Notes on Canoe Protocol
Polynesian Voyaging Society

Departure: a pule, or prayer, for the safety of the crew and canoe is usually said. The following was written by Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa (June 2, 1998) for use in the PVS voyaging programs:

Ę nā 'aumākua o ka pō
Ę nā 'aumākua o ka ao
E hoʻolulu mai ia mākou, i kō'oukou mau pulapula
   E mālama i ka lani
   E mālama i ka ʻāina
   E mālama i ka wai
   E mālama i ka kai
   E mālama i ka honua nei
   E mālama i kēia waʻa kaulua
       me nā hoa waʻa
   E mālama i kekahi i kekahi.
E pale i nā mea 'ino a pau ē

ʻĀmama. Ua noa. Ua lele wale aku no ē.

A Prayer before Departure

O ancestral gods of the darkness
O ancestral gods of the light
Inspire us, your many offspring
to take care of the heavens
to take care of the lands
to take care of the water
to take care of the ocean
to take care of the earth
to take care of this double-hulled canoe
   and the crew
to take care of each other.
Protect us from all harm.

It is finished; it is free; it has flown.

Arriving at a New Place—After the canoe announces its arrival (by pu or pahu), the people on shore will ask for the identity of the canoe. The proper response is to recite a chant identifying the canoe—to whom the canoe belongs and from where it comes. In the story of Pakaʻa, when Keawenuiaʻumi, the ruling chief of the Big Island, arrives on Molokaʻi, the question is asked, “No wai he waʻa?” (“To whom does the canoe belong?”; “In honor of whom is this canoe?”) The responding chant identifies the canoe as belonging
to the gods, to the land of Hilo (where it was built and launched), and to the chief Keawenuia'umi:

...he wa'a
No Kū, no Lono
No Kāne a me Kanaloa
No kini a ke akua
Ka lehu o ke akua,
He wa'a keia no ka 'aina ua o Hilo a malama,
Ua ka ua kēwai kāpili ua o Hanakahi,
Malie a mao ae ka ua,
'Ukelekele a hakukele ke one,
A helele'i ka lau la'a'u
Waiho ka'oko'a Lelewi i ke kai
Pōpō ke kapa au Kahulaana,
Lei aku i ka hala o Hōpoe
Wawe aku e hiki i Ke'a'au
Ka i'a o ka lohiho i Ki'i la-e,
No Keawenuia'umi he wa'a.

... This canoe is
For Kū, for Lono
For Kāne and Kanaloa,
For the forty thousand gods,
The four-hundred-thousand gods;
The canoe is of the rainy land of Hilo of Malama,
The rain falls, the misty, sticky rain of Hanakahi,
Gentle and passing is the rain,
Muddy and wet the sand,
Scattered the leaves of the forest,
Lelewi is left standing apart at the sea,
The kapa of Kahulaana is rolled up [Pōpō-kapa: name of a rain],
The rain rises over the hala of Hōpoe,
Quickly reaching Ke'a'au,
The fish of the sparkling at Ki'i,
The canoe is for Keawenuia'umi.

In some cases, the canoe/crew may be challenged to prove they are worthy of coming ashore or are friend, not foe. (See the story of Pāka'a, in which Pāka'a's son insults rather than welcomes the lesser chiefs who accompany Keawenuia'umi.) To overcome any challenge, the chant identifying the canoe and crew should establish common ground between the visitors (malihini) and natives of the place (kama'aina) by referring to shared gods, common ancestors or relatives, shared history (i.e., times when the canoe has visited the place before in friendship), etc.

Gifting—“I hele i kauhale, pā'a pū'olo i ka lima,” “In going to the houses of others, carry a packet in the hand,” “Take a gift”—something special from one’s home district; or something made by hand; or something to mark the occasion (e.g., a carved stone).
Sharing—Be prepared to share something with your hosts: a song, a dance, a story of your home district; a lesson about canoes, voyaging or navigation, etc.

Respect—When we travel with the canoe, we are representatives of the Polynesian Voyaging Society and the great tradition of Hawaiian and Polynesian voyaging it represents. Whether we like it or not, both at sea and on land, we are in the public eye. Be sure your actions are worthy of the respect that PVS crew members have built up through years of achievement and positive contributions to the communities we come from as well as those we visit.

Departure—Leave the places you visit cleaner and in better condition than when you arrived; express your appreciation to your hosts by actions and words; and later by letter, photos, etc.

