

Her name was Kawahine Kapohele Ikapokane and she said she had these hulas and chants that no one in her family wanted to learn. She said she had waited for a long time for somebody to come. She had prayed and prayed for a long time for someone to come that she could teach. At that time I was six feet tall and she stood six foot-four. She had short white hair and a dark complexion and when she looked at you her eyes just pierced you. She make you feel like she knew everything about you.

When I met her she was ninety two-years-old and she stood erect. She was like a young woman in an old woman's body. When she talked about the ocean she didn't have to tell you what she was talking about. She would make her voice sound like waves washing on the sand or airy like the winds above a cliff.

Everyday after school for two years I would go to her home and learn from her. In 1975 at the end of my junior year in high school she passed away. I never knew if she had any kind of English name. I never knew if she had any kind of family. Whenever I went to her home she was always alone.

All I have left of her are these chants from Molokai and a geneology of who her kumu were. She said that for every two kumu in the geneology the time span is a hundred years which would start the lineage at 900 A.D. . It takes roughly an hour to dance a hundred lines of a chant and a chant was danced in its entirety.

The longest chant she left with me is 38,000 lines long, the shortest in 928 lines. Each kumu in the geneology kept an account of what went on during his lifetime. They recorded what alii were born what alii died, what kind of food was planted, and it's all in the chants.

People today look upon the ancient Hawaiians as mythical but the Hawaiians did not deal in myths. On Molokai, mo'os ruled the land when the Hawaiians first arrived. The kumus describe the lizards as the size of ridges and the Hawaiians as supernatural beings. The events that are recorded in some of these chants would be unbelievable to the modern world just as the modern world would be unbelievable to the ancient world.

The knowledge of the culture and the chants was passed down only through families which is why it's so difficult for our history to be recovered. At one time there was one true, unified hula that over hundreds of years separated and reappeared on different islands.

The chants that Kawahine left me were recorded in a written Hawaiian language that over the centuries has dissappeared among the people and is kept today only in a few families and priestly lines. Symbols represent nouns and verbs and are read from top to bottom and the sentences were ordered from right to left.

If you go to Molokai today it is totally different from the way it is described in the chants of the eleventh century. Today it is barren and dry but in ancient Maa-naloa there was a lush lehua forest and seventeen flowing streams. In the eleventh century, Molokai was famous for the hula and people would come from all over the island to learn from a woman named Kapoulakinau and her sister Kewilani. Kewilani spent her life traveling and teaching throughout all the islands and she was known by three names: Kumunu, Laiea, and Laka. Wherever she went she established schools. On Kauai she stayed in Haena and taught a student named Lohiau. On the Big Island she stayed in Puna and one of her students was Pele. When she passed away in Kaana she became the example of how all hula should be and she along with all of her first students became deified as gods and goddesses as the years passed.

What is missing in the ancient hula of today is the purity of spirit within each individual kumu and dancer. We don't seem to know our goals, we don't seem to know where our hearts are. Ancient hula is spiritual. We are re-enacting the past life of our forefathers and if we are dirty inside how can we represent the hula? The hula was held sacred to the hearts of our forefathers. It wasn't entertainment but the very essence of life. The whole culture was preserved in it, the ceremonies of the temples, the government of the alii, the lifestyle, the calendars, everything is in the chants.

Kawahine told me that the culture is like a tree and it will spring from Kaana and have many branches but the time will come when all the branches will be dead from this tree. All that will be left is the withered trunk. The hula is the inspiration that can make the Hawaiians rise up from out of the dust, out of obscurity. It is the last hope that can make us remember our culture and our forefathers. It is the dance that will be the last thing that can preserve us.

p.s. please indicate how you wish your name to appear in the publication. If you prefer your full name or any variation from the above please supply our office with the required information before JUNE 17, 1983.

John Kaimikaua

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John Kaimikaua began to formally teach in 1977 with the establishment of "Halau Hula o'Kukuna'okala".

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KAPO'ULA KINAU

John Kaimikaua

In the dance itself

It wasn't so much interest as things falling into place. I was fortunate when I was small because I lived at a time when my great grandparents were still alive. My grandparents were still alive and my parents worked so we were raised literally by my grandparaents. My grandmother would tell us about Hawaiian things and legends and it was a part of our everyday life.

And with me out of all the grandchildren I was the one who took the interest in these things. But s as far as hula it wasn't until I came into highschool. I was a freshman and I had a Hawaiian garden. And in this Hawaiian garden I had twenty-one varieties of taro, sugar cane, banana everything. But there was one particular ti leaf that I was looking for. that was called the kahuna ti leaf. Now the kahuna ti leaf was a very rare ti leaf and it was alsoused in the ancient days. The true kahuna ti leaf looks like the regular ti leaf except it s is extremely curly.

