bingham 1981:264f.; Bloxam 1925:31.

71. MH 1826:68. Also Brigham 1899:59, “on the ground that such robes belonged to the heathen times”. The two reasons are not mutually exclusive, as will be seen below. Hähi‘ena‘ena’s later Christian life was tragic. For some time, she acted according to mission teachings (e.g., Chamberlain n.d.:69 [May 28, 1825]), and was admitted to membership in January 1827 (Sinclair 1976:88). In her letter of 1828 to Stewart she speaks of her attachment to Christianity and the good it has done her (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 218). She later returned to more Hawaiian ways and perhaps personal problems, attempted a marriage with Kamehameha III, lost a child, and died in great fear of damnation (e.g., Judd 1928:47f.; Sinclair 1976:146-55, 159).

72. Stokes MS n.d.: featherwork was done by poe ike ‘knowledgeable people’ at a chief’s court ([Emma Aima, Mrs. Joseph K.? Nawahi letter]; Malo n.d.:XXIII:9, uses the expression haku hulu manu. I argue from Malo n.d.: XIX:31, 33; XXII:1-4, that featherwork was done at the chief’s place of residence, at least some of it by the chiefesses there. The commoners and warriors did not keep feathers collected or the feather objects captured in battle but brought them to the court for use or distribution. Kamapua’a’s transgression in a form of the story of the mysterious warrior (reference in Charlot 1987:40) is that he does not bring to the chief the feather objects he takes in battle, but keeps them for himself. Completed featherwork was under the care of specially designated persons, called kahu, in the service of a chief (Rose 1978:30; Malo n.d.:XXVIII:49). Kelepino describes the court functionary called the Paa-ahu ‘Cloak Bearer’: “he was the person who took the cloak of the chief upon his own shoulders and then spread it out in the place where the chief established his seat” (Beckwith 1932:129; the passage is not translated in the publication). o kalawe ahu ‘the cloak carrier’ (p.139) may
refer to the same functionary; compare the Malama-ukana 'the Effects Guardian' (p.129).

73. Legendary houses thatched with feathers perform the same function (Forzander 1916:7:171; Beckwith 1919:401, 411, 618f.; 1970:510, 526, 529, 536f.). The impression of awe stimulated by such houses provides some idea of the impact of an innovation such as a feather skirt (Beckwith 1919: above and pp.447, 457).

Feather skirts are listed in the index of Forzander 1916-7: xlv, for pp.25, 405, but I did not find them in the text; p.42f., a feather skirt is mentioned in the translation, but not in the text (Beckwith [1970:491] accepts the translation).

Innovations of form with preservation of basic function is characteristic of Polynesian art. Hulu 'Feather' was a god of childbirth (Malo 1951: 136, 139 [Emerson]), but I have found no mention of that god in any of the literature concerning Nāhi‘ena‘ena.

A woman in a beautiful pā‘u is a good dream omen (Malo n.d.:XXXIV:4).

74. MH 1826:171; see also p.145, “more modest, and less aspiring”.

75. On the use of yellow and its possible significance, see Brigham 1899:18; Buck 1944:10; 1957:216f.; Kaepepler 1985:118, 121.

76. Charlot 1985:5-8. I have already mentioned the colour sensitivity of Hawaiians (note 5). That colour was also significant can be seen in its being used as the basis for the name of a cloak; Rémy-Dibble (1862:46) notes Ukapaiapai kekah lole o Keokupuhi, a ua kapaiapai kekah lole o Keokualapu, no ka ulu o ka lole keia inoa i kapaiapai ku a i ‘One garment was called Keokupuhi, and the other garment was called Keokualapu [the ghostly god?]; on account of the glowing red of the garment it was called that’. The names of the temple, ‘Aha‘ula or Waha‘ula, are also based on colour (Green 1926:122f.). The cloak of the mountain goddess, Poli‘ahu, is white, expressive of the snow on the high mountain slope (e.g., Beckwith 1919:403). The colour of the malo used in a ceremony can be mentioned and was apparently significant (e.g., Malo n.d.:XXV:9; XXXII:7; XXXIV:11; XXXVII:52; Malo 1951:133 [Emerson]).