Homecoming Chant—In traditional times, the return of a relative long absent was greeted with a wailing chant of “overflowing emotions” and “expressions of joy, grief, memory and affection.” (Handy and Pukui, Polynesian Family System in Ka‘ū, Hawai‘i 104). The following chant is used when Eala returns home to Wai‘anae from a voyage:

Heaha kela mea u‘i o ke kai e,
Ka manu e, manu e, manu e,
Heaha ke ano manu e,
Ka ‘Iwa e, ‘Iwa e, ‘Iwa e,
Lilo nā hulu manu i ka makani e,
Aue e, aue e, aue e,
Holo mai ‘oe i ka moana,
Ua ‘eha ka loko i ke aloha,
‘Owai ke koa noho ma Wai‘anae,
Eala e, Eala e, Eala e,
‘Owai ke koa noho ma Wai‘anae,
Eala e, Eala e, Eala e.

(What is that beautiful thing on the sea?)
(The bird, bird, bird.)
(What kind of bird?)
(The frigate bird, frigate bird, frigate bird)
(The winds took off the bird feathers,)
(Oh my, my, my)
(You sailed the open seas,)
(The heart aches with love)
(Who is the warrior who lives in Wai‘anae?)
(Eala, Eala, Eala)
(Who is the warrior who lives in Wai‘anae?)
(Eala, Eala, Eala.)

(This mele oli was written for the children of Wai‘anae by A. Kalanihookaha Cope [1980, at Pōka‘i Bay] to chant when the Eala returned from its maiden voyage. Grandparents and parents wanted a simple no‘eau to chant accompanied by their mo‘opuna and kamali‘i.)

Welcome-Home Lu‘au: “The wailing chant (uwe helu) was but the vocal expression of [the welcoming] sentiment. The true welcome called for a family gathering and a feast in honour of the returning relative…. The welcoming-feast, ‘Aha‘aina Ho‘okipa, re-established the returned relative in the ‘ohana and ‘aina, or homeland, did honour to the person welcomed and created good-will for all concerned” (Handy and Pukui, Polynesian Family System in Ka‘ū, Hawai‘i 104).
Ha‘a Hōkūle‘a—Composed by Keli‘i Tau‘ā
(On the Compact Disc Chants: Hawai‘i Canoes)

Holo i ke kai
(hoe hoe, hoe hoe)
Holo ‘o ka i’a
(hoe hoe, hoe hoe)
Ho‘i i ke kai
(ku‘e ku‘e, ku‘e ku‘e)
Wa‘a Hōkūle‘a
Eō, e ka wa‘a
Eō, Hōkūle‘a (ku)
A pae i ke kula
‘Amama, ua noa

Travel over the sea
(paddle, paddle, paddle, paddle)
The fish goes
(paddle, paddle, paddle, paddle)
Return to the sea
(back and forth, back and forth)
The canoe Hōkūle‘a
È canoe, answer to this call
Hōkūle‘a, answer to this call
Come ashore
‘Amama, the kapu is lifted

Eō è Hōkūle‘a—Composed by Keli‘i Tau‘ā
(On the Compact Disc Chants: Hawai‘i Canoes)

Pā mai ka makani Pu‘ulena
Hiki mai ka lā ha‘aheo
A hiki pū me nā ‘A‘ā
Eia nā me’e o ke kai
Nā me’e kaulana o ka Pakipika
Ua ho‘i mai
È lohe kākou ka nūhou
Ua ho‘i mai nā kama
Kū aku i ka home me ka lanakila
Oli e! oli e o Hawai‘i
È ʻulu, e ʻola mau
Nā hana apau o Hōkūle‘a

The Pu‘ulena wind blows
The proud sun arrives
Arrives along with the fire
Here are the heroes of the sea
The famous ones of the Pacific
Returning home
Let’s listen to the news
The children have returned,
Arriving there at home, victorious,
Sing, sing, Hawai‘i
Let them increase, let them live forever
All the deeds of Hōkūle‘a

A Chant for Bringing Up the Wind (Traditional)

Pā mai, pā mai ka makani nui o Hilo
Ka ipu nui lawe mai
Ka ipu iki waihō aku
Blow, blow, great wind of Hilo.*
Bring the big wind gourd,**
Leave the small wind gourd.

* Hiro, the famous Polynesian navigator and voyager, deified as a wind god.

