

Alakai

Traditional Leadership

Malcolm Nāea Chun

Ka Wana Series



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Curriculum Research & Development Group
University of Hawai'i

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 10: 978-1-58351-048-3
ISBN 13: 978-1-58351-048-3
ISBN 10: 978-1-58351-040-7 (set)
ISBN 13: 978-1-58351-040-7
eISBN: 978-1-58351-113-8

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Pihana Nā Mamo: The Native Hawaiian Special Education Project (Grant Number: H221A000002) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, under the Native Hawaiian Education Program as authorized under Part B of Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110), and is administered by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education, and such endorsement should not be inferred.

Series note: Ka Wana Series, Book 7

Book design by Erin Sakihara and layout by Wayne Shishido
Cover design by Robin M. Clark

Distributed by the Curriculum Research & Development Group
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Foreword

For more than fifteen years, Pihana Nā Mamo, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the Native Hawaiian Education Act, has been actively involved with Hawai'i Department of Education schools in improving educational results for Hawaiian children and youth. We have witnessed the powerful role that our rich Hawaiian culture and heritage, and in particular the revival of interest in Native Hawaiian culture and the desire to practice Hawaiian customs appropriately, play in motivating our students to learn and excel.

The first step to ensure such an outcome is to gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural basis for the many Hawaiian customs and traditions. To this end, Malcolm Nāea Chun, a cultural specialist with the Curriculum Research & Development Group (CRDG) of the University of Hawai'i, has researched and compiled valuable information on several Hawaiian cultural traditions and practices.

In *Alaka'i*, Chun addresses the topic of leadership, asking what traditional leadership styles and practices looked like in old Hawai'i, and how those might serve us today. In an earlier publication entitled *Ano Lani*, he wrote about the role of Hawai'i's monarchy and asked the rhetorical question about Hawaiian leadership, "Who is the next Kamehameha?" In *Alaka'i*, he deepens that inquiry by exploring the roots of Hawaiian leadership through traditional sources and the eye-witness accounts of foreigners as they observed Hawaiian leaders in action. His years of service at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

have given Chun a unique vantage point to see how traditional means of Hawaiian leadership have evolved and how they operate in the modern era.

This book is part of the Ka Wana Series, a set of publications developed through Pihana Nā Mamo and designed to assist parents, teachers, students, and staff in their study and modern-day application of Hawaiian customs and traditions.

Pihana Nā Mamo is a joint project of the CRDG and the Hawai'i Department of Education and production of the Ka Wana series represents the work of many collaborators. Mahalo to the many who have assisted in the production of *Alaka'i*: Project Co-Directors Gloria S. Kishi and Hugh H. Dunn; the Pihana Nā Mamo 'ohana of the Hawai'i Department of Education and the Curriculum Research & Development Group, College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the U.S. Department of Education, which provided the funding for Pihana Nā Mamo.

Morris K. Lai, Principal Investigator
Pihana Nā Mamo

'Ōlelo Ha'i Mua

Preface

Do you believe I'm wearing a kukui lei?
It's Hawaiian in looks—it's plastic made in Hong Kong.
That's what became of a lot of our beliefs.
I wore this on purpose. I wanted you to know this is kukui nut.
It's not kukui nut, but it's Hawaiian, but it's Hawaiian made in
Hong Kong of plastic, and that's the way a lot of our beliefs
and customs have become.
attributed to Mary Kawena Pukui



Cultural revival and identification have gone beyond academic and intellectual arguments to a reality in communities and families and are now part of the political landscape of the islands. In asking the question “Who are we?” people are really asking how they see the world differently from others and how this affects the way they make decisions. These are questions about a people’s world view—how they see the world around them, and ultimately, how they see themselves.

In the 1960s, social workers at the Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, a trust created to benefit orphaned and destitute Native Hawaiian children, began to notice behaviors of their children and families that were quite different from the textbook cases they had studied in school. In response, the center initiated a project to identify Hawaiian cultural and social practices and behaviors, and to study them as they contrasted

with their Western counterparts. The impact and influence of the resulting books, entitled *Nānā I Ke Kumu*, are still felt in Native Hawaiian communities, where the books are now a standard reference.