The connection of colours and symbols to particular chiefs is generally accepted, but so far insufficiently known (e.g., Kaepepler 1985:111, 118ff.). Stokes (MS n.d.) reports the statement of Lucy Peabody that the crescents on cloaks represented moons; circles might, then, represent full moons. Since nights were connected to particular gods, such designs might refer to the particular gods of a family or days of birth, etc.

A question relevant to this article is whether capes with predominantly yellow feathers are connected to the Kamehameha dynasty. Rose (1978:34) records a late tradition that Kaumuali'i of Kaui'i had a malo of all yellow feathers. The triangles on the skirt of Nāhi‘ena‘ena may also connect it to Kamehameha and the Hawai‘i chiefs (compare Kaepepler 1985:118).

77. This is mentioned by many visitors (e.g., Byron 1826:130; Paulding 1970:197, 199, 203). Pā‘u were worn informally for comfort, sometimes in combination with Western clothes (e.g., Byron 1826:122; Tyerman and Bennet 1832:2:64; Thurston 1934:31). Byron (1826:98) writes that, "In dress, occupations, and amusements, they endeavoured to conform to our habits, and that in the manner of rational imitation, and not bearing any mark of savage mimicry . . . ."

78. Dampier (1971:36, 43, 47) observes that feather cloaks, helmets, and kahili " are now completely laid aside", although feather leis are still worn; p.41, men wear feather cloaks at the funeral procession.

79. See the letter of Hiram Bingham, December 15, 1827 (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30: No. 13, p. 10): “You see everyone decently draped in our own style, or to use a scripture phrase ‘clothed and in his right mind’ —”. Such attitudes were shared by nonmissionaries; e.g., Byron 1826:102 (“we doubt not that their happiness will receive a large increase when gowns and petticoats, caps and bonnets, scarfs and reticules, become the permanent fashions at Oahu . . . .”), 129.
80. Stewart 1970:117 (Kamāmalu), 119; 118, others seem to have been wearing pāʻū. See also Brigham 1899:19. Compare the preparation of Kamāmalu’s body after her death in England (Byron 1826:67).

81. Formander 1919-20:41, 43. Kamakau 1867a; 1961:183f., describes a feast given by Kamehameha for Kaʻahumanu: she is dressed in a “pa-ʻu, splendidly colored by the most skilled dyers”. The malo can have a significant role in a traditional ceremony (e.g., Formander 1919-20:5, 33; and see below), as can the pāʻū (p.29).

82. Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1972:91; see also p.92; the article is headed ‘iliki kapu ‘kapu skin’. Handy and Pukui 1972:48, 181f. Pukui 1983: Nos. 172, 2223, 2341 (wear loincloth only of someone very close); compare No. 2228. The points mentioned below are found in these references. Contemporary older Hawaiians have spoken of the kapu ‘ili to me with a good deal of emotion; the idea and practices were obviously internalised.

83. In Handy and Pukui (1972:182) a hula master stated: “What belongs above should stay above, and what belongs below should stay below”. (Ko luna, no luna no ia; ko lalo no lalo no ia)”. Transgressing this kapu can be an expression of the disorder of mourning (Pukui and Elbert 1986; kālōlōia 2).


Several events in early contact history can be understood through the kapu ‘ili. For instance, Kamehameha gives Vancouver a cloak for King George: as it had never been worn by any person but himself, he strictly enjoined me not to permit any person whatever to throw it over their shoulders, saying it was the most valuable in the island of Hawaii, and for that reason he had sent it to so great a monarch, and so good a friend, as he considered the King of England (Brigham 1899:7).

