

KEALAIKAHIKI – SEA ROAD BETWEEN HAWAI'I AND KAHIKI

Introduction

Moving forward and strengthening as a lāhui (nation) for coming generations, Native Hawaiians seek to understand our identity as rooted in our ancestral past. We must consider Moananuiākea, the vast Pacific Ocean, when we consider our futures. As in the chant *Eia Hawai'i* by Kamahualele, many of our mele (chants), mo'olelo (histories), and mo'okū'auhau (genealogies) position us as kama na Kahiki -- children of Kahiki.

On June 18, 2019 the *He Kama Na Kahiki Symposium* convened at the Kamehameha Schools Kapālama at the Ka'iwakiloumoku Hawaiian Cultural Center.

This day-long symposium explored the ancestral foundation of Native Hawaiian identity that is genealogically rooted in Kahiki. A group of Native Hawaiian community leaders, educators, navigators, and cultural practitioners with insights about Tahiti and the expansive idea of Kahiki were invited to participate. The dialogue also explored the various ways Hawaiians today express their affinity for this heritage region.

The following materials include assumptions, themes, and ideas that were shared and affirmed by the participants through the course of the symposium. These thought-provoking insights expand and strengthen understandings of who we are as Hawaiians and our connections to the greater Pacific universe.

Purpose

We envision that the insights shared in this document from the *He Kama Na Kahiki Symposium* can be used by educators, administrators, and others in key positions to reframe existing understandings of the Pacific region, inspire new directions for curriculum, and help to shape understandings of Hawaiian identity within Moananuiākea.

Assumptions and Beliefs

Recognizing our connections to the greater Pacific and our responsibility within it, we seek to be: advocates for our language, customs, and traditions; stewards of our environment; and proponents for finding solutions through our ancestral ingenuity. We take with us these values and commit to forwarding these beliefs for the betterment of society and the continuation of our shared Pacific heritage.

1. We acknowledge that “Kahiki” or “Kahiki Homeland” is a specific reference to the ancestral region that includes the Society Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, and the Marquesas Islands, and may generally refer to other closely-related island groups.
 - We acknowledge that there are other conceptions of Kahiki, such as the notion of Kahiki as mythical lands to the south, as well as all lands outside of Hawai'i.
 - We acknowledge that the French Polynesian Flag recognizes five island groups, including the Austral and Gambier Islands.

2. Kealaikahiki can be viewed as an ancestral sea road that forms a heritage corridor connecting Hawai'i and the Kahiki Homeland.
 - We acknowledge the significance of Kaho'olawe (Kanaloa) as an important ancestral marker for the Kealaikahiki pathway. The 'ili, the point, and the channel known as Kealaikahiki, as well as the island of Kaho'olawe itself, constitute these markers.
 - Kealaikahiki is a corridor with multiple access points ("on-ramps and off-ramps"), as well as optimal times and conditions for traveling.

3. The royal genealogy of Princess Bernice Pauahi can be traced back to the ancient chiefly lineages of the Kahiki Homeland and beyond.
 - The genealogical lines of Ulu and Nanaulu, from which Pauahi descends, can also be found in the chiefly genealogies of the Kahiki Homeland and beyond.
 - This same Ulu/'Uru is held to be a direct ancestor of the progenitor of the Pomare Dynasty, also named 'Uru (per S. Percy Smith's comments on Teaira Henry's essay regarding the Pomare Dynasty, 1893).

4. A wealth of traditional mo'olelo and mele constitute historical records that reflect our connection to the Kahiki Homeland.
 - For the purposes of this symposium, the mo'olelo of Mo'ikeha, Pele, Pa'ao and Pili were referenced as migratory, voyaging mo'olelo.
 - Kamahualele's chant "Eia Hawai'i" of the Mo'ikeha tradition lends one of its lines as the symposium theme, "He kama na kahiki," *Hawai'i is a child of Tahiti*.

