

Welina

Traditional and Contemporary Ways of Welcome and Hospitality

Malcolm Nāea Chun

Ka Wana Series



Pihana Nā Mamo

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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.

A major step to ensure such outcomes is gaining a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural basis for the many Hawaiian customs and traditions. Traditional greetings and protocol are familiar subjects of our cultural specialist. As the cultural affairs officer for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Malcolm Nāea Chun wrote their publication on this subject entitled *Ho'ōkipa*. During his tenure there he served as the chair of the protocol committee for the welcoming of the first large group of Māori to visit Hawai'i since the two peoples departed from their ancestral homeland.

This personal experience, combined with his style of historical research, has produced this volume entitled *Welina*. It covers the traditions of greetings and protocol using accounts from primary and secondary sources and provides some insight into what can be done today to remain true to those ancestral traditions, especially in light of the tremendous pressures of our island economy and commercialization.

Welina is about traditional and contemporary ways of welcome and hospitality, and it challenges us to seriously consider what we are doing today as we revive those traditions. Is the touching of noses, the presentation of speeches, and a male dancer at a welcome due to the strong influence of the Māori? Is there a difference in the way ‘awa or kava is ceremonially presented in Hawaiian and other Pacific Islands?

This booklet 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 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 *Welina*: Reviewers Stephen Boggs and Sidney Moko Mead for their reading and comments; 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.



Mai! Mai! Komo mai maloko nei.

E noho iho a ku'u ka luhi, hele e 'ai.

Come! Come! Come inside here. Sit down and rest till your weariness is gone from you, then have something to eat.

Mary Kawena Pukui

... Inā ho'i he huaka'i kā kāua na ke aloha, he aloha mai nohoi ko uka.

Kalola to Kalani'ōpu'u

“Ēa! Hele loa nō ka, 'a'ole ka e aloha mai.”

Kanikaniula to Eleio



I love to tell this story now, but when we were little kids it scared the heck out of us, though I suppose it was meant to do so. I had an aunt who was a school teacher in Kona, and her time spent there enabled her to be a very good story teller. She loved to tell stories of Pele, the goddess of the volcano. Even if we had heard the stories over and over again, they were so entertaining and spooky, especially at a bedtime gathering after a large family meal.

This is her story: In a small village on the mountain slopes there lived several families. In one home they welcomed all the strangers who passed by and stopped to ask for rest and refreshments. Further down the pathway there was another household that was just the opposite. They did not trust anyone who came by their house and would not share any food or water, or even their shade.

One day an old woman came walking through the village and stopped by the first house. She was warmly greeted and given some food and water. She rested for a while and then said good-bye and journeyed down the pathway. She then stopped at the second house, called out, and asked if anyone was home. There was only the sound of the wind whistling through the house. She called out again and again. Finally a voice yelled back, “Go away! You are not welcome here. We don’t have enough food and water for you, old woman!” The old woman felt very hurt by these words and hurried off down the pathway.

A few nights later, the elder of the first household had a dream in which he was visited by the old woman. She told him that they must place four white flags around their house to mark the boundaries of their property. They were told not to let their neighbors know what they were doing or the reasons for doing so.

The next day they planted white flags at the four corners of their property and waited for the old woman to pass by again. Instead, the volcano erupted, and as the ground shook, lava flowed down the mountain slope. As it sped downwards, it broke into a fork and passed around the home marked with the white flags. The household that would not greet anyone, however, was covered by the lava flow, killing everyone in it.

The old woman was none other than Pele, the goddess of the volcano, in the form of an old woman. As we listened in the stillness of the night, we were admonished: “That is why you must welcome all who pass by and stop at your doorway, especially an old woman, for you never know if it is Pele herself.”

Why do we continue to tell these stories? Perhaps today some view them merely as “ghost stories” to entertain young children or enjoyable legends used to share a little Hawaiian culture.

I believe, however, that is not why such stories were shared. The moral of the Pele story, for example, is not to invoke fear of Pele and her anger, but to teach that old people who traveled long distances needed to receive rest and refreshment during their journey. In more general terms, it is to remind people of the importance of being hospitable by emphasizing opposite behavior (*hewa*) and its eventual consequences, for we know, as Mary Kawena Pukui remarked, “Hospitality was typical of all Hawaiians on all of the islands. My own parents, our relatives, friends and associates were always glad to share whatever they had, be it little or large” (Handy & Pukui 186).