Underneath this ti leaf is a purple streak on the stem. I was looking for that variety of ti leaf to make my garden complete. I went to Aiea High School and one day during lunch I decided to go up to Keahiwa ~~inighmsmhmothnw~~ hieau which is above the high school. I was driving up ht there and when I turned a corner I saw a whole yard bordered by this kahuna ti leaf.

When I saw the yard I was shocked because the variety is so rare. So I went up and knocked on the door to aks thbe owner if I could have some ti leaf. This old Hawaiian lady came out and I asked her if I could have some kahuna ti leaf. She looked at me kind of startled and then she said yea yes and went outside an cut some for me.

She asked me if I was in a rush. I said no so she siad come inside and we talk story. I sat inside and we were talking and while we were talking she asked th question are you interested in things of the old. When I heard that I already knew what she was talking about and I said yes very much so.

And she said she was from Molokai and her name was Kawahine Kapohele Ikapokane and she said she had all of these hulas all of these canchants.that no one in her family wanted to learn. She said she had waited for a long time for someone to come. She had prayed and prayed for a long time for smeone to come that she could teach. She said that when I came up to her door and asked for the kahuna ti leaf, at that time I was 14 years old, she said nobody at even <sup>her</sup> ~~my~~ age <sup>knew</sup> knows about it. Because even in the ancient days it was rare.

That to her was the sign. Everyday after that I would go to her home. and learn. That woman, I always called her Kawahine, was unusual. At that time I was six feet tall and she stood six-four. She was a tall woman and she short white hair. She had a dark complexion and she projected so much love and in her eyes and her smile. Her yeys were grayish and when they looked at you they just pierced you and made you feel like she knew everything about you. When I met her she was 92 years old and she stood erect. It was like a young woman in an old woman's body. Her feet were big like a man's but she was so graceful. When she talked about the ocean she didn't h even have to tell you what she was talking about. she would make her voice sound like waves washing on the sand. when she talked about the winds she would make her voice sound like the winds, airy.

Till today I have never heard anyone oli like her. When she danced her body wa so rubber-like and elastic, constantly-flowing. Two years I spent studiyng with her and learning all of these things that came from Molokai. At the end of my junior year in highschool in 1975 I was going to take a one-month long tour of Europe as part of the Aiea Swinging Singers. So that last day of school I went up to her house and told her I was going to go to Europe and I would be back after a month. That last day she llooked at me and smiled and her whole face just radiated relief. She told me to go because she had given me everything. And she said she was going back home.

That last day before I left she gave me a geneaology of who her kumu hulas were. After I returned from my trip I went up to her house. I knocked on the door an she wasn't there at all. A neighbor heard me and came over and she told me that three days after I ahad left she had passed away.

I never knew if she had any kind of English name. I never knew if she had any kind of family. Whenever I went there she was always alone. I never met any of her friends or neighbors. I didn't even know the neighbor who came over and told me of her death.

I don't know where she is buried. All I have of her is these chants. She wrote them in Hawaiian and then translated them into English. She showed me the genealogy and said for every two kumus in the genealogy the time span is a hundred years. When I count her genealogy it goes all the way back to 900 A.D.. She had in her midst a complete record for the Hawaiian people in chant and dancing. From 900 A.D. until the day she died. The shortest chant that she gave to me is 928 lines long.

The longest chant I have is about 38,000 lines long. Each kumu that lived kept <sup>an</sup> account of what went on during his lifetime. They were recorded what alii was born what alii died, what they planted all through chants. The events that life that is recorded in some of these chants would be unbelievable to the modern world just as the modern world would be unbelievable to the ancient world. People today would look upon the ancient Hawaiians as mythical but the Hawaiians did not deal in myths.

*according to the chants* *The chants say that the Hawaiians had jewels*  
~~The things that they wrote in their chants were true.~~ The power that the people had. On Molokai, mo'os ruled the land when the Hawaiians first came. The chants describe the lizards as the size of ridges. The genealogy that I have goes back to Laka and goes five generations back to a woman La'ila'i. Laka was a living person who lived during the eleventh century.

The knowledge of the hula was passed down only through the families, which is why it is so difficult for that knowledge to be recovered. The genealogy of the kumu in her family which she gave to me is filled with genealogists who kept the records of the people. She said that if other kumu hula have a true line, somewhere in time they will meet with this line. They will connect in to this line. It goes back to one true root which is Laka.

At one time there was one true unified hula that over the hundreds of years separated and reappeared on different islands. The hula began on Molokai, Laka was born on Molokai on the mountain Maunaloa in the district of Kaana. If you go to Molokai today it is totally different from the way that it ~~was~~ is described in the chants. Today it is all barren and dry, in ancient Maunaloa there was a lush lehua forest and seventeen flowing streams. In the 15th century the people were tested with the Kalaipaho wind. Laka was trained and bred on that island by her sister Kapoulakinaho.

Whether people today know or not Molokai was very famous for hula in the eleventh century. People would come from all over the islands to come to see this certain family dance because it was kept only in the family. The leader of that family was a woman named Kapoulakinaho. When she danced people would come from all over and would beg her to show her their style.

