

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 *alii*, 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 begging 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'uke, 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...>

2 of 58 2/2/2008 9:39 PM

0024. Hanau ka Pi'oe, o ka Pipi kana keiki, puka

Born was the barnacle, his child the pearl oyster came forth

0025. Hanau ka Papaua, o ka 'Olepe kana keiki, puka

Born was the mother-of-pearl, his child the oyster came forth

0026. Hanau ka Nahawele, o ka Unauna kana keiki, puka

Born was the mussel, his child the hermit crab came forth

0027. Hanau ka Makaiauli, o ka 'Opihi kana keiki, puka

Born was the big limpet, his child the small limpet came forth

0028. Hanau ka Leho, o ka Puleholeho kana keiki, puka

Born was the cowry, his child the small cowry came forth

0029. Hanau ka Naka, o ke Kupekala kana keiki, puka

Born was the naka shellfish, the rock oyster his child came forth

0030. Hanau ka Makaloa, o ka Pupu'awa kana keiki, puka

Born was the drupa shellfish, his child the bitter white shell fish came forth

0031. Hanau ka 'Ole, o ka 'Ole'ole kana keiki, puka

Born was the conch shell, his child the small conch shell came forth

0032. Hanau ka Pipipi, o ke Kupe'e kana keiki, puka

Born was the nerita shellfish, the sand-burrowing shellfish his child came forth

0033. Hanau ka Wi, o ke Kiki kana keiki, puka

Born was the fresh water shellfish, his child the small fresh water shellfish came forth

0034. Hanau kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola

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 'Ala'ala moss living in the sea

0048. Kia'i ia e ka 'Ala'ala-wai-nui noho i uka

Guarded by the '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

Kumulipo (Text and Translation) <http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/Oral-Lit/Hawaiian/Kumulipo...>

3 of 58 2/2/2008 9:39 PM

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

0060. Kia'i ia e ke ko Punapuna, ko 'ele'ele, noho i uka

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

0061. He po uhe'e i ka wawa

Darkness slips into light

0062. He nuku, he wai ka 'ai a ka la'au

Earth and water are the food of the plant

0063. O ke Akua ke komo, 'a'oe komo kanaka

The god enters, man can not enter

0064. O kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0065. Hanau ka Puaki noho i kai

Born was the Puaki seaweed living in the sea

0066. Kia'i ia e ka Lauaki noho i uka

Guarded by the Akiaki rush living on land

0067. He po uhe'e i ka wawa

Darkness slips into light

0068. He nuku, he wai ka 'ai a ka la'au

Earth and water are the food of the plant

0069. O ke Akua ke komo, 'a'oe komo kanaka

The god enters, man can not enter

0070. O kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0071. Hanau ka Kakalamoa noho i kai

Born was the Kakalamoa living in the sea

0072. Kia'i ia e ka Moamoamo noho i uka

Guarded by the moamoamo plant living on land

0073. He po uhe'e i ka wawa

Darkness slips into light

0074. He nuku, he wai ka 'ai a ka la'au

Earth and water are the food of the plant

0075. O ke Akua ke komo, 'a'oe komo kanaka

The god enters, man can not enter

0076. O kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0077. Hanau ka limu Kele noho i kai

Born was the Kele seaweed living in the sea

0078. Kia'i ia e ka Ekele noho i uka

Guarded by the Ekele plant living on land

0079. He po uhe'e i ka wawa

Kumulipo (Text and Translation) <http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/Oral-Lit/Hawaiian/Kumulipo...>

4 of 58 2/2/2008 9:39 PM

Darkness slips into light

0080. He nuku, he wai ka 'ai a ka la'au

Earth and water are the food of the plant

0081. O ke Akua ke komo, 'a'oe komo kanaka

The god enters, man can not enter

0082. O kane ia Wai'ololi, o ka wahine ia Wai'olola

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad stream

0083. Hanau ka limu Kala noho i kai

Born was the Kala seaweed living in the sea

0084. Kia'i ia e ka 'Akala noho i uka

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

Kumulipo (Text and Translation) <http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/stampe/Oral-Lit/Hawaiian/Kumulipo...>

5 of 58 2/2/2008 9:39 PM

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 Huluhulu-'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