By 1992 *Nānā I Ke Kumu* was considered historical information, and as the cultural specialist for the Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, I became involved in a project to update it. We were still seeing cases that involved Hawaiian cultural practices and behaviors foreign to both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian workers that needed to be considered in any programs designed to help. We were having to re-adapt traditional healing practices like ho‘oponopono to accommodate changes such as family schedules, misunderstanding or not knowing Hawaiian language and concepts, and having non-Hawaiian family members. We realized that there was, once again, a great need for a series that would examine, in depth, key concepts and values for Native Hawaiians to understand and practice today.

This series is intended to fill that need. Each title is supported by historical and cultural examples taken from our oral and written literature, in most cases directly from primary sources that recorded how Hawaiians acted, reacted, responded, and behaved in different situations. Our goal is to make this knowledge more accessible to teachers, parents, and students.

Knowing how our ancestors behaved begs the question of whether we are doing the same. If we are practicing our culture in a way similar to how they did, then we know that Hawaiian culture is very much alive today. If we do things differently, we have to ask if those changes have been to our benefit, and whether we can reclaim what has been forgotten, lost, or suppressed.



E ho'okanaka.

Be someone.

motto of Kamehameha II

E na'i 'oukou i ku'u pono, 'a'ole e pau.

Try and undo the good things of mine, it cannot be done.

the attributed last words of Kamehameha

He [a young chief] would have many troubles, live in poverty,
and become a famous ruler.

Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau



The word for leadership in the Pukui-Elbert *Hawaiian Dictionary* is alaka'ina. This is a compound word derived from the root alaka'i ("to lead, guide, direct" (18)) and 'ana (-ing (24)). Today we see this word used to describe things like student leadership in a hālau or the relationship of a mentor to a student. And it is probably true that this word has always applied to this kind of leadership. I have not seen alaka'i used to describe an ali'i.

An ali'i's leadership role was unlike that of today's political leaders who gain power through popular election and lead us in a democratic system of government. In Hawai'i, traditional governance and the development of leadership were based upon an accident of birth that conveyed rank, status, and a place within the hierarchy.

In re-examining traditional sources, like the writings of Davida Malo, we rediscover a sense of what traditional leadership was like in Hawai'i and see that it had many of the qualities of great leadership that are not only timeless but universally held.

One of the biggest clues Malo gives us comes from his chapter concerning the relationship between the ali'i (chiefs) and the maka'ainana (people).

There were many dispositions of the ali'i. They were not alike. An ali'i would be known to only plunder, another to up root things, another to kill and another to collect or to heap things up. There were a few just ali'i like Kamehameha I.; for he was a just and caring ali'i. (177)

He nui ke ano o na [a]lii, aole like pu, he hao wale kahi alii, he uhuki wale kahi alii, he pepehi wale kahi alii, he ohi wale kahi alii, he pue wale kahi alii uuku na [a]lii noho pono e like me Kamehameha I he alii hoomalu pono ia. (33)

There are several things to look at in this statement. The first is how Malo approaches his description. He begins with the negative and ends with the positive. This same approach is used in his other observations, perhaps because it is easier to remember and describe the things that are abnormal or different, and, by a process of elimination, work back to what you really wanted to say.

The ali'i that he refers to—those that plunder, dig up crops, murder or are greedy—come from a well-remembered tradition that he describes in the following paragraph.

Due to the misbehavior of some ali'i to the maka'ainana, there were often battles fought between the ali'i and the maka'ainana. Many ali'i were killed by the maka'ainana in

battle. The maka'āinana were the opponents of rouge [sic] ali'i in the old days. (Malo 177)

Malo repeats this statement later in his chapter on politics.

There were many ali'i who were killed by the maka'āinana because they were oppressed.

These were the ali'i who were killed by the maka'āinana because [they oppressed them]. Ko'ihala was killed because he overburdened the maka'āinana in [the district of] Kā'ū, [on the island of Hawai'i]. Due to this murder [the district of] Kā'ū was called mākaha [*fierce*].

Ko'ihalalani was an ali'i who was killed in Kā'ū. Hala'ea was another ali'i killed in Kā'ū. 'Ehunuikaimalino was an ali'i who was secretly killed by lawai'a at Keahuolu in the Kona [district on the island of Hawai'i]. Kamai'ole was another ali'i killed by Kalapana at 'Anaeho'omalū in the district of Kona.

Hakau was the ali'i killed by 'Umi at Waipi'o [Valley] in the Hāmākua [district] on the island of Hawai'i. Lonoikamakahiki was presumed to be expelled in Kona and 'Umiokalani was another ali'i who was expelled in Kona.