5. We acknowledge Marae Taputapuātea at Opoa, Ra'īātea as a sacred religious site of paramount importance, and a highly significant center of ancestral navigation and voyaging for Hawaiians and others associated with the Kahiki Homeland.
 - We acknowledge the he'e/fe'e (octopus) as a metaphor for Ra'īātea being the center of the cultural alliance of island groups which are touched by its radiating tentacles (cf. Teaira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*; Te Rangi Hiroa [Sir Peter Buck], *Vikings of the Sunrise*; Ministry of Culture, Gov. of French Polynesia, *UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation 2017*).
 - We further acknowledge the importance of ceremonies and protocols observed on the occasion of voyaging, and on special pilgrimages in contemporary times; and we affirm the practice of offering and exchanging pōhaku at Marae Taputapuātea.

6. We acknowledge ancestral place names and their conspicuous recurrence throughout Polynesia over centuries serving as markers along an oceanic road map (e.g., Havai'i/Hawaiki/Savai'i, Vava'u/Wawau, 'Uporu/Kuporu/'Upolu, Tonga/Kona, Ta'ū/Ka'ū, Olosenga/Orohena/Olohena; Tahiti/Kahiki/Fiji, Taputapuātea/Kapukapuākea, etc.)

7. We recognize a shared linguistic, cultural, genetic, and maritime heritage among speakers of Austronesian languages that originated in the ancient region known today as Taiwan, and which through profound human dispersal (by means of traditional wayfinding technology), spanned more than half the distance around the world from Madagascar to Rapa Nui, and from Aotearoa to Hawai'i.

Insights:

The diverse backgrounds and the subject matter expertise of the participants resulted in robust discussion of many aspects of Kahiki.

The following section includes selected quotes shared by *He Kama Na Kahiki Symposium* participants: Derek Kekaulike Mar, Gordon Heulu Piianaia, Kaleomanuiwa Wong, Kaleo Trinidad, Dr. Kāwika Ty Tengan, Kaumakaiwa Kanaka'ole, Dr. Keao Nesmith, Shantell DeSilva, Lehua Kamalu, Nainoa Thompson, Dr. Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa, and Snowbird Bento.



Derek Kekaulike Mar, *Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO)*

On the reciprocal connections between Hawai'i and Kahiki, particularly on Kaho'olawe:

"Kealaikahiki is the name of the 'ili [small land division] on the western side of Kaho'olawe, and then the channel off of that point... Papa Mau [Satawal navigator Mau Pialug], he was quiet, and so when he did speak there was gravitas, so I remember him saying, 'This is the place to launch from, to come back to; to make this regular, this place the spot for regular voyaging.'"

"I would offer that Kealaikahiki is a place name that exists on Kaho'olawe, it also can be used to refer to the many different ways we go up and down, and it's not a one lane highway. Get plenty on-ramps and off-ramps too."

"The western construct is, 'you guys that are up here, and Tahiti is down here.' They draw lines around peoples; segregated and separated. But we need to erase some of these western lines and reaffirm that we are all connected. By stating that Pauahi, and us all, have lineage back to Kahiki Homeland."



Gordon Heulu Piianaia, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS) Voyager

On what constitutes "Kahiki":

"I think we have to look at how they define Kahiki down there too. One of the best examples is their flag; it is my favorite flag. On that flag it has the wa'a, the foundation. And on the flag, there are 5 x's which represent the five archipelagoes that they have defined."

On the spiritual pull to certain places in Kahiki:

"Every time a canoe leaves Hawai'i and it reaches Kahiki, where do we land? Basically, the same area. Mataiwa, Rangiroa, Tikehau, there's a pocket, an 'umeke there that says, "Welcome home, welcome home.""



Kaleomanuiwa Wong, PVS Navigator

On spiritual connections between Hawai'i and Kahiki:

"I like that idea that there's something else going on that's pulling us into those islands. Not just us doing the navigation, but there's kupuna around us, other things guiding and pulling the canoe. And we see those things pretty often...It's not just us guiding the canoe, a lot of other things around us, pulling us to these islands. It's calling us, it's bringing us there."

On voyaging to Kahiki:

"One of the things that's always talked about with Nainoa [Thompson] and voyaging these days is that sailing to Nīhoa and Mokumanamana is what *Makali'i* just did, is almost harder than sailing to Tahiti, and if you can sail to those islands, you can sail to Tahiti. You have the knowledge to get there, especially to Mokumanamana and beyond, and you have a canoe that is seaworthy enough to get to those places, that you can get to Tahiti and Kahiki wherever Kahiki is."



