A TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN EXPRESSION
RE-EXAMINED

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Traditional Polynesian literature regularly uses words and senses of words that are no longer current. An understanding of them is naturally important for literary and linguistic studies. When oral informants are lacking, the meanings or senses of words must be induced from parallels and cognates.

In this note, I will attempt to define an expression found in Lili'uokalani's He Kanikau nō Lele-iō-hoku 'A Dirge for Lele-iō-hoku'², stanza 1, line 3: Haehae i ka manawa. The expression is translated "Tearing the heart" by Samuel H. Elbert and Noelani Mahoe, who state, "The torn heart in the first stanza also seems to be a foreign concept."³

Objections can, however, be raised to this view. Manawa is indeed well attested in the sense of "Affection, feelings, disposition," so defined by Mary Kawena Pukui and Elbert in their Hawaiian Dictionary.⁴ Moreover, Hawaiian culture, as others, posits an internal, physical seat of the emotions. Modern Western culture uses language that places that seat in the heart. Other cultures place that seat elsewhere, and the identification of the manawa with the heart can be claimed by Pukui and Elbert only to be 'figurative'.⁵ Significantly, the other Hawaiian words listed by them as figurative of heart denote entrails, insides, and the chest. To identify the manawa with the heart, as occurs often in dictionaries and translations, is, therefore, to understand a Hawaiian word in Western terms. Moreover, when that Western identification is adopted by 19th and 20th century Hawaiian writers, they simply use the Hawaiian word for heart: pu'uwai. The judgement of Haehae i ka manawa as a foreign concept can, therefore, be based only on a loose translation of the text.
An important argument against such a judgement is that Lili'uokalani uses systematically in her dirge the vocabulary and expressions that had long been established as traditional or canonical for the genre. Thus a parallel to the expression under discussion can be found in a chant. Ha'alilo's emotion is described on hearing of the death of his brother:

Haha'i Ha'alilo i ka manawa.
Ha'alilo breaks into pieces the manawa,7

translated in the Fornander collection: "Ha'alilo is sore at heart."8 A play on the expression can also be found in S.N. Hale'ole's novel Laieikawai in a chant in which the heroine mourns her husband:

Ha'iha'i pua o ku'u manawa
Breaking the flower of my manawa.9

The expression can, therefore, be identified as a traditional one for grief used in chants and, later, songs of mourning. As such, the expression may contain words or senses of words no longer current at the time of composition. All the words in the expression are, however, in common use, and the current senses of haahae, hahā'i and ha'iha'i are congruent with each other and seem to pose no problems in their contexts.

The exact sense of manawa in the expression does not seem, however, to be covered by the dictionary entries or by the translations cited. The physical character of the manawa is shown by its use with the verbs in the expression: the manawa can be torn or broken. Other words used with manawa have equally physical denotations.10 The glosses "Affection, feelings, disposition" are, therefore, inadequate because the physical seat of the emotions must be identified. A note in the Fornander collection states the problem succinctly: "Manawa, some internal part not well understood, the seat of fear and other passions."11

A use of manawa is available that connects it clearly to breathing:

ke aho i ka manawa
the breath in the manawa.12

Manawa as breath or respiratory system is not in current use, but can be apprehended in several word combinations: manawaea "Hard breathing, panting for breath, from exertion; to pant thus. Lit., rising breath";13 manawanui is a synonym for ahonui "Patience . . . Lit., great breath."14 Breathing is, of course, physiologically connected to the emotions, so that the use
of manawa in words referring to them is not surprising. Finally, the Samoan cognate manava refers as a noun to breath and as a verb to breathing.

I conclude that the traditional expression under discussion enshrines a sense of manawa that is no longer current, a reference to the breath or respiratory system. The expression would thus refer to the deregulation of breathing caused by the impact of a strong emotion, an example of the traditional Hawaiian's close attention to bodily phenomena as manifestations of emotion.

An examination of the traditional phrase in the context of the available literary and lexical evidence has provided a more exact understanding of its meaning and a closer possible translation for it, as well as revealing a non-current sense of the word manawa, which can be found in the current use of its Samoan cognate.

NOTES

1 E.g., Elbert-Pukui 1979: 53; Milner 1966: xii. Knowledge of such words and senses confers prestige. In Samoa, I was told by a chief from Manu'a that his oratory was respected because he used words from his island that were not understood by Tutuila chiefs.


4 Pukui-Elbert 1971: manawa 3. See also manawahūwā (hūa), manawa 'ino, manawale'a manawanui.

5 Pukui-Elbert 1971: heart.

6 Charlot 1983: 90 ff., 99, 103; above, note 10. Compare line 4 of the dirge chorus to Judd 1930: 42, number 487. I discuss at length in Charlot forthcoming, the tendency of Hawaiian literature to canonise a vocabulary and set of expressions for a given genre. Many of the words and expressions used in the works cited can be found in funeral orations and death announcements.
Fornander 1916-1917: 417, line 40. The published text does not use diacritical marks; I have supplied the glottal stop in haha'i because hahai yields no sense appropriate to the context. The proposed sense of haha'i is close to that of haahae given by Pukui-Elbert 1971: haahae "to tear to bits".

Fornander 1916-1917: 416, line 40.

Beckwith 1919: 521, stanza 2, line 4, translated "Proud flower of my heart." The play on the expression is characteristically complicated. Manawa in the first and third stanzas clearly refers to the seat of emotions of the chanter. The lehua flower in the first line of the second stanza symbolises the husband; he expires with his fragrant panting, nae kolopua, line 2. I would argue that the third line refers with the word olopolu "lovelorn, heartbroken" (Pukui-Elbert 1971: at word), to the still living chanter. The fourth line thus plays on the traditional expression by inserting into it the pua 'flower', which is the central reference point of the word play of the stanza.

An alternative interpretation of line 3 would have it refer to the whistling ghost of the lonesome husband. In this interpretation also, line 4 would refer to the chanter, describing her reaction.

E.g., Fornander 1919-1920: 462, line 63 and note 28; Beckwith 1919: 521, ha'alulu, nei, nakolo, ho'opâ'ele; compare 487, komi, hiamoe, ho'ọnakulu. Nakolo is used in Lili'uokalani's dirge, stanza 1, line 2; her lihaliha, chorus, line 1, is a variant of lia in Beckwith 1919: 521 stanza 3, line 2.

Fornander 1919-1920: 470, note 19.

Fornander 1919-1920: 470, line 19. This text, as others, precludes the identification of the seat of emotions designated by manawa with another of its physical referents, the anterior fontanel; Pukui-Elbert 1971: manawa 4, manawaea 2. The stated connection with the stomach, manawahuia 1, could be related to the respiratory system.

Pukui-Elbert 1971: manawaea; ea 3, "To rise," an indication that manawa is understood as "breath" in manawaea.

Pukui-Elbert 1971: ahonui, manawanui. See also aho 2.

See above, note 4. Similarly, the use of manawa for words referring to time may have arisen from the primordial connection of breathing to the development of a sense of time; Pukui-Elbert 1971: manawa 1, 2; manawakolu.
E.g., Charlot 1983: 64, 67-73, 82-90, 94, 106, 111 f. Compare the line in a chant bewailing an absent lover, Fornander 1916-1917: 603, line 4 of the chant:

Ke lalawe nei la i ku'u 'ao'ao
Grabbing continually at my sides,

translated, 602, "It is pricking me at my side." Pukui-Elbert 1971: lalawe, give mostly positive senses (see also Charlot 1983: 88), but also "to itch". The sense in the cited chant is clearly negative.

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