

Kai Tae Hakatele

This is a ritual song that was sung after refurbishing the ritual house (Hale Aitu) in traditional Sikaiana society. The traditional ritual life on Sikaiana ended some time in the 1920s when the ritual houses were burned. Anglican missionaries who were members of the Tasiu, Melanesian Brotherhood arrived in 1929 and a rapid and mostly complete conversion to Christianity followed. This song was collected in 1981-2. Reuben Tenai and Fane Telena were the leading singers. I have a transcription of the song, although I don't know where I got it. It was checked with two middle aged men and seems fairly accurate. Older people who witnessed the traditional life told me that the song had ritual meanings that were only known to the traditional ritual leaders. The middle aged men, who would not have seen the actual performance claimed, that much of the song had to do with sexuality. I have some skepticism about their assertions. Older informants said that the meanings were known only to ritual leaders.

I divided the song into separate choruses. Except for the first stanza, the transcriptions seem fairly accurate and I must have had help with them. Songs often include extended vowels in singing. Unfortunately, after 40 years it is hard for me to remember the exact conditions under which I recorded this. At the time, I did not think the language would be lost and so was not overly concerned with transcriptions of traditional ritual which was not a main focus of my research. I take responsibility for my lack of precision. In 2021, it seems worthwhile to publish what I know.

When singing, the Sikaiana will hold some vowels and make some changes from normal pronunciation.

The recording is highly repetitious, and I do not have all the repetitions transcribed below.

I have listed the various sections followed by their timing on the tape.

The Teika Llee follows on the tape and after the transcription below.

I 0:33

U E Kauli ee Kaumai ee, teika, teika
Kauli ee Kaumai ee, teika teika

Tukumai, Tukumai

((The following lines were given to me as the beginning, but they are not what is sung in this recording:

Tu Tu Tu Tu kamele motuna kae motuna e kauli e kae mea e sekaseka e sekaseka
(repeat)

Motuna—glans of penis? Again, I have some doubts about this reference.

I have tried to transcribe the above stanza in 2021.

The following verses below are from my notes in 1981-2 The above was given to me as the beginning but is not the beginning of the recording.

II. 00:50

Kae pu ki tona a(i) iioo
Puki tona lomilomi EE. Repeat

Tata tata ia, tata tata ia Repeat
Nevaneva

Ki uta, ki tai, ki aluna, ki lalo
Tukumai, tukumai

Repeat

My informants claimed that *lomilomi* and *nevaneva* referred to the excitement felt during intercourse, *tata* refers to the tattoos on women's upper thighs

The last two lines are
To landward, to sea, to above, to below
Place it, place it

III 1:53

Ko te malama O A OIE
Ko te malama O I ku hanaake (repeat)

Ko hine mami A oi O ku hanaake (repeat)

Ka m(o) au (u) tiketike te maalama ku hanaake

Oi Sua Oi ona nutu e otaota
Manoni sua

Tukumai, tukumai

Repeat

Malama. Dawn, light
Hanaake. Go forth

Hine? Possible spirit name?
Mau tiketike sit stooped?

Sua surprise
Nutu lips?
Otaota placenta?
Manoni smell

IV 5:05

E tipitipi to kai te toki, kai ana, to kai te toka (repeat)

U oi hakatautaulia E

Oi sua, oi ona nutu e otaota manoni sua

Tukumai, Tukumai

Repeat

Tipitipi fish type?

Te toki, a jutting forehead of the fish, sexual reference?

Te toka a small reef inside the larger reef, feeding place for fish

Hakatautaulia hang down?