** The winds were conceived of as being contained in a gourd. The wind god could call forth the winds by calling out their names.
He inoa no Hōkūleʻa
Nā Kamuela Chun i haku `ia, 11/10/96

'O ka wa'a `o Hōkūleʻa,
ua hānau i Hawai'i,
ua ho'ola'a i Hawai'i
Ua holo puni i nā kai `ewalu,
mai Hawai'i ā i Kaua'i,
ua kūkala e

Kaulana e ka holo a Hōkūleʻa
I ke kai loa
I ke kai pokó
I ke kai `aleʻale o Kanaloa

'O Kanaloa, Kanaloa e,
Mai ke kai loa e

Ke Kahi, Ka Hoʻalā
'O Honolua ma Maui ā i Mataʻiva
'O Mataʻiva ā i Tahiti
'O Tahiti ā i Taputapuatea ma Raʻiʻatea
'O Raʻiʻatea ā i Tahiti
'O Tahiti hoʻi i Hawaiʻi e

Kaulana e ka holo a Hōkūleʻa

Ka Lua, Ka `Ieono
'O Kanaloa ma ke ala i kahiki
'O ka hoa `Aikau
'O ka nu`anu'a haki kakala a ka `ino
Aloha `ino e

Kaulana e ka holo a Hōkūleʻa

Ke Kolu, `O Nainoa
'O Hilo ma Hawaiʻi ā i Pape`ete ma Tahiti
'O Pape`ete ā i Tautira ma Tahiti
'O Tahiti hoʻi i Hawaiʻi e
'O Nainoa ka hoʻokele nui e

Kaulana e ka holo a Hōkūleʻa

Ka Hā, Ka `Ike Mua
'O Miloliʻi ma Hawaiʻi ā i Tahiti
'O Tahiti ā i Rarotonga
'O Rarotonga ā i Aotearoa
'O Aotearoa ā i Tonga-tapu
'O Tonga-tapu ā i Lifuka
'O Lifuka ā i Vavaʻu

A Name Chant for Hōkūleʻa
Composed by Kamuela Chun, 11/10/96
(Revised 6/23/98)

The canoe Hōkūleʻa
born in Hawaiʻi
Traveled around the eight seas
from Hawaiʻi to Kauaʻi
heralded abroad

Famous are the voyages of Hōkūleʻa
In the big seas
In the small seas
In the rough seas of Kanaloa
Kanaloa, Kanaloa
Returning from the far seas.

The First Voyage, The Awakening
Honolua, Maui, to Mataʻiva
Mataʻiva to Tahiti
Tahiti to Taputapuatea, Raʻiʻatea
Raʻiʻatea to Tahiti
Tahiti, returning to Hawaiʻi

Famous are the voyages of Hōkūleʻa...
(Repeat Chorus)

The Second Voyage, The Storm (Tragedy)
Kanaloa, on the way to Tahiti
The crew member `Aikau
The multitude of breaking waves of the storm
Very sad

Famous are the voyages of Hōkūleʻa...
(Repeat Chorus)

The Third Voyage, Nainoa
Hilo, Hawaiʻi, to Pape`ete, Tahiti
Pape`ete to Tautira, Tahiti
Tahiti, returning to Hawaiʻi
Nainoa, the great navigator

Famous are the voyages of Hōkūleʻa...
(Repeat Chorus)

The Fourth Voyage, The Rediscovery
Miloliʻi, Hawaiʻi to Tahiti
Tahiti to Rarotonga
Rarotonga to New Zealand
New Zealand to Tongatapu
Tongatapu to Lifuka
Lifuka to Vavaʻu
Famous are the voyages of Hōkūleʻa...

(Repeat Chorus)

The Fifth Voyage, For the Children
Hōnaunau, Hawaiʻi, to Tahiti
Tahiti to Huahine
Huahine to Raʻiʻatea
Raʻiʻatea to Borabora
Borabora to Maʻuke
Maʻuke to 'Aitutaki
'Aitutaki to Rarotonga
Rarotonga to Tahiti
Tahiti, returning to Hawaiʻi

(Repeat Chorus)

The Sixth Voyage, The Voyaging Families
Honolulu, Oʻahu to Hilo, Hawaiʻi
Hilo to Tahiti
Tahiti to Taputapuatea, Raʻiʻatea
Raʻiʻatea to Tahiti
Tahiti to Nukuhiva
Nukuhiva to Uapou
Uapou to Nukuhiva
Nukuhiva, returning to Hawaiʻi
Hawaiʻi to Molokaʻi
Molokaʻi returning to Hakipuʻu, Oʻahu
Hakipuʻu, the sands of birth