Dr. Ty Kāwika Tengan, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Professor

On "Kahiki" as an expansive concept for the lāhui:

"I prefer to think of Kahiki more broadly as any of our possible homelands in the Pacific. For other historical engagements, we might think with Kealani Cook's new book *Return to Kahiki*. I'd also like to think not only of what Kahiki represents historically, but what we imagine it to be in the future, and how its meaning and location will change based upon where we want to go as a lāhui."



Kaleo Trinidad, Kumu Hula, Kamehameha Schools educator

On the transformative nature of traveling within Moananuiākea for students and our lāhui:

“We’ve seen generations of students and we’ve seen what happens at the end of every trip and we’ve seen the transformation when you remove the students from one home and you take them to an ancestral home. And you see the amazing centeredness that happens outside of their colonized realm, which is home and where they are, but they make those different connections. And whether it’s staying out overnight or meeting kupuna from different areas. They come home different people in the best ways possible... What purpose does Kamehameha have in Moananuiākea? I think it’s the transformation of our haumāna in the best ways possible. It’s hard to put a value or quantify. If you have intimate knowledge of your students and you see that light go on, that is the most important thing as an educator, as someone who is a kahu of the next generations to come.”



Kaumakaiwa Kanaka'ole, Kumu Hula, Cultural Practitioner

On Moananuiākea as a constant through time:

“Is it Ulu and Nanaulu from Tahiti, or is it Ulu and Nanaulu from Hawai'i to Tahiti? Both! The point is, it's neither nor, it's both. As far as time is concerned. The space is the same. Moananuiākea, the space of Moananuiākea has remained the same, that's the constant, we are not. So I think if we latch on to Kanaka culture—that gives us chronology—for our benefit... but I don't think that it means all that much.”



Dr. Keao Nesmith, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Lecturer

On the different perspectives within Moananuiākea:

“If you are already in Tahiti then you don't look at yourself in the way that we think of you. If you're already in Tahiti, then you don't think in relation to anybody, you're home already.”

“In the kaona sense, I think of waking up: “ke ala i kahiki.” All esoteric knowledge, you rely on the stars, it's all actions of pō. So the voyage itself actually represents pō, because it's esoteric knowledge. When you reach your destination, that's ao. So ala i kahiki, when you reach, you're in Kahiki.”



Shantell DeSilva, PVS Navigator, Educator

On Hawai'i's kuleana:

"We need to know that what we do in Hawai'i affects folks in the Pacific."

On the importance of timing and place for voyages to Kahiki:

"Our ancestors know that names were important, but our ancestors also knew when it was the right time to leave from certain points."



Lehua Kamalu, PVS Navigator

On ocean "places":

"There is a personality to the ocean as you go from here to there, it's not just an unpredictable abyss that you are trying to pay very close attention to. I don't know if these places have specific names, but from the experience of being in these places, I get this feeling. I was going to ask Gordon about that, the various places in the ocean along the way, these regions, that maybe don't have a physical island in them, but you definitely know you're in a slightly different place as you go through that pathway."

On continued voyaging in Hawai'i beyond scientifically affirmed time frames:/ on continued migration and its ramifications among peoples in the Pacific today:

". . . The idea that migration has never stopped is absolutely true . . . the cultural aspects of peoples moving to places that are not their ancestral homelands, . . . who are trying to figure out how they relate back to their homelands that they may never be going back to, but how they think about it, and how that can help them find pathways in a very different world than the one that they are leaving."



Nainoa Thompson, PVS Master Navigator,

On situations that encourage innovation:

“What I remember profoundly was the description of doldrums, right? It’s a European term for calm. But it was a place that we really feared, because there was no wind... nobody had the solutions for the doldrums; it became a bigger and bigger problem in everybody’s head and what it drove was fear. It scared me... A coffee cup falls overboard, nighttime, and next day it’s still there, because it was so flat... But it’s the most spectacular place on the planet.... you can see Orion setting in the ocean, it was so flat and so brilliant and so clear. No light, nothing to reflect light. It was just brilliant. You could just be down there in that area and if you want to know what black is... because the ocean will reflect the conditions of the sky, the doldrums are so cloudy sometimes that there is no light, no starlight, no moonlight. It is completely black. You can’t see anything. You can’t see any waves. Essentially, your eyes don’t work in the doldrums. And then sometimes you wait for the sunrise because you don’t know where you are going and it’s one of the most special times when there is no wind.... And what the doldrums are for now, is it’s a good place to get lost. Because in getting lost as a human being, you find the creativity to find the solutions. It’s where you have to give up everything that you’ve known and start to rely on something else. It’s a part of you, but you’ve never used it. It’s the same conversation we’ve talked about. It’s the deeper side of existence.”

