THE KUMULIPO

A Hawaiian Creation Chant

translated and edited with commentary by Martha Warren Beckwith

The Kumulipo ("Beginning-in-deep-darkness") is the sacred creation chant of a family of Hawaiian ali'i, or ruling chiefs. Composed and transmitted entirely in the oral tradition, its two thousand lines provide an extended genealogy proving the family’s divine origin and tracing the family history from the beginning of the world.

This chant remains as an authentic work or primitive literature. Moreover, it is one of the principal sources of information on Hawaiian mythology, early culture, political structure, and way of life.

The original text of the Kumulipo was first printed in Honolulu in 1889 from a manuscript copy in the possession of King Kalakaua. Several translations were made later, including one by Queen Liliuokalani, published in 1897. However, none was available in English when Martha Beckwith completed her own translation and detailed study, first published in 1951 by the University of Chicago Press.

“Not only does Beckwith’s book provide students of pre-European Hawaii with the most authoritative text and translation of the Kumulipo, it also brings to anyone interested in Polynesia a profound glimpse into the creative depths of the pre-European Hawaiian mind.”—Pacific Islands Monthly

KA WA AKAHI
CHANT ONE
0001. O ke au i kahuli wela ka honua
At the time when the earth became hot
0002. O ke au i kahuli lole ka lani
At the time when the heavens turned about
0003. O ke au i kuka‘iaka ka la
At the time when the sun was darkened
0004. E ho'omalamalama i ka malama
To cause the moon to shine
0005. O ke au o Makali‘i ka po
The time of the rise of the Pleiades
0006. O ka walewale ho'okumu honua ia
The slime, this was the source of the earth
0007. O ke kumu o ka lipo, i lipo ai
The source of the darkness that made darkness
0008. O ke kumu o ka Po, i po ai
The source of the night that made night
0009. O ka lipolipo, o ka lipolipo
The intense darkness, the deep darkness
0010. O ka lipo o ka la, o ka lipo o ka po
Darkness of the sun, darkness of the night
0011. Po wale ho--'i
Nothing but night
0012. Hanau ka po
The night gave birth
0013. Hanau Kumulipo i ka po, he kane
Born was Kumulipo in the night, a male
0014. Hanau Po'ele i ka po, he wahine
Born was Po'ele in the night, a female
0015. Hanau ka 'Uku-ko'ako'a, hanau kana, he 'Ako'ako'a, puka
Born was the coral polyp, born was the coral, came forth
0016. Hanau ke Ko'e-enuhe 'eli ho'opu'u honua
Born was the grub that digs and heaps up the earth, came forth
0017. Hanau kana, he Ko'e, puka
Born was his [child] an earthworm, came forth
0018. Hanau ka Pe'a, ka Pe'ape'a kana keiki puka
Born was the starfish, his child the small starfish came forth
0019. Hanau ka Weli, he Weliweli kana keiki, puka
Born was the sea cucumber, his child the small sea cucumber came forth
0020. Hanau ka 'Ina, ka 'Ina
Born was the sea urchin, the sea urchin [tribe]
0021. Hanau kana, he Halula, puka
Born was the short-spiked sea urchin, came forth
0022. Hanau ka Hawa'e, o ka Wana-ku kana keiki, puka
Born was the smooth sea urchin, his child the long-spiked came forth
0023. Hanau ka Ha'uke'u, o ka 'Uhalula kana keiki, puka
Born was the ring-shaped sea urchin, his child the thin-spiked came forth
Kumulipo (Text and Translation) http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/Oral-Lit/Hawaiian/Kumulipo...
Born was man for the narrow stream, the woman for the broad stream

0035. Hanau ka Ekaha noho i kai
Born was the Ekaha moss living in the sea

0036. Kia‘i ia e ka Ekahakaha noho i uka
Guarded by the Ekahakaha fern living on land

0037. He po uhe‘e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light

0038. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la‘au
Earth and water are the food of the plant

0039. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a‘oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter

0040. O kane ia Wai‘ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai‘olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0041. Hanau ka ‘Aki‘aki noho i kai
Born was the tough seagrass living in the sea

0042. Kia‘i ia e ka Manienie-‘aki‘aki noho i uka
Guarded by the tough landgrass living on land

0043. He po uhe‘e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light

0044. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la‘au
Earth and water are the food of the plant