Hawaiian Welcoming Traditions and Practices

In Hawaiian traditions, we find many reminders of the importance of welcoming visitors. One well-known account is related to the meaning of the place name Nānākuli on the leeward side of O‘ahu.

Although the compound name Nānā-kuli appears to have several meanings, the most widely known was recorded by Mary Kawena Pukui during an interview with informant Simeona Nawa‘a. He shared that he had gotten his information from “a native woman of Wai‘anae who told him why this place was so named.”

Because of the great scarcity of water and vegetable food, they were ashamed to greet passing strangers. They remained out of sight as much as possible. Sometimes they met people before they were able to hide, so they just looked at strangers with expressionless faces and acted as though they were stone deaf and did not hear the greeting. This was so that the strangers would not ask for water which they did not have in that locality.

The strangers would go on to the other places and mention the peculiar, deaf people who just stared and they would be told that the people were not deaf but ashamed of their inability to be hospitable. So the place they lived was called Nana, or look, and kuli, deaf — that is, Deaf mutes who just look. (Sterling & Summers 61–62)

A similar idea is to be found in the tradition of Kulepe.

Kulepe once upon a time set out from Oahu and landed at Kalaupapa in Molokai and proceeded to the first house seen by him, where he found the people eating with their

heads bowed down, and who never looked up to see who the stranger was. Kulepe was hungry and this was the reason why he called at this house. [. . .]

After a while Kulepe again called out: (He did this with the hope of being able to get the people to invite him to sit down with them and take some food, without asking outright for the food.)

Say, Molokai, raise your paddles.
When you look down, the darkness you see is pili grass,
And the black things, the heads of people.

These words of Kulepe were meant for themselves, on account of the way they gormandized the food and fish; of the fingers dipping the poi and raising them aloft [the raised paddles], while the dishes were loaded with fish, that only the dark color of the hair was manifest as their heads were bowed [the pili grass and the dark heads], and of their eating and then whistling. (Fornander, 1918, 172)

In Hawaiian proverbs or wisdom statements, we find several references to such a lack of hospitality in certain communities. The following are but a few more examples:

O’ahu maka ‘ewa’ewa (O’ahu with indifferent eyes) was a term of reproach to O’ahu people, reported to have been said by Hi’iaka when her O’ahu relatives refused to help her mend a canoe for a journey to Kaua’i (Pukui & Elbert 42).

Kalaoa ‘ai pō’ele’ele (Kalaoa eats in the dark) describes the people of Kalaoa in east Hilo on the island of Hawai’i. They “were noted for their lack of hospitality. To avoid having to ask visitors or passers-by to partake of food with them, they ate in the dark where they could not be seen” (Pukui 155).

Na ka pua‘a e ‘ai; a na ka pua‘a ana paha e ‘ai ([It is] for the pigs to eat; and perhaps the pigs will taste [you]) is based upon a story of a missionary and his two Hawaiian companions. They had reached Keonepoko in the district of Puna on the island of Hawai‘i and were hungry and tired. “Seeing some natives removing cooked breadfruit from an *imu*, they asked if they could have some. ‘No,’ said the natives, ‘it is for the pigs to eat.’ So the visitors moved on. Not long after, leprosy broke out among the people of Puna. The first to contract it were taken to O‘ahu and later sent to Kalaupapa. Others died at home and were buried. When the last ones finally died, there was no one to bury them, and the pigs feasted on their bodies. Thus, justice was served” (Pukui 244).

Ho‘ohewahewa ke aloha, aia i Puna i Nānāwale (Love failed to recognize him, for it is gone to Puna, to Nānāwale) (Pukui 113) is a proverb that uses a word play on the place name of Nānā-wale or literally “only looking.” It was considered rude or insulting for a person not to call out or greet another, particularly if they knew each other.

Mū ka waha heahea ‘ole (Silent is the mouth of the inhospitable) (Pukui 239) is another such proverb.

In the tradition of the man-eating ghost of O‘ahu, Hanaaumoe, hospitality is used as a device to entice travelers to land ashore only to be later eaten.

This is the only island that is without ghosts, the island of Halalii. Come ashore, we have food ashore [. . .], and we also have women. The canoe men can have as many as two or three, while your chief, Kahaoookamoku shall have five, therefore you must come ashore. (Fornander, 1918, 428)



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