
The late Sarah Nākoʻa’s *Lei Momī o 'Ewa* demonstrates how well the Hawaiian prose tradition can express the situation of contemporary Hawaiians. Nākoʻa's language is that of a native speaker. Dictionary compilers can study the rare words and shades of meaning she has saved for posterity. Language students can admire her combination of easiness and precision of expression.

Sarah Nākoʻa was deeply learned in the history of Hawaiian literature, from the short folk tales she heard from her family and friends, to the long, abstruse 19th century Hawaiian writings she herself taught at the University of Hawaiʻi.

But she did not reproduce past literature mechanically. She gave us traditional literary forms — stories, reports, explanations of sayings and songs — with their careful structures and time—honoured turns of phrase. But she placed them within a framework she created from her own experience of today.

In "Ke Kiʻowai 'o Honokawai lani" ("Honokawai lani Pool"), she tells the story of the long—haired beauty who was lost to the loving lizard god of the pool. But she begins her chapter by writing that her own mother would tell her that story as she was combing the future author’s long hair. The story is thus enshrined within the context of Hawaiian life and — like the pool itself — becomes a memorial of and a monument to it.

The child of 'Ewa passes on to us the stories of 'Ewa. "Aloha nō ke noʻonoʻo aʻe," she writes, "How strange and wonderful to think about it." Is the story of Kaluaʻoʻopu all that will remain of that pool now that it has been covered with houses? No, the water still wells up from the earth and flows underground to Honokawai lani.

Sara Nākoʻa’s work, presented without translation, becomes a part of the hidden but continuous and powerful stream of Hawaiian culture.

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