V 6:20

A Teau pe ni au maaoni kamauli ao kumi ee (repeat)
A ka pe ni a maaoni kamauli ao kumi ee
Nalo iao uaoi uuu

Te aliki e he moe ki uta

Lanapolapola polapola mau ni uhi mau ni talo (repeat)
Hati (hoti?) mai, hati mai o uhi mokulu matolo (repeat)
Repeat

Ko moe koe moe ki tua te lau kakai (eio?)
Eio te aliki e he moe ki uta

Repeat first three lines above, then skip to

E leilei he tanata tahao. (Repeat)
Hati (hoti) Hati o uhi ma kulu ma talo (Repeat)
Ko moe ko moe ki tua te lau kakai eio
Te aliki e he moe ki uta

Repeat first three lines and then skip to last four lines above again

Notes: Te aliki e he moe ki uta—the chief does not sleep landwards

VI 10:20

E taku kaitae ka mua ki a Lei nau ko matakū i a Teia o (repeat)

Io veke io veke io ka tau hiti ke e Lei
Ko tau taku kaitae kamua ki a Lei ko
Toa o Lei ko toa hakamaana henua
Ni taia he tanata ka pisi ona tae
Ki te lani tua valu Poo

Repeat above

Repeat first verse then,

Veke io veke io ka tai nupani, manaloa, ko henua ma lotuma, sapai ko aluna, tuu I
Tikopia lele I aliki lua. Poo

Repeat first verse and above lines once

Repeat first verse again, then

Sina hatu e lei na ka to henua ni takoto mau ki Sikaiana te au mai Luaniua tau hakamasa
kite polo a Pua. Poo

Notes:

Teia-o. Spirit name?

Veke io veke io ka tau—sail to a destination

hiti koe e Lei—you are descended from Lei

hakamanna—fight powerful

Sapai. Carry in arms

Sina hatu. Place name associated with Lei?

VII 13:43

Ko Lei a na(u) ko tani
Ko lei a na(u) ko tani e sau a e (repeat first and second)
Ko lei a na(u) ko tanitanisia
Ko lei a na(u) ko tanitanisia

Nei ki lalo te ata e luamai
Manu mai kau mai hiti makalo
Te laa kai ana sele

This section above is repeated and before the name of each spirit below

Tehui Atahu---e
Tehui Luaniua
Tehui Pelau
Te Lani Hakamalu
Te Luahine
Te Lani Hakasele
Tehui Takuu
Simiau
Tehui Tupe
Tehui Saalupe

Notes

The above are the main aitu (gods/spirits) of traditional Sikaiana

A nau ko tanisiasia—I cry?

Te ata e luamai twice dawn/ twice beauty

Hiti makalo te laa sun rays move, disappear

Sele A recurring disease that is passed down in families

VIII. 18:17

IA. Tehui Atahu ne ku moe moe
a hea o kai te haahaa

IA. Te Luahine new kamauli o he oooi

IO Komouli, komoouli hehe tilia
Hehe ka mate—Mate

Repeat with the following spirits

Tehui Luaniua, Te Lani Hakasele, Tehui Pelau, Tehui Kahana (joke?, Kahana was an elderly man who might have been among the singers)

Notes:

Kai te haahaa—eat taro

Mate die

Teika llee

Album 2 21:22

The Teika Llee (fish fly) was sung when a large fish, whale or crocodile washed ashore. The wording seems to try to placate the animal from bringing harm to the island. The ceremony was frequently performed in recent times to ceremonially welcome an important visitor to the island including the Bishop of Malaita and the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands.

These words are chanted:

Ui koe na e au ei nei,
koe na he ika
He ika taha ki laa
Koe au mai nei
te maatou henua nei e one
Kai ki te aa?
Kai ki te lono ao
Kai ki te aa?
Kai ki te ahu kona
Kai ki aa?
Kai kit e kape maneo
Sese atu mau ni ka pena ki sulumana te laa naa

IE Tahola e tahola tu he ika
Saa vilivili saa kaealiki saa mokopusi
Oio vulisana ko tui ma tahola ua pilimai, osoosomai
Te ava E

Repeat 2 times.

The first line does not appear to have been sung in version accompanying this recording

You have come, you are some kind of fish
Some kind of very large fish
You have come to our island
We are in a famine
What will you eat?
Eat a dry yaw bush(?)
What will you eat?
Eat bitter wild yam?
What will you eat?
Scratchy wild taro?

The whale is a whale, not a fish
Appear Vilivili, appear Kaealiki, appear Mokopusi
OO Vulisana (a special ceremony)... the whale.. on top, move slowly