

Aloha

Traditions of Love and Affection

Malcolm Nāea Chun



Pihana Nā Mamo

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Ka Wana Series

Curriculum Research & Development Group
University of Hawai'i

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Aloha

Traditions of Love and Affection

Ka 'Ōlelo Mua

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 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 *Aloha* Chun addresses the topic of love and affection and the evolution of the use of the related word, *aloha*. Through his research, which included the use of numerous primary sources, Malcolm Nāea Chun has found that *aloha* has a meaning that goes far beyond a simple greeting such as *hello* and *goodbye*. In fact, he asserts that *aloha* has undergone a post-contact transformation, so that its original meaning is now merely a secondary meaning. He conducted his research by looking at how *aloha* has been used by Hawaiians before and after contact with explorers and, later, with missionaries. He followed the meaning

of the word through history, looking at how it was used by Hawaiians and others, and discovering what *aloha* really meant in traditional Native Hawaiian culture before European visitors came ashore in 1778.

This book is an addition to 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 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 *Aloha: 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.

ALO-O-OHA!

Ua 'ōlelo pinepine mai nō ho'i ka po'e kānaka Hawai'i holokahiki e holo nei ma nā 'āina 'ē, i ka po'e aloha nui (lāhui Hawai'i) ke loa'a aku ma ko lākou wahi i noho ai. Ua kāhāhā nui nā haole me nā kānaka i ka po'e mau o ke aloha o ka lāhui Hawai'i, iā lākou Hawai'i iho, 'I hemo wale ai nō kahi malo i ka hōhē o ka po'e kahiko.'

It was often said of those Hawaiians who went overseas that they were full of love (the Hawaiians) when they received visitors wherever they lived. The English speaking people and others were greatly taken by the hospitality (aloha) of the Hawaiians as they were treated like other Hawaiians. A malo (loin cloth) was only removed at the timidity of the people of old.'

Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau
Ke Kumu Aupuni and author's translation

Aloha is the most important word in the Hawaiian language. It encompasses a wide variety of meanings, all of which are about hospitality and love. The spirit of Aloha guides the Hawaiian people in their lives everyday.

Westin Vacation Services, opening statement
from a letter to guests



H. M. Queen Lili'uokalani's hānai daughter, Lydia Aholo, left a collection of audio recordings of her recollections of the queen that extend our insight into the queen's personal life beyond what

she shows us in her own published biography, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*. One of the stories Aholo remembered was of Her Majesty returning to Honolulu in the spring of 1910. In a taped interview, she recollected how Lili'uokalani "was met at the wharf by *haole*, *hapa-haole*, and Hawaiians" (Allen 380). Helena Allen wrote of this event from the taped interview in her biography of the queen.

She stepped off the ship with Curtis Iaukea and was greeted with "Alo-o-oha!"

Liliuokalani stopped, shocked, still. She stood unmoving until the cry melted away as if in chagrin. She looked down upon the crowd. "I greet you," she said in her rich musical voice, "with *aloha*. *Aloha*—that is the Hawaiian greeting." "Never," she told more than one Hawaiian child, including the adults such as Lydia, "never say *alo-o-oha*. It is a *haole* word. *Aloha* is ours, as is its meaning." (380)

What did Her Majesty mean when she said that *aloha* and its meaning belonged to Hawaiians while *alo-o-oha* belonged to non-Hawaiians, and in particular, to the haoles, the term for English speaking peoples? Does *aloha* have meaning that goes beyond a simple greeting such as hello and goodbye? The Queen, through Aholo and Allen, says that her greeting is *with aloha*. That would indicate to me that *aloha* is something that qualifies the greeting. Yet, this is followed directly by the short statement "*Aloha*—that is the Hawaiian greeting," which says *aloha* itself is a type of greeting, a Hawaiian greeting. What, then, is *aloha*?



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