

SOME HAWAIIAN RELATIONSHIP TERMS RE-EXAMINED

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Disorganization appears to be the keyword which describes the status of present day Hawaiian family life. This impression is gained from a cursory observation of the situation. However, upon closer scrutiny, one finds important elements of the ancient culture still functioning, and the Hawaiians' attitudes toward them very positive. The importance of understanding the old Hawaiian family system insofar as it persists today can scarcely be over-estimated. Especially is this true for social workers who are daily confronted with questions of policy involving the older order.

In a previous number of this journal*, an article described a few of these customs that have *died hard*. In this brief article, an effort will be made to further interpret and clarify these customs.

Such terms as *ohana*, *hanai*, *hookama*, *ohua*, and *punalua*, which are among those most frequently encountered by the social worker, can only be understood in the light of the old cooperative principle of Hawaiian life known as *lima-lau*, literally, "many hands." The *ohana* consisted of members of a clan related by blood and tracing descent from common ancestors. This was the unit of organization, and may be referred to as the "large family." At the head of this organization, there was the *Alii-nui*, or high chief. The Hawaiians did not think of their leaders as "kings" in the western sense, but more on the order of a patriarch as in the Orient.

This large unit was composed of smaller groups made up of those directly related to each other and having common parents. These smaller groups were commonly referred to as *ohana-pono-i*, literally "one's very own relatives or immediate family." It has been stated that the Hawaiians had no term for family in the modern American sense and that the nearest approximation was the word *ohua*, which Andrews describes but excluding the parents. *Hanai* has been defined as "foster child, one taken into the family and raised as a member thereof." According to Handy, quoted by Glick, "relationship in formal adoption was indicated by modifying the word for "parent" or "child" by "made-child" (*hookama*). The fostering relationship was indicated by "feeding" (*hanai*); thus, *makua hanai*, means "foster parent." Glick continues: "a child might be made *hookama* without coming to live with the adopting family, in which case the adopting parents would not be *makua hanai*. On the other hand, any waif taken in and fed and thus becoming a part of the *ohua* (household) referred to the parents in the household as *makua hanai*. We know little more about the system than that it exists, although we hear nothing of the first type of adoption of the *hookama*."

In early Hawaiian traditions, the *Alii-nui* or leige-lord was

* Doris Lorden Glick, "Problems of Culture in Social Work in Hawaii", Social Process in Hawaii, III, pp. 8-15.

referred to by the people as their *hanai* and they, in turn, were his *ohua*. The *ohua* were designated as either *hoainā*, tenants placed upon the land by agreement, or *kupa*, hereditary tenants. The word *hanai*, to the Hawaiians, meant more than just "the fostering relationship." It implied "a sympathetic embrace toward one, whose very existence depended upon that embrace."

In giving a child away, usually at birth, in order that the child might become attached to the new parents, the mother would utter the following words, "*make a ola, kukae a naau*," designating "the child is yours, never to be returned." If, after a time, the original parents (*makua pono-i*) wished the child to be returned to them, then the Hawaiians believed that since faith had been broken, the child would die. If, however, the child returned of his own accord, then he was referred to by the foster parents as "*kukae ka ka hanai*," the appellation given to "an ungrateful and unappreciative child, after all the care and attention that had been given to it." Children were often promised before birth, especially by one sister to another if the second had no children of her own, and especially if it was asked for. The Hawaiians believed that to refuse such a request would bring bad luck to the child throughout life.

The foster child became a part of the new household (*ohana*) if the foster-parents were also blood relatives; otherwise, it remained a part of the *ohua*, or those that were attached to the household unit but not related in any way blood to the *akana*, or family proper. The Hawaiians were very careful as to the parentage of a *keiki-hanai* or foster-child and did not "foster indiscriminately" as is often believed.

Household guests not related to the family proper, were referred to as *ohana makamaka*. They were allowed to share with the family whatever it had to offer, and were different from the *ohua* in that they were not compelled to do any work. They became the *aiālo*, privileged to eat at the same eating place as the *ohana*. This was a high honor bestowed upon the guest in ancient Hawaii. The outgrowth of this practice has come to be called "calabash" relationship, in which one family claims relationship to another because in the past, their common ancestors ate together out of the same calabash of poi. A guest in a Hawaiian household today is still referred to as *ohana makamaka* (a face-to-face relative).

Today, there is often indiscriminate adoption without knowing the background of the child. It is likewise a common practice today to have the grandparents (*kupuna*) foster the children. This is a carry-over from ancient times, as the grandparents were said to have more time on their hands, and more experience. This practice gave the young parents more time in which to perform their everyday tasks.

The term *hookama*, designating "legal adoption" in our modern terminology, is not clearly understood as to its ancient usage as witness the statement of Glick. This form of relationship existed in order to retain the power in a ruling house, and, most important of all, to keep the blood undefiled and so to perpetuate

this *mana* or psychic force in the clan. If a chief had no direct heir, he adopted one, but in doing so he had to choose from the closest of kin, children of his brother or sister only. In making a child "*hookama*", he passed on to it all the prerogatives, rights, and privileges of his own high position, in order that it might succeed him to leadership. In the case of the *hanai* relationship, even in the same family, the rights of the fostering parent or parents are not necessarily transmitted to the *keiki-hanai*, or foster-child. *Hookama* literally, "to cause to be made" is in essence, an elevating instrument. This form of adoption was also used in another way. For example, two brothers of royal birth might choose mates. The elder, designated as *haku* and therefore possessing the right of leadership in his own generation let us say married a woman of low caste. His son, if born before that of his brother, became the *haku* within the new generation. If the younger brother married a woman of high caste and his son were born after his brother's son, this child, being younger, paid respect to his cousin. But, his grandparents, in order to give this second boy a higher place in his generation, might adopt him and thus bestow upon him all the rights and privileges enjoyed by themselves. This act immediately placed the boy on the same social level as his father, becoming, as it were, his father's brother. Although the son of the older brother was still the *haku*, the son of the younger brother automatically became the leader in his generation. This is done to retain the blood purity. Today, it is done, not for purity of blood, but for economic reasons.

The *punalua* relationship is seldom understood today. In ancient Hawaii, there were two interpretations. The first designated the relationship between a man's younger brothers and his wife, or that between a woman's younger sisters and her husband; the second designated the unfaithfulness of either marriage partner. In the first instance, the relationship worked only one way; while it was alright for a woman's spouse to take any one of her younger sisters to himself, or for a man's wife to take to herself the younger brothers of her husband, an older sister could have nothing to do with her younger sister's husband, and likewise, an older brother could not touch his younger brother's wife.

Today, the term is used more as one of disrespect, as "a rival," or as "indicating unfaithfulness to one's own." The term usually used is *manuahi* (meaning "extra"), as *wahine-manuahi*, a female paramour; *kane-manuahi*, a male paramour. The word *kaikoeke* means "an in-law", as *kaikoeke-wahine*, sister-in-law, and *kaikoeke-kane*, brother-in-law. The Hawaiians have a saying as follows: "*O ke kai, ka hale ia e ka puna; o ka puna, ka hale ia e ke kai.*" meaning, literally, "The sea is the home of the coral; the coral is the home of the sea." The real meaning denotes a play on the word *kai* for *kaikoeke*, and *puna* for *punalua*. An interesting development of the