Therefore, several of the traditional or old ali'i feared the maka'āinana, but the maka'āinana faced death when the ali'i was pono [*moral, proper or fair*]. (266)

The Despotic Chiefs

The importance of these traditions of the “despotic” chiefs in the memory of the ali‘i is given by the native historian John Papa ‘Ī‘i in this account of how Kamehameha passed on these traditions to his son and heir, Liholiho, at the temple of Ahu‘ena in Kailua on the island of Hawai‘i.

Whenever there was a meeting in the Ahuena house in the evening, the king [Kamehameha] instructed the heir [Liholiho] carefully as to how to do things, describing the lives of former rulers such as Keakealaniwahine, Kalaniopuu, Koihala, Kamalalawalu, Kauhiakama, and Hakau. Thus Liholiho learned the results of abuse and disregard of the welfare of chiefs and commoners and about farming and fishing and things of like nature. In the discussions with the king the heir derived understanding which has passed down to his heirs of today. (129)

What is in these traditions that is so important to shaping the thinking and behavior of future ali‘i? It should be obvious from ‘Ī‘i’s statement that Kamehameha hoped his son would figure out which actions and decisions of those chiefs were good or bad and how others reacted to them. ‘Ī‘i’ mentioned the tradition of Ko‘ihala, and that is a good place to start because it is lesser known than that of the half-brothers Hakau and ‘Umi. Editor Martha Beckwith notes the similarity of plots between this account of Ko‘ihala and the story in which “the disaffected old followers of Liloa destroyed Hakau and obtained the chieftainship of Hawaii for Umi” (Green 89).

An irresolute chief was Ko-i-ha-la. When the chief was visiting in Ko-na, he despatched a messenger to Ka-u with

the order for food to be prepared and taken to Wai-ahu-kini, there to meet him. When all was in readiness, the servants bore it to Wai-ahu-kini. As they sat awaiting his appearance, they saw the chief's canoe heading for Kai-li-kii, so they took up the food again and went on to the place where they expected him to land. Not so! when they got to Kai-li-kii he was heading for Ka-pu-a.

Again the men shouldered the food and followed toward the mountain, but as they reached Ka-pu-a they perceived the chief heading for Ka-alu-alu and they immediately proceeded thither.

By this time they were hungry and tired and they therefore agreed to watch and, if the chief did not arrive shortly, to eat the food themselves. The chief delayed landing, simply sitting idly in the canoe and gazing at the men. So the servants ate the food that had been prepared and then they filled with stones the *ti*-leaf packets in which the fish had been wrapped and the empty calabashes of vegetable food. The chief, seeing these things [Ike ke alii i ka ano e o kanaka — The chief saw the strange behavior of the servants], paddled furiously until he reached Ka-alu-alu. Hence has arisen the proverb, "*Kau ino auwaa o Kaalualu*," that is, "The canoes arrive hurriedly at Ka-alu-alu." Hastening up the beach to the spot where the men sat he cried, "Say! let us eat! let the chief eat!"—"Yes, indeed!" answered the servants. "Here is vegetable food and fish!" Whereupon they stoned the despotic chief to death. (Green 88–89)

The term used in the Hawaiian text to describe the chief Ko'ihala is "ho'oluhi i'o," that is, to make truly tired or to overburden. To understand the importance of the servants' actions, we must remember that chiefs were like gods upon the earth. They had rank and status, and if we carefully examine what happened we can see that Ko'ihala's servants loyally continued to follow their chief wherever he went. Things changed when the chief remained in his canoe off shore and just looked at his servants and the

food. That is the moment when the relationship broke down because of the chief's insolence and irresponsibility toward the efforts of his people.



There are no known images of the despotic chiefs, but there are two very similar petroglyphs of a male figure with a barbed helmet or headdress carved in the lava rock at Anaeho'omalu and KeahuoLū. The other known similarity between these two places is that killing of the high chiefs took place there. These shared images may be suggestive of such an event. Photos by Malcolm Nāea Chun.

As Beckwith has noted, a similar ruse was used to kill the physically and mentally abusive Hakau, the older brother of 'Umi. It is told in detail in the Fornander account, 'Umi's followers gathered stones, and they "were bundled up into ti-leaf [wrappers], and made to resemble bundles of potatoes" (1916, 200). With the help of some elders who eased Hakau's suspicions, 'Umi, his friends and followers surprised Hakau and stoned and entombed him with the bundles they had brought with them (Fornander, 1916, 200–204).