She said that she would but they would have to follow her kapu her laws. So they agreed and when they opened up people heard that she opened up a school mass amounts of people came. It was too much for her to handle so she decided to teach her younger sister Kewilani. But Kapo loved her sister very much and called her by her pet name wahinelihili.

After this sister had been trained and had gone through an uniki, Kapo gave her three names. The first name was Kumunuu, the second was Laiea, and the third name was Laka. By those three names she would teach the hula. On Molokai she was known as Laiea. On Maunaloa at that time whenever the sun would sink in the west, Laka could see the reflection of Niihau faded in the sea spray. So she desired greatly to go to that island.

So Laka went down to Haleaona with her entourage and they sailed to Niihau. When she arrived in Niihau she danced the first hula on Niihau and established the first schools on Niihau. From Niihau she went over to Kauai. What attracted her to Kauai was Waialeale. The darkness of Waialeale. On Niihau she turned and chanted to Kauai what is known on Molokai as a luheno which is a poetical song. In English the chant went Waialeale is like a mother's breast always feeding the heavens, and the heavens never tiring, always crying for more.

The place that she stayed in Kauai was Haena. And in Haena she established the first halau on Kauai. But she loved Kauai and she stayed there many years establishing schools. One of her students on Kauai was a young boy who was 8 and his name was Lohiau and Laka taught him. Even Pele was an actual living person.

All of these people were actual living people, they were not myths. The power of Pele was to work with fire and when she died her spirit chose to stay in Halemaumau. These were not myths. When she was done on Kauai, she went to Oahu and established schools here. From Oahu she went to Maui. From Mqui to Lanai and from Lania finally she went to the Big Island.

Now her travels was all over a course of many years. When she went to the Big Island she stayed in Puna. She loved Puna. In Puna she taught the women, she loved the women of Puna because they were humble and clean, they were virgins.

Now when she taught them, one of her students was a young girl named Hopoi. Hopoi was an actual living person to you see. Laka taught Hopoi and Hopoi taught Hiiaka and Pele. and Kpoleopele, they danced for Pele and it was interwoven into that line. All actual living persons. By the time Laka hit the Big Island she was old. She stayed a few years because she knew she was going to die and she did not want to die on the Big Island. She wanted to come back to Molokai, to Kaana. So where a lot of people pick up the legend it was actually the point where she her life was coming to an end at Puna. She sailed to Molokai and lived out the rest of her days on the top of Maunaloa. When she died she was buried secretly in Kaaana. And the people because she had gone from island to island they knew her as the foremost teacher of the dance. And she was deified and she became the example of how all hula should be. In time she became elevated to the point of being a goddess.

If you go to Puna, people worship Laka or Hopoi. The first people who learned from her also were elevated to be gods and goddesses in those districts. So wherever your hula genealogy goes to, somewhere it will connect to this one. When Laka died Molokai was praised as Molokaikahula piko, Molokai the center of the dance.

Kawahine always told me that it began on Molokai and it will end on Molokai. Everything began on Molokai. The culture is like a tree and it will spring from kaana and have many many branches but the time will come when all the branches will be dead from this tree. All that is left will be the withered trunk.

Hula was not entertainment, hula was the very essence of life. The whole culture was preserved in it. The ceremonies of the temples, the government of the aliis, the way the people lived, the agriculture, the calendars, the days, the months, all of these things were in the chants. Nothing is lost altogether I have a 156 chants from her. Everything is all written down by her. The english is also written by her. When I teach a chant I use only thirty lines because it's too much to teach.

She spent the majority of the two years I spent with her showing the dance to me. It takes roughly about an hour for a thousand lines to be performed. When she danced she would go for three hours non-stop with no effort. She was 94 when she died. When she danced it was impossible to get bored. It was like she was flying off of the ground and it was fascinating. I am trying to teach the truth about the Hawaiian culture.

There were people who had powers. People like Kamapua were not myths they were eareal people. They had people who could turn themselves into animals.

I opened up my halau on November 18, 1977.

The thing that is missing in ancient hula today is not so much motions. Everything is still there but people don't know how to use it. But even that isn't the real problem. The main thing that is missing in the hula is the purity of the dancers. Of each dancer as an individual. The purity of heart. of mind of body. This is true of the kumu as well. Dancing is spiritual. You are re-enacting the past life of your forefathers. The hula was held sacred and dear to the hearts of our forefathers. If you are dirty inside how can you represent the hula.

As long as the dancers do not have the purity of the heart and mind and soul the hula will always be lost. Spiritual is half of the dancing, half is physical. You cannot dwell on the physical in dancing because it won't work. Where is your heart? What are your goals when you begin to dance?

The hula is the inspiration that will make the Hawaiians rise up from out of the dust, out of obscurity. It is the last hope. It is the thing that will make us remember our culture and our forefathers. It is the dance that will be the last thing that can preserve ~~them.~~ *us*

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