(To be Continued...)
HE PAHA NO KA HŌKULE'A
no kona ho'olana hou 'ana ma ka 'ua'po 35, Kou

1 'O 'oe Hōkūle'a wa'a kaulua 'eā
2 Wa'a kaulana o ka lāhui
3 E ka wa'a e lana maika'i nei 'āhā
4 Na wai nō 'oe laha 'eā
5 Mea mai nā wahine he mea laha 'ole 'oe
6 He keiki na Māui, na Haumea paha lā 'eā
7 He 'eki'eki 'oe e a'e 'ale ana i ka moana ē.
8 Lawe mai 'oe i ka le'a, ka hau'oli 'eā
9 Hau'oli kākou lā 'eā.
10 'O 'oe Hōkūle'a e ka mānai 'eā
11 Nāna i kui a lei nā mokupuni lā ē
12 I lana ka mana'o he pua laha 'ole 'oe
13 Nāna i ho'owehi ia kākou nā Hawai'i 'ēhē
14 'O 'oe Hōkūle'a kahi mea i aloha 'ia
15 Kahi mea i mālama 'ia e nā lima hana lā ē
16 Nā kānaka i mālama a kia'i ia Hōkūle'a
17 He kia'i o ka pua laha 'eā
18 O holo 'oe me nā kānaka he nui paha 'eā
19 I hea lā aku 'oe
20 I Nu'uhiwa, Hiva 'Oa, i hea lā 'oe?
21 O hele 'oe e Hōkūle'a a ho'i mai.

na Kalani Akana, 1993 lune
Haku uluwale 'ia me nā mana'o o Pinky Thompson, Paige Barber, Moku Iaua o Wally Froiseth, Randy Fong, me Sam Ka'ai. Na 1ākou I ha'i 'olelo ma mua a I ho'o'olu mai i ka paha 'ana.
A CHANT FOR THE HŌKULE'A
for its refloating at pier 35

1. You are Hōkūle'a the double-hulled canoe
2. Famous canoe of the Hawaiian people
3. You, there, canoe floating well
4. Whom do you belong?
5. The women say that you are a precious thing.
7. You are an 'eki'eki bird darting over the billows of the ocean.
8. You bring excitement and happiness.
9. See, we are all happy.
10. You are Hōkūle'a the needle
11. That strings the islands into a lei to wear
12. I always knew that you were a precious flower
13. You have adorned us, the Hawaiian people
14. You are Hōkūle'a the beloved
15. Someone well taken care of by many hands
16. Those that take care and guard over you, Hōkūle'a
17. Are guardians of a cherished offspring
18. You'd better go with lots of people
19. To wherever you go
20. To Nu'ūhiwa, Hiva 'Oa, where?
21. You go, Hōkūle'a a return....
Hōkūle‘a Hula—Composed by Carlos Andrade
(On the Tape / CD Pacific Tunings by Nā Pali)

Outbound for Tongatapu, Aotearoa goodbye;
Leaving on the Southwest wind,
Hōkūle‘a spread your wings and fly,
Ancient Polynesian pathway, carry us home again,
Sail on, and on, and on, till the journey’s end.

Chorus:

Follow the stars at night, high in the Southern skies,
Ke Ali‘i o Kona i ka Lewa [Canopus], into the night while Orion dies.
Southern Cross is spinning slowly,
Aloha nui, goodbye. Aue Hōkūle‘a, te vahine o ke kai.
Aue, aue, hi. Aue Hōkūle‘a, te vahine o ke kai.

Sail at night for Ha‘apai, Nuku‘aloa goodbye,
Through the reefs, the shoals, the islands,
Fangatua lead us with your eyes,
Await the wind, Pangai, Lifuka, into Vava‘u at night,
Sail on, and on, and on, until the morning light.

Matangi Tonga to Samoa, Neiafu goodbye,
The winds blowing, there’s no stars showing,
Nainoa’s navigating, hold on tight,
Raise the island Tutuila, Pago Pago’s in sight,
Sail on, and on, and on, like a bird in flight.

Ha‘ina mai ka puana, so the story is told,
Hōkūle‘a sails the ocean highway with a family
Both young and old,
Aotearoa, Tongatapu, and now Samoa have past
Sail on, and on, and on, to Hawaii at last.