The passage is used by Linnekin (1988:270f.) to show “that once worn they [cloaks] were kapu, i.e., restricted to their chiefly owners” (p.270). This is true of the kapu ‘ili in general. A more specific application of that kapu can be found in the analogy of athletic contestants who could exchange malo if they admired each other as equals; “such exchange indicated that they had accepted each other as brothers” (Handy and Pukui 1972:181). In Formander (1916-7:431), Kūaliʻi puts his own malo on a boy because he admires his courage and skill; the boy does not seem to be chief, but had a fan as a recognition token that he was the grandson of a former kahu ‘attendant’ of Kūaliʻi (pp.429, 431). Similarly, when Hakau will not allow his half-brother, ‘Umi, to wear his malo (Malo n.d.:LXVII:59), he is expressing his view that they are not equals. The point of Kamehameha’s action is, therefore, that he is peerless in Hawai‘i and recognises only the King of England as equal to him and also as a friend or even intimate. These considerations might apply also to Kalani`ōpu`u’s similar presentation of a cloak to Cook; that is, he may be treating him as a chief rather than a god (Joppie and Smith 1987a:121f.).

86. E.g., Elbert 1959:117; see also p.253; Halemano recognises his dream lover through her pāʻū: p.259: the pāʻū is given as a recognition token to his sister. See also Beckwith 1970:499. In Rose (1978:3), Kamehameha III leaves his malo as evidence of paternity. Compare Pukui 1983: No. 1642. Feather cloaks can be used as recognition tokens (Formander 1916-7: 485, 487, 496, 497).

Malo and pāʻū in large numbers could, however, be distributed by a chief to his followers or offered ceremonially to a chief (Malo n.d.:XXVI:16; XXXVII:59, 63).

87. Emerson 1909:51ff., line 3; on page 51, Emerson notes, “im. An oven; an allusion to the heat and passion of the part covered by the pa-ʻu”. Lines 49-52 are humorous: the skirt slips,
and the dancer’s genitals are exposed; people react and shout *I ka mahalo i ka pa-ū* ‘in appreciation of/thanks to the *pa-ū*. Compare the variant chant and the interpretations in Gutmanis 1983:87f., 93. A parallel can be found in a *hula ʻōhelo* in which the dancer’s genitals were deliberately exposed (Emerson 1909:233, lines 3f.; *Minomo no, enena ka ia la kapuahi, kapuahi! “Shriveling, raging is the fire pit of that person!”


89. Pukui and Handy 1972:93f.; also pp.86, 93, 159.

90. E.g., Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:106f., 182f., 292. The points mentioned in these references can be found in earlier Hawaiian literature (e.g., Malo n.d.: XXVIII: 21; XXXIV: 3; Foramander 1918-9:141, 197). See also, Foramander 1916-7:247; Beckwith 1932:127.

91. Foramander 1916-7:483. See also Beckwith 1970:113. Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:223: “the uniquely Hawaiian way of sending bad luck by showing the genitals”.

92. Beckwith 1970:113; Charlot 1987a:42. In Emerson 1915:23, Pele says to Hi‘iaka, “Yours is the power of woman; the power of man is nothing to that”. Because Emerson does not give his sources, such passages are difficult to evaluate.

93. Emerson 1915:54, 85; 35, Pā‘ū-o-pala‘e uses her skirt in battle (on this character, see pp.19, 60, 190, 214, 235; on p.190: Emerson speculates that she has some connection to the skirt of Hi‘iaka); the skirt of Pele seems to have the same function (p.195, lines 12f.; 222, line 5). In Foramander (1919-20:496, line 131), Pele seems to be at disadvantage in battle when caught without her pā‘ū; Emerson (1915:118) has a different reading of the text. See also Beckwith 1970:175. The tradition of Hi‘iaka’s skirt was used in Hawaiian herbal medicine (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:155).

According to Green (1926:117), “The supernatural power of a woman often resides in this garment, hence it becomes in the stories one of the gifts bestowed by a supernatural ancestress upon the favorites of fortune by shaking which he can create a storm and devastation. In both *La‘ieikawai* and *Aukелenui‘aku* it is by shaking the *pa-ū* that the goddess raises a storm to destroy her enemies.—Ed.” [Beckwith]. Beckwith 1970:113: “the use of her skirt to raise a thunderstorm” (I have not found the text), p.531; compare Beckwith 1919:551. The use in the stories of *La‘ieikawai* and *Aukелenui‘aku* may be late. For the latter, see Foramander 1916-7: 43, 53, 55, 76f. (the pā‘ū is mentioned in translation but not in Hawaiian text; it could, however, be implied in the story). Pukui and Elbert 1986: where *Pā‘ū ‘ai kaua* is entered at “‘ai”.

