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*Ku Kanaka—Stand Tall: A Search for Hawaiian Values* by George Hu'eua Sanford Kanahahele

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GEORGE HU'EU SANFORD KANAHELE. *Ku Kanaka—Stand Tall: A Search for Hawaiian Values*. Honolulu: Waiaha Foundation, 1986. xxi; 529 pp. \$30.00.

Reviewed by Paul Alfred Pratte, associate professor of communications, Brigham Young University. Pratte is also the founder and a former associate editor of the *Hawaii LDS Record-Bulletin*.

Most of us who have visited or resided in the Hawaiian islands or other parts of Polynesia for any period of time sense a certain subjective something about the people and their lifestyle which defies objective description. How nice it would be if we could pin down and put some of that intangible aloha (Hawaiian), aroha (Maori), alofa (Samoan), aroha (Tahitian), alofa (Tongan) spirit in a bottle or box and bring it back to use on an ongoing basis with our families, in business, or in politics.

For those who are looking for a better idea of those valuable primal values, George Kanahale's *Ku Kanaka—Stand Tall*, succeeds to a great extent. In a rigorous and comprehensive volume, the former BYU student carefully defines the qualities influencing the lives of pre-Captain Cook Hawaiians, qualities that still cling to some like a scent of leis today. Without minimizing such atrocities as human sacrifice which have been practiced in other countries around the world, Kanahale suggests that by increasing our awareness and adopting Hawaiian values we can do more than we are currently doing to adapt to the changes being wrought not only on the Hawaiian islands but on all of us in the areas of technology, economics, leadership, and politics.

The book is a massive labor of scholarship and love by Kanahale, who has been referred to by the *New Yorker* as "the spiritual father of the Hawaiian renaissance," a movement he has also helped through his editing of *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*. His latest book serves as an important means for Hawaiians to shake off the extensive guilt trip laid on them with the arrival of Captain Cook and the Western missionaries who came to do good and did very well in exploiting the Hawaiian's generosity and making them strangers in their own land. More so, the book provides haoles as well as Hawaiians with guidelines to move them beyond the cultural cliches to the specifics of a primal value system less materialistic than those of the Western world. In short, Kanahale's book, along with Lawrence H. Fuch's *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (1961) and Gavan Daws's *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (1968), is an essential for anyone who wants to learn about the real Hawaii beyond Waikiki.

The key, according to one elderly Hawaiian woman who participated in a series of conferences leading to Kanahale's book, lies more

in living aloha than in trying to define the elusive concept which according to one study has at least 123 definitions. Kanahale focuses on such concepts as love, sharing, cooperation, and stewardship. In a most provocative concluding chapter on the "Dynamics of Aloha," Kanahale helps define the term which has become as commercialized as "Zion" and "Deseret" in Utah by tracing it from an extended love of kin to beyond the *'ohana*, or family, to aloha's marriage with the gospel of love. As a result, Kanahale's book is not just a discussion of Hawaiian values. It is also a celebration of the values of other primal peoples including Eskimos, Africans, and American Indians. In particular, Kanahale says that Hawaiian civilization probably resembled the American Indian Zuni culture (101).

A part-Hawaiian educated at Hawaii's Kamehameha schools, BYU, and Cornell who served in the administration of former Governor John Burns, Kanahale says he first saw the need to define what a Hawaiian is when he was a part of a trade mission in New Zealand in 1981.

Unlike his own people who were struggling as strangers on their own land to recover their identity, the Maoris had already been partially successful. As a means of helping reassert their own unique value system, and with help from the nonprofit Waiaha Foundation, Kanahale set out to answer the painful question of who and what is a Hawaiian and related questions. For those of us who do not have Hawaiian genes, the question is what can we learn from these people.

At the heart of Kanahale's thesis (outlined in the first part of his book on religion, mythology, and ritual) is his contention that the Hawaiians were not inferior to other major cultures of the world. "We are a people with a profound capacity for experiencing that which is extraordinary, sacred, or *kapu* (taboo); a people with an abiding faith in the shared divinity—the *mana* (spiritual power) of man, nature and the cosmos beyond; a people able from the primal past to explain through myth, symbolism, and ritual, the transcendent realities of life; a people 'in sync' with the rhythms of the universe; a people who see time not as a linear measurement but as a qualitative experience; a people with an unsurpassed sense of place and the unity of things" (497).

