

Ho'onaohonoho

Traditional Ways of Cultural Management

Malcolm Nāea Chun

Ka Wana Series



Pihana Nā Mamo

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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 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.

The use of Hawaiian culture in the workplace, be it in tourism or in other business sectors, is a popular topic, as evidenced by the number of recent publications aimed at providing cultural sensitivity as a way to understand, appreciate, and use Hawaiian culture in the work place. *Ho'onothonoho* goes beyond this approach by looking at the traditional culture and history to trace how Native Hawaiians have practiced an indigenous way of doing things and then comparing those methods with today's Americanized island society.

Malcolm Nāea Chun has worked for many Native Hawaiian agencies and organizations and has been involved in their

strategic planning, development of legislation, management decisions, and board meetings. He has seen how our culture has both clashed with and worked with American styles of management, business, and thinking. Several times he has worked with organizations in what seems to be an eternal quest to “become a Native Hawaiian organization,” that is, to integrate Hawaiian culture as a means to improve service, policies, and decisions. In *Ho‘onohonoho* he shares some of his insights about what has worked and what has not worked to provide a framework for the possibility of “cultural management,” a phrase he has coined to describe this indigenous phenomenon. In the end, Chun poses a challenge to Native Hawaiian agencies and organizations to understand what they really mean by the idea of a “Hawaiian organization”—do they really mean to be Hawaiian, and if so, are they willing to take the risks to be truly indigenous in a modern American business world?

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 *Ho‘onohonoho*: 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.



In the time of Kamehameha the fishermen swam together in a row, and if one got out of line or lagged behind he was struck by the sharp nose of the fish.

Kaheihemalie in *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*

If a group worked together to compose a chant the leader would ask each composer to give a line; if there were eighty composers the chant would contain eighty lines, and these would be combined into a single composition. Two, three, or more composers could work on a single chant.

Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*



In Hawaiian there are two words that were used to describe what management is about: ho'oponopono and ho'onothonoho. I have seen both of them used to describe how a chief ruled. Although today we associate the word ho'oponopono with a process of reconciliation, it had a broader meaning before people began to refer to it with that single intent. If we broaden what we now think of as the process of ho'oponopono to apply it to larger groups, we can see that a leader or a council of leaders may engage in a similar process to make decisions and carry them out.

Ho'onothonoho has a similar kind of intent. The act of noho (that is, to live) combined with the causative *ho'o-* (to make), as in to make a living or to provide a living, suggests more of a system of doing things, what we now think of as management. I have seen

this term used more often to mean governance. But can it also describe a “cultural” kind of management? Our modern world of money and of the marketplace is made complex by the need for a high degree of cooperation between people. In business, greater efficiency saves on costs and increases profits. We manage money, goods, services, and people, and we even try to manage time. If there is such a thing as “cultural” management, and I believe there is, then the way that we choose to manage all these things should reflect the culture we use to make our decisions. We should be able to detect traditional ways our ancestors managed their world and, if we are practicing “cultural” management, to see those traditions continued in our practices today.

Management is a term we can associate with two groups: the large, corporate organizations whether private, government, or not-for-profit, and the personal, represented by family or community-based groups. In traditional Hawaiian society, the closest thing to the first group was the ali‘i (chiefs) and their relationship to people (kānaka).

Corporate Management: The Ali'i

The complexity of the ali'i(s) style of rule covers several inter-related concepts and values. Its hierarchy, or protocols, and its methods of collection and redistribution of wealth seem to have operated in ways that we see in large corporations and organizations. The 19th century scholar Davida Malo gives us this description.

[. . .] the chiefdom was thought to have [only] one body like a human being. [There being] a head, hands, feet and the smaller body parts. There are many parts to this one body and so this was the same with a chiefdom. It had many parts to its body.

The chiefdom's real body was the people, from the maka'ainana [*commoners*] to the ali'i(s) [*chiefs*] who were directly below the ali'i nui [*high chief*]. This was the real body of the chiefdom [. . .]. The ali'i nui, who was higher in rank, was the real head of the chiefdom. The ali'i(s) directly below the ali'i nui were like the shoulders and chest of the chiefdom. The kahuna [*priest*] of the ki'i(s) [*images*] was the right hand of the chiefdom, the kālaimoku [*chief counsellor*] was the left hand of the chiefdom. That was how the people of old had worked [this system] out.

The koa [*warriors*] were the right foot of the chiefdom. The mahi'ai [*farmers*] and the lawai'a [*fishermen*] were the left foot of the chiefdom. These people labored at every task [and they] were the small parts of the body [attached to] the larger parts of the chiefdom. [. . .]

There were two important body parts: that of the kālaimoku and the kahuna pule ki'i. They ran the chiefdom. They

guided the head [ali'i nui] of the chiefdom to where they had thought it was best [to go]. They guided the head of the chiefdom there. If the head of the chiefdom refused their guidance then the chiefdom might be turned over to someone else, because of the mistakes of the head, the ali'i nui. (258)

We can see from this vivid description how the roles and relationships of the various offices and positions worked. The inter-relationship hints at the cooperation needed for such a body to function effectively.



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