94. Foramander 1919-20:538; compare p.294, lines 95f. See Rose 1978:30f. on the names of the *malol*; p.31f. on the terms *kahei, kāhei, kā’ai, and kā’ei*. Compare Kaepleer 1985:107. Rose (1978:4, 17) states that Tahitian feather *malol* were lengthened at each reign: “A new piece, about eighteen inches in length, was attached at the inauguration of every sovereign”. Does this express a connection between the *malol* and the genealogy? No such additions were made to the Hawaiian examples (p.25).


96. Note also the mention of the *malol* of ‘Umī, line 20; and the references to *kāne ‘male* and/or Kāne, the god (lines 6, 32). Kāne is also prominent in the chant for the *hula* goddess, Laka, discussed immediately below (Pukui and Korn 1973:42-7).


Kekoa 1865 reports that, at an important wedding, the groom’s side of the family presented *malol* and the bride’s, *pā‘ū*. 

*The Feather Skirt of Nāhi‘ena‘ena:* 157
98. Emerson 1909:51ff., lines 2 (dyeing), 8 (fragrant), 12-6 (work that goes into it), 25 (Nani ‘beautiful’), 26 (the printing on the tapa), 27-41 (the effort of making it), 53f. (perfumed with lēhua, like a rainbow).

99. Lines 4f., 9, 10 (keiki pa-ū pali ‘child of the cliff skirt’), 16f., 27. Elbert (1962:397) claims that the term “refers to a handsome physique”.

100. On ‘ula for exposed female genitals, see Pukui 1983: No. 241. No. 396 depends on a word-play between ‘ula ‘ula referring to an ‘ahu ‘ula ‘feather cloak’ and the same word referring to female genitals. See also Handy and Pukui (1972: 161) for male sexuality. The humour of the line in the chant is enhanced by the play on the famous saying Ka’a ka pōhaku, ‘ula ka pali ‘The rock rolls down, the pali is red’, used of a foolish statement.

101. Pukui 1983: No. 537. I once heard Mrs Lydia Delacerna tease a very old man by asking him where his kīhei ‘cloak’ was. When I asked for an explanation, she told me she meant his girlfriend.

102. Fornander 1919-20:484, lines 16ff. The translation reads “cape” (which seems to be the reference on 436, line 61), but “kāpa” can refer to a variety of garments. The allusion seems to be to Lā‘ieikawai’s powerful skirt, see above.


105. MH 1826:171. Toeta, the princess, “desires now to make herself very low. She does not wish to be exalted by men. She desires to cast off entirely the rehearsing of names; for her rejoicing is not now in names and titles”. See also Sinclair 1976:66. I refer in this article to a number of chants by and for Nāhi‘ena‘ena; see also Roberts 1926:141f.


109. Lines 73f. Also line 82, Liholiholo and Nāhi‘ena‘ena have the same mother and father; “kupuna” and “mo‘opuna” are used for the relation between Kamehameha I and his children because of the presence of a junior and senior line (Edith McKinzie, personal communication; Charlot 1985:34).

110. Line 138. Makahinu is best given its literal meaning of “bright-faced”, which fits the emphasis on light effects in the chant; the Hawaiian text, as opposed to the translation, is positive about kapu. Compare line 123: Ke ahi hou a Nahi‘ena‘ena ka makua!— Mai o— e ‘The new fire lit by Nāhi‘ena‘ena the parent. Come hither’. The text may be defective.

111. For the use of wai‘akua for Kamehameha I, see Fornander 1919-20:388, line 300.

112. Line 109. The same pattern is found in Fornander 1919-20:541f., and in the well-known chant requesting entrance into a hula academy, and its response (Emerson 1909:39f.).