One of the first conclusions from Kanahale's review is that although they were isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and shut off from intellectual, economic, and political contact with most of the world, Hawaiians before 1778 dealt with many of the same social, economic, and political issues, the same philosophical questions about the meaning of life and earth.

Kanahale takes to task what he describes as the mistaken interpretation of aloha as the Hawaiian way of avoiding confrontation by

such writers as Francine du Plessis Gray in her book, *Hawaii: The Sugar-Coated Fortress* (1972). “Until commentators on Hawaiian developments, whether they come from inside our culture or outside it, truly understand Hawaiian values, their conclusions will be as full of errors as those of du Plessis Gray,” he asserts.

In his second section on space, time, and place, Kanahale develops another idea central to the concept of aloha: that the people are but stewards of the *aina* (land: that which feeds) and *kai*, trusted to take care of the islands on behalf of the gods, our ancestors, ourselves, and our children. This idea, which flies in the face of Western concepts, is best stated in Kamehameha III’s declaration which now serves as the motto of the fiftieth state, “Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono” (the life of the land is preserved in righteousness). The land will surely be lost forever if we who have been entrusted with its care should betray our leadership.

Concerning leadership and destiny, Kanahale writes that the Hawaiians idealize leaders who have shown such tested qualities as caring, humility, integrity, wisdom, and courage. “We have made aloha a central value, but one no more elevated than hospitality, generosity, graciousness, harmony, industry, spirituality, helpfulness and excellence” (497).

As for technological lessons from the Hawaiian past that can be applied to the universal condition of “the technological animal,” it is that clearly the responsibility for making decisions that affect the fate of man and his tools must be returned to the control of man. Disputing charges that the Hawaiians were ignorant, Kanahale notes that the Hawaiians had at least half of the world’s six basic machines: the lever, wedge, and inclined plane before Cook’s arrival. The book also provides a list of the “peaks of the Hawaiian culture” designed to give Hawaiian audiences an ethnic lift. The items from such recognized authorities on Hawaiian and Polynesian cultures as Kenneth Emory, E. S. C. Handy, and Peter Buck include canoes, featherwork, wooden bowls, gourd bowls and bottles, twine baskets, sleeping mats, bark cloth or kapa, musical instruments, chants, agriculture, fishing equipment and fishing ponds, sports and pastimes, religion and dance or hula instruments.

In his fourth section, Kanahale provides insights for modern economists who shun intangible values because they are imprecise and unquantifiable from a more mystical point-of-view that would insist that intangibles must be a part of our understanding. In sum, when Hawaiians think about the ratio of relative abundance to limited wants, it is not just a simple one-to-one material relationship, but a psychological, social, and spiritual relationship as well. The relationship is not only an abundance of natural resources fulfilling economic

needs, but also noneconomic wants. Such wants may vary from the finite to the infinite—a happy home; a loving relationship with a spouse, child, relative, or friend; a certain kind of recognition from the *'ohana*, the *konohiki* (manager of surplus goods), or even a high chief; a deeper spiritual rapport with nature, communion with an *'amukua* (family guardian spirit), and so on (331).

Kanahele contends that the true test of Hawaiian socioeconomic values now, as it has always been, is whether or not we take care of ourselves. The self-sufficient *'ohana* survived as an institution not because of any great technological or organizational capability, but because of its ideals based on a cluster of social values: generosity, reciprocity, *kokua* (help, assistance), *laulima* (cooperation), industry, loyalty, and giving.

“We may not live any more in an *ahupua'a* or under the rule of an *ali'i* born with ‘divine right’ but these values are important and applicable in our modern political and economic world as they were back then, in the years before the westerners came. They are timeless and universal, and they speak not only to Hawaiians but to all people” (393).

Despite concerns over such problems as unemployment, a low spot on the economic totem pole, and the fact that for many Hawaiians there is still a haunting ghost of inferiority, Kanahele concludes on an optimistic note. Because of the Hawaiian renaissance and a growing positive self-awareness, Kanahele believes that chances of resolving problems are better than ever because more Hawaiians are better educated, better trained, better organized, better informed of their needs and resources, better at managing within the system, and better prepared spiritually. Thus, the present challenge offers an unparalleled opportunity to *laulima* and *kokua*, to share in a collective pride as Hawaiians that no other generation has felt in this century.

Kanahele's optimistic words to the Hawaiians also contain the same challenge to others with primal values and for those of us with a lighter shade of skin and set of genes. Through Kanahele's fine book we can learn a lot about Hawaiians and the elusive aloha spirit of loving and sharing for all ethnic groups.