

Activity: Famous Are the Flowers

A *mele*, or song, written in 1893 is reprinted here. It expresses the feelings of some of the Hawaiian people as the monarchy came to a sad end.

Read the history of this *mele* and the song itself.

The words of this *himeni* are bitter, yet the tune is gay (was there no feeling that the tune should reflect the mood of the words?). "Kaulana Na Pua" (Famous Are the Children/Flowers) opposes the annexation of Hawai'i to the United States and was written, according to Ethel M. Damon, by Ellen Wright Prendergast in 1893 under the title "Mele 'Ai Pohaku."

The song was considered sacred and not for dancing. Four famous chiefs are mentioned as symbols for their lands: Keawe of Hawai'i, Pi'ilani of the bays with names beginning Hono on Maui, Mano of Kauai, and Kakuhihewa of Oahu.

Damon thus describes the song's composition:

One such gifted composer, Mrs. Ellen Wright Prendergast, was sitting on an afternoon of January

1893, in the lovely garden of her father's mansion at Kapalama. Her prized guitar lay close at hand. When guests were announced, their familiar faces proved to be the troubled ones of all but two members of the Royal Hawaiian Band—on strike. 'We will not follow this new government,' they asserted. 'We will be loyal to Liliu. We will not sign the *haole's* paper, but will be satisfied with all that is left to us, the stones, the mystic food of our native land.' So they begged her to compose this song of rebellion, Mele 'Ai Pohaku (Stone-eating Song), called also Mele Aloha Aina (Patriots' Song.)

Long a close friend of the royal family, Ellen Prendergast found the words and music rising within her. Soon the *mele* was well known among Hawaiians. Years later, after the Royal Hawaiian Band had reassembled and gave special afternoon concerts, it was an event when Heleluhe of the band was to sing the Mele 'Ai Pohaku. Distance and time even then were merging bitterness with legend. The origin of this Hawaiian chant has been shared with us by the composer's daughter Eleanor Prendergast. (Elbert and Mahoe 1970)

Kaulana Na Pua

(Famous Are the Flowers)

(Hawaiian)

Kaulana na pua a'o Hawai'i
Kūpa'a mahope o ka 'aina
Hiki mai ka 'elele o ka loko 'ino
Palapala 'ānunu me ka pākaha.

Pane mai Hawai'i moku o Keawe.
Kōkua nā Hono a'o Pi'ilani.
Kāko'o mai Kaua'i o Mano
Pa'apū me ke one Kakuhihewa

'A'ole 'a'e kau i ka pūlima
Maluna o ka pepa o ka 'enemi
Ho'ohui 'āina kū'ai hewa
I ka pono sivila a'o ke kanaka

'A'ole mākou a'e minamina
I ka pu'ukalā a ke aupuni.
Ua lawa mākou i ka pōhaku,
I ka 'ai kamaha'o o ka 'āina.

(English Translation)

Famous are the children of Hawai'i
Ever loyal to the land
When the evil-hearted messenger comes
With his greedy document of extortion.

Hawai'i, land of Keawe answers.
Pi'ilani's bays help.
Mano's Kaua'i lends support
And so do the sands of Kakuhihewa.

No one will fix a signature
To the paper of the enemy
With its sin of annexation
And sale of native civil rights.

We do not value
The government's sums of money.
We are satisfied with the stones,
Astonishing food of the land.

(Hawaiian)

Mahohe mākou o Lili'u-lani
 A loa'a 'ē ka pono a ka 'āina.
 (A kau hou 'ia e Ke Kalaunu)
 Ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana
 Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'āina.

(English Translation)

We back Lili'u-lani
 Who has won the rights of the land.
 (She will be crowned again)
 Tell the story
 Of the people who love their land.

—Ellen Prendergast

Questions

1. Now that you have read the song, consider how it makes you feel. Do you agree with the laments?
2. Tell what the song means when it says,
 We are satisfied with the stones,
 Astonishing food of the land.
3. How are the chiefs of old alluded to in this song? Be specific.
4. Choose one of these activities:
 - a. Write your own poem or song about the loss of the Hawaiian Kingdom. It does not need to be as long as this one. It does not have to rhyme. Share your poem or *mele* with the class.
 - b. Find a recording of this song. It has been recorded by several groups in Hawai'i. Play these recordings for the class. Does the way different groups sing the song make it feel different? How does hearing the song make you feel? Teach the song to the class.
 - c. Sing the song for the class, either in a group or alone. If you can provide accompaniment, do so. Teach the song to other members of the class.

6 Annexation: Hawai'i Becomes a Territory

During the years 1893 to 1898 Hawai'i functioned under two kinds of governments, first a provisional government set up by the members of the Committee of Safety, then the government of the Republic of Hawai'i. The leaders of both governments had a definite goal in mind—annexation to the United States. In 1898, just 5 years after the overthrow of the monarchy, the United States officially annexed Hawai'i. The Hawaiian Islands became the Territory of Hawaii.

The Provisional Government and the Republic of Hawaii

After the overthrow of the monarchy, Queen Lili'uokalani protested to the American government about the American role in ending the Hawaiian Kingdom. She believed, as did many of the Hawaiian people, that the monarchy would be restored.

President Grover Cleveland sent his own representative, James Blount, to investigate the

circumstances of the overthrow. Blount spoke with the major people involved, including the queen. He then returned to Washington to deliver his report.

On December 20, 1893, almost a year after the overthrow, President Cleveland sent a letter to Sanford Dole, the president of the Provisional Government of Hawai'i. Cleveland acknowledged the wrongness of the overthrow and asked Dole to resign and to restore authority to the Hawaiian Kingdom.