114. Line 129. This symbol corresponds to that of the wet malo, described above. Compare Emerson 1909:52, line 16: Me he pa-ū elehiwa wale i na pali. The use of limu ‘underwater plant’ in line 127 shows that the ‘ula of line 128 should be understood in the sense of genitals; the scent of limu was traditionally associated with that of an aroused woman.

115. A comparison of the two lines is my argument against the Fornander translation of line 2,
except as a play on words (akei in line 1 is probably a related play on “Waikai”). On the use of akua for living chiefs at this time, see Charlot 1985:30-5.

116 Nahienaena lines 28-31, 40, 45, 47ff., 116f.:

*I hanau Nahienaena, ke
kupa no Hawai'i,
A Hawai'i a Hawai'i, a lalo o Hawai'i,
A papa ia Wakea o ka papakū*

Nāhiʻenaʻena was born, a native
for Hawaiʻi,
By Hawaiʻi to Hawaiʻi, even
underneath Hawaiʻi
By Papa/at the bedrock, by
Wakea, the standing rock.

The theme can be found in Hoolea ia Liholiho, line 110. The bedrock of the island is an ancient Polynesian theme. Kupa is used of the chief in a name chant for Keōua, line 1 (Pratt 1920:63), in Hawaiʻi ka Lani, line 109 (Fornander 1919-20:375), and in other chants. In the mourning chant for Kahahana, kupa is used in a way similar to the chants discussed in the text (Fornander 1919-20:293, line 50). See also Emerson 1909:208, line 9. The great emphasis on kupa may, therefore, be influenced by the historical situation, but is based on tradition. Kupa was used by nationalists in later literature (e.g., Sheldon 1908:227f., 304, 306). The theme of the chief as kupa can be used to correct an overemphasis on the chief as stranger in his land.

117 Nāhiʻenaʻena: lines 67-73; Kauikeaulani: lines 135-44; both: lines 76-122.
118 Pukui and Korn 1973:17ff. Also, e.g., Fornander 1916-7:381, line 268; Beckwith 1919:313. For a saying, see Pukui 1983: No. 1227.
119 This is the subject of the opening of the third section of the Kumulipo (Beckwith 1972: 68 f.).

A singularity of the chant is the appearance of Leia' (line 71) and Hinaakikamaalama (line 78) in the role of Hoʻohokukalanui (line 142). This may be some family variation on the tradition. The Hina name was used for the summer palace of Queen Emma in Nuʻuanu.

Only one Hāloa is mentioned in the chant (lines 80-3, 143ff.), but traditions exist of two brothers of the same name: a defective older one, who is the origin of the taro plant, and a younger one, who is the source of the chiefly lines (Malo n.d.:LX; Beckwith 1932:192f.; Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1972:173). Line 124 of the chant refers, perhaps, to the death of an older brother, but the allusion is unclear. The emphasis on Hāloa may have been an answer to the missionary argument that offspring of incestuous unions were defective. Similarly, the emphasis on ola ‘life or health’ and fertility may be polemical as well as generally ideological; a focus of controversy — inevitable in view of the health problems of the time — was the efficacy of Western as opposed to native medicine or, even more sharply, whether the missionaries were somehow killing the Hawaiians, especially the chiefs (e.g., A.B.C.F.M. 1824-30: No. 126, p.6f.). This controversy touched Nāhiʻenaʻena’s circle (A.B.C.F.M. 1828-30:5ff.) and was given by her as a reason for her earlier hesitation to join the missionaries: “I once thought that the word of God was a very heavy thing, and burdensome to those that carried it, and a thing to make one sick… Indeed it is not so. It is light; it is good; it is a thing to make well” (MH 1826:171 [Toteta]).