“We’ve come a long way from only seeing the world through the eyes of fear, to now saying we have to find other ways. And maybe it takes us getting lost to find our way, and to not be afraid of getting lost.”



Dr. Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Professor

On the importance of understanding identity and connection:

“We as Hawaiians are empowered when we understand more of our ancestry and identity ...When we do comparative studies, especially between Tahiti and Hawai'i, we learn so much more about our ancestors... we learn all of those different stories that go into one another like a jigsaw puzzle. And that ancestral knowledge maps empower our identity. We need them more than they need us. Because of what we learn from them...We, as the pua a Pauahi [children of Pauahi], we are cousins. And we want to learn more of them and we want to learn more of us. That’s what we want to tell Kamehameha. That we become much stronger by doing these comparative analyses. Our identity is much more uplifted.”



Snowbird Bento, Kumu Hula, Educator

On [being students and then educators with experience in] Moananuiākea [and] shaping Hawaiian identity and legacy:

“For me personally, I never felt more proud to be Hawaiian than in those moments when they took us to those places and we were interacting with the people and interacting with youth our age and seeing the older people and how they carried themselves. And thinking about those experiences. My grandma, full Hawaiian; she never spoke Hawaiian, but the way she carried herself was exceptionally Hawaiian.”

“I tell my students all the time, you folks are my contribution to our lāhui. You folks. Everything that I teach you, everything that I love, everything that I get to share with you folks, is so that you guys will make decisions for my mo’opuna. And I have to trust that what I’m sharing with you, you’ll take that, and you’ll go.”

Themes and Ideas

The following selection includes some key themes and ideas identified and developed from the symposium. These ideas were distilled from the insights provided by the *He Kama Na Kahiki* attendees and help to reshape our current understandings of Hawaiian identity, traditional maritime technology, and Kahiki our regional homeland.

1. There are multiple conceptions of Kahiki: *a* kahiki as opposed to *the* kahiki.
 - Traditional mo'olelo refer to distant places beyond the horizon as Kahiki.
2. There are multiple access points to the Kealaikahiki corridor.
 - Kealaikahiki is like a highway with multiple lanes and on- and off-ramps.
 - There isn't just one departure point, but many points given the time of year, ocean conditions, and so forth.
3. Knowledge traveled both ways between Kahiki and Hawai'i.
 - The import and export of ideas, technology, culture, and materials influenced the world view and the development of society at both ends of the Kealaikahiki corridor.
4. Voyaging and maritime technology could have continued beyond the widely accepted historical window of frequent voyaging (circa 1000 AD – 1250 AD).
 - Contemporary navigators describe sailing to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as more challenging than sailing to Tahiti.
 - Current research suggests that such voyages did occur after the "migration window."
5. Voyaging involves more than the technical knowledge and physical skill of sailing; there are other forces that guide the canoe and crew to their destination.
 - Crew members observe and interpret hō'ailona (signs) as part of navigation.
 - Natural and spiritual forces guide and "pull" canoes onto the right paths.
6. Expanding our ideas of "place" can reveal new insights and deeper understandings.
 - Different cultures "map" their places according to their world view. Maps from a colonial legacy often disregard native perspectives. Remapping the Pacific can enhance existing beliefs and world views.
 - Contemporary navigators describe the ocean as having "places" in the same way that land does: The different appearances, conditions, sounds, and colors display the ocean's personalities.
7. The human spirit has a deep capacity for innovation.
 - Climate change, sea level rise, and pollution create dire conditions that necessitate innovation on a global scale.
 - Fear and tension can prompt innovation.
 - According to contemporary navigators, fear of the unknown should not make obstacles feel insurmountable; the challenging conditions of the doldrums can prompt us to access deeper parts of our existence to find solutions and solve problems.