0045. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a‘oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter

0046. O kane ia Wai‘ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai‘olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0047. Hanau ka ‘A‘ala‘ula noho i kai
Born was the ‘A‘ala‘ala moss living in the sea

0048. Kia‘i ia e ka ‘A‘ala‘ala-wai-nui noho i uka
Guarded by the ‘A‘ala‘ala mint living on land

0049. He po uhe‘e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light

0050. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la‘au
Earth and water are the food of the plant

0051. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a‘oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter

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0052. O kane ia Wai‘ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai‘olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0053. Hanau ka Manauea noho i kai
Born was the Manauea moss living in the sea

0054. Kia‘i ia e ke Kalo-manauea noho i uka
Guarded by the Manauea taro plant living on land

0055. He po uhe‘e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light

0056. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la‘au
Earth and water are the food of the plant

0057. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a‘oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter

0058. O kane, ia Wai‘ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai‘olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0059. Hanau ke Ko‘ele‘ele noho i kai
Born was the Ko’ele seaweed living in the sea

Guarded by the long-jointed sugarcane, the ko ‘ele’ele, living on land

Darkness slips into light

Earth and water are the food of the plant

The god enters, man can not enter

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

Hanau ka Puaki noho i kai

Born was the Kakalamoa living in the sea

Guarded by the moamoa plant living on land

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

Hanau ka limu Kele noho i kai

Born was the Kala seaweed living in the sea

Guarded by the Ekele plant living on land

Hanau ka limu Kala noho i kai

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Guarded by the ‘Akala vine living on land
0085. He po uhe’e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light
0086. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la’au
Earth and water are the food of the plant
0087. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a’oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter
0088. O kane ia Wai’ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai’olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream
0089. Hanau ka Lipu’upu’u noho i kai
Born was the Lipu’upu’u living in the sea
0090. Kia’i ia e ka Lipu’u, noho i uka
Guarded by the Lipu’u living on land
0091. He po uhe’e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light
0092. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la’au
Earth and water are the food of the plant
0093. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a’oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter
0094. O kane ia Wai’ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai’olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream
0095. Hanau ka Loloa, noho i kai
Born was the Long-one living at sea
0096. Kia’i ia e ka Kalamaloloa, noho i uka
Guarded by the Long-torch living on land
0097. He po uhe’e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light
0098. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la’au
Earth and water are the food of the plant
0099. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a’oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter
0100. O kane ia Wai’ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai’olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream
0101. Hanau ka Ne, noho i kai
Born was the Ne seaweed living in the sea
0102. Kia’i ia e ka Neneleau noho i uka
Guarded by the Neneleau [sumach] living on land
0103. He po uhe’e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light
0104. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la’au
Earth and water are the food of the plant
0105. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a’oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter
0106. O kane ia Wai’ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai’olola
Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream
0107. Hanau ka Huluwaena, noho i kai
Born was the hairy seaweed living in the sea
0108. Kia’i ia e ka Huluulu-‘ie’ie noho i uka
Guarded by the hairy pandanus vine living on land
0109. He po uhe’e i ka wawa
Darkness slips into light
0110. He nuku, he wai ka ‘ai a ka la’au
Earth and water are the food of the plant
0111. O ke Akua ke komo, ‘a’oe komo kanaka
The god enters, man can not enter
0112. O ke kane huawai, Akua kena
The man with the water gourd, he is a god
0113. O kalina a ka wai i ho’oulu ai
Water that causes the withered vine to flourish
0114. O ka huli ho’okawowo honua
Causes the plant top to develop freely
0115. O paia [‘a] i ke auau ka manawa
Multiplying in the passing time
0116. O he’e au loloa ka po
The long night slips along
0117. O piha, o pihapiha
Fruitful, very fruitful
0118. O piha-u, o piha-a
Spreading here, spreading there
0119. O piha-e, o piha-o
Spreading this way, spreading that way
0120. O ke ko’o honua pa’a ka lani
Propping up earth, holding up the sky
0121. O lewa ke au, ia Kumulipo ka po
The time passes, this night of Kumulipo
0122. Po--no
Still it is night