Notes:

This song recounts the voyage from of Hōkūle‘a from Aotearoa to Samoa, May 1–25, 1986. The voyage was a rough one, with gale force winds gusting 40-50 knots. In Tongatapu, Sione Taupeamunu, a Tongan sea captain and navigator, joined the crew to pilot the canoe through the maze of “reefs, shoals, and islands” that make up the Tongan Archipelago.

Aotearoa: New Zealand.
Tongatapu: southernmost of three main groups of islands in the Tonga Islands.
Nuku‘aloa: main port and principal town in the Tonga Islands; located on Tongatapu.
Pangai: town on Lifuka, the principal island of the Ha‘apai Group
Neiafu: port on the island of Vava‘u.
Matangi Tonga: “Makani Kona”—South Wind.
Pago Pago: capital of American Samoa, on the island of Tutuila.
I kū mau mau! (Stand Together!)

This is a chant expressing “tumultuous joy,” when a multitude of people performed a task together such as bringing down a tree from the mountains to the lowlands—e.g. a koa tree to build a canoe or an ‘ōhi’a log to carve an image of the god Kū. The chant was collected by N.B. Emerson and published in his notes to David Malo’s Hawaiian Antiquities (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1951, p. 186):

One:
I kū mau mau!*  
Stand together!

All: I kuwā!  
Shout!

One:
I kū mau mau!  
Stand together!
I kū hulu hulu!**  
Haul with all your might!
I ka lana wao!**  
Under the mighty trees!

All: I kuwā!  
Shout!

One: I kūlana wao!  
Under the forest trees!

All:
I kuwā!  
Shout!
I kuwā! huki!  
Shout! Pull!
I kuwā! kō!  
Shout! Push!
I kuwā a mau  
Shout! Snagged,
A mau ka ēulu  
Snagged is the tree top!
E Huki, e!  
Pull!
Kulīa!  
Strive!
‘Umia ka hanu!  
Hold your breath! [A war cry]
A lana, ua holo ke akua!  
It floats, the god runs! [i.e., the tree is moving!]

* kumaumau: Same as maumau; “constant,” “continuous,” “together.” Hai kumaumau ē, hai kuwā! (chant for those carrying a log to shore to be made into a canoe), “follow together, follow shouting!”

** Emerson translates “I ka lana wao!” as “Under the mighty trees!” If so, perhaps the second line should be amended to “kūlana wao!” “Place where the forest rises up”; cf. “kūlana nalū,” “Place where the waves rise up.” “I kū hulu hulu!” is translated “Haul with all your might!” It is not clear how Emerson derived this translation. The two lines under consideration are similar to lines in another canoe-hauling chant (June Gutmanis, Nā Pule Kahiko: Ancient Hawaiian Prayers; Honolulu: Editions Limited, 1983, p. 78-79):

Ē Kū-pulupulu,
Ē Kū ‘alanawao,
These two lines address two forest gods associated with canoe building. Kū-pulupulu is translated as “Kū [giver of] verdure” by D. Barrere in S.M. Kamakau’s *Ka Poe Kahiko: The People of Old* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1964, p. 58); “pulu” refers to “any greenery or underbrush cut to be used as mulch”; or a “low branch, as of certain trees such as koa and ‘ōhi’a.” Emerson (in Malo) translates Kū-pulupulu as “Kū the rough one, or the chip-maker, one of the gods of the wa’a” (p. 133); he translates “Kū-ala-na-wao,” or “Kū-ae-la-na-wao” as “‘There stands the forests,’ a woodland deity, one of the gods of the wa’a.” Barrere gives the name as Kū-alono-wao, “Kū of the mountain heights” (S.M. Kamakau, *Ka Poe Kahiko: The People of Old*, p. 58). Martha W. Beckwith gives the following translations of the epithets of the two Kū gods (*Hawaiian Mythology*, Honolulu: UH Press 1970, p. 15):

Kū-pulupulu (Kū of the undergrowth)
Kū-alono-wao (Kū of the deep forest)

*** Emerson translates “I kuwā a mau! / A mau ka ʻulu!” as “Stand in place! and haul / Haul branches and all!” “Mau” means “snagged”; “caught”; “grounded, as a canoe”; “stuck or stalled, as a car”; “ʻulu” is the top of a tree or plant. The lines seem to refer to the tree being stuck in the undergrowth, so some extra effort is needed to “float” it (lana), i.e., to free it.