Green's collection also gives the traditions of Hala'ea and Kohaikalani, both of whom were killed in the Ka'ū district on the island of Hawai'i. Hala'ea was a chief who coveted all the fish caught by his fishermen. They respected the demands of the chief until they were forced into near starvation. The Hawaiian text says that "Hoakoakoa na poo lawaia [. . .] a kukakuka iho nei lakou [. . .]" (86) The head fishermen gathered and discussed among themselves how they could get rid of their chief. Their strategy was brilliant because they were able to destroy their chief without diminishing the respect to the chief's rank and status. What they did was simple: they kept on filling the chief's canoe with heavy 'ahi fish until the canoe was ready to sink, and then they all paddled quickly away to watch the chief drown with his coveted fish. The word given to describe Hala'ea is "anunu" or greedy (86–89).

Kohaikalani is described as "he alii hoounauna ino" (Green 90) or "causing heavy burdens to be laid upon his people whenever opportunity offered" (91). Kohaikalani had his people gather stones to build a new temple, but the priests who came to bless the place realized that the quantity of stones meant the temple would be for human sacrifice, and they warned the people, who were the potential offerings. Taking note of the priests' caution, the people were able to convince the chief to help them by

pushing the tree from below while they pulled it from above. The “men pulled at the tree until half the distance up the cliff was covered, then they released the rope. The great tree rolled over on top of the chief and death came to the oppressor [alii hooluhi]” (90–91).

The people were warned by the priests, but they did not retaliate directly. Rather, it was the chief’s vanity in taking the role of pushing the log rather than pulling it, a role that should have been for his people, that killed him.

Another despotic chief mentioned by Malo is Kamai’ole. Kamai’ole had taken away the chieftdom from another ruling chief Kanipahu, who was exiled to the island of Moloka’i. Kamai’ole was known for taking the wives of other men and refusing to give them back. “Therefore the maka’ainana were very angry at Kamai’ole. They secretly went to ask [the priest-prophet] Pā’ao how Kamai’ole could be killed” (Malo 298).

Word was sent to Kanipahu calling for his return, but he refused and designated one of his children, Kalapana as heir. When Kamai’ole traveled by canoe, his canoe would wait until all others had gone ahead, and so at ‘Anaeho’omalū, the people and Kalapana, now the designated heir of Kanipahu, waited overnight until all the canoes set sail leaving Kamai’ole(s) behind. Then they went to kill Kamai’ole (Malo 299).

Among Malo’s traditions of chiefs who were killed by the maka’ainana is his statement that “Ehunuikaimalino was an ali’i who was secretly killed by lawai’a at Keahuolu in the Kona [district on the island of Hawai’i]” (266). This brief passage is the only source we have of a deliberate and outright killing of a high chief by commoners done “secretly.” Ehunuikaimalino was recognized as the builder of many pathways in the Kona

district on the island of Hawai'i and the builder of the famous pu'uhonua (place of refuge) Hōnaunau (Barrère 117). According to Kamakau, the chief 'Umi-a-Liloa took over as ruler of 'Ehu's kingdom when 'Ehu was in his old age (19). Typically for the tradition of 'Ehunuikaimalino, of which we are missing many pieces, Malo does not tell us why fishermen would kill such an elderly high chief and in such a manner.

In Malo's concluding chapters on the traditions of the ali'i, he seems to emphasize the difference between good and bad chiefs as being instructive points to remember. Malo writes of one of the very early ali'i, Waia.

In the words of the Hawaiian Island's people of old, Waia('s) chiefdom was very hewa (*bad*), because he went about [only] seeking after entertainment, sports and pleasures. He had abandoned the orders of his parents to be religious (haipule) and to properly care for the chiefdom, and to care for the maka'āinana [*commoners*] so that his reign would [be] beneficial. (295)

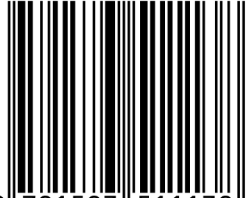
In Waia we have a chief who is not actively oppressive, but who is still considered a bad chief because he neglects his duty to properly care (mālama pono) for both chiefs and commoners.



Curriculum Research & Development Group
University of Hawai'i

Instructional Services Branch
Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support
Hawai'i Department of Education

eISBN 978-1-58351-113-8



9 781583 511138

ISBN 978-1-58351-048-3



9 781583 510483

ISBN 978-1-58351-040-7



9 781583 510407 (set)