120 Lines 74f. The mating in line 74 is expressed in terms that can be found elsewhere; Pukui and Korn 1973:43: Nā ka wahine i ‘oni a kealakela i ka lani.
121 Charlot 1985:2 (regularised text). Note the parallels to Pukui and Korn 1973:19: Pili, maui; and the use of ‘e‘a in the title of the chant for Liholiho.
122 Malo n.d.:XXXV:14 (navel-cutting); XXXVI:62 (kālīi ceremony); XXXVII:63 (on staff of priest of Lono), 87, 106 (temple offerings), 109 (altar dressing); 1951:184, 186ff. (in temple chants [Emerson]).
123 Malo n.d.:XXXVI:43; also 1951:154, where Emerson states that this malo was made of wauke tapa, but ‘oloa is clearly mentioned in the name of the ceremony. Kelou Kamakau
writes that ʻköpiliʻ tapa was used (Formander 1919-20:21). Different tapa may have been used at different times and places, as was the case in commoner ceremonies (Formander 1919-20:157). Emerson interprets ʻkiaoloa as a tapa bleached with sea water; one would expect ʻʻoloa kai. Kai is almost certainly ʻkaʻi as used in Malo n.d.:XXXVII:116; e kaʻi malo loihī ʻcarrying or drawing forth a long maloʼ; the phrase is parallel to the traditional kaʻi i ka ʻaha(Malo XXXVII:44,72,77 [kaʻi kaʻi],95) or kaʻi ʻaha(Malo n.d.:XXXVII:84;1951:185 [Emerson]). The malo of the god was reportedly made during a special month (Formander 1919-20:205).

124. Malo n.d.:XXXVII:68, 70f., 103f. A malo is offered in the navel-cutting ceremony, but is not called explicitly ʻʻoloa (Malo XXXV:12, 15); ʻʻoloa is used in the cutting itself (p.14).

125. The texts I shall refer to are Malo n.d.:XXXVII:116f.; 1951:186f. (Emerson; the "kaiaoloa" prayer); and Formander 1919-20:27, 29.

126. Formander 1919-20:29. Formander speaks of one wife, whereas Malo explicitly mentions multiple wives. Formander states repeatedly and explicitly that the malo was for the image of the goddess of the chief. Malo is less clear but is best understood in the same sense. After the principal goddess has received her malo, the guardians of other goddesses join the ceremony and receive prayers and offerings, among which are malo.

The wife of the priest in the tree-cutting ceremony hands him a malo, which is white but not explicitly stated to be ʻʻoloa (Malo n.d.:XXXIV:11). White malo are worn by the temple priest and the fisherman conducting a ceremony (Formander 1919-20:15, 33). Colours can ritually be significant (Malo XL:4, 5; Formander 1919-20:3).

127. Formander 1919-20:5. A malo is offered to the image of the goddess in this ceremony, which may be the basis for the more elaborate temple rite.

128. This theme is explicit in the priest’s prayer. The malo is connected to both male and female gods — respectively, Kū, Lono, and Kāne and ʻUli and Hina — and the result is ola ‘life’ and lanakila ‘victory.’ The malo of Kū is connected to the vaʻeleʻe ‘the flying rain’; that of Hina with luʻu ‘dipping in liquid dye’. The malo is called ke ola o na lii wahine ‘the life of the chiefesses’. The pattern of uniting male and female gods for fertility and prosperity will be discussed below. Compare also the prayer of the priest presenting a malo to the god (Formander 1919-20:11).

The only Hawaiian-language text I know where a woman wears a malo describes the ceremonies surrounding the birth of a chief (Malo n.d.:XXXV:21f.). During the seven days of discharge after the birth, the chiefess lives in a place separated from the men and wears a malo that holds medicinal herbs to her belly. This “cleansing” is called hoopapa, which may mean ‘like Papa’; a reference to the separation or perhaps to the use of a malo as in the Hale o Papa ceremony. See also Pukui 1942:362.

Mary Kawena Pukui speaks of prophetesses called malo kea because they wore a white malo, especially while conducting rituals (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 1979:110f., 269, 289; accepted by Pukui and Elbert 1986: malo kea). This would constitute a nearer parallel to the text under discussion, but I have found no other reference to such prophetesses and cannot judge whether their practice might have been known to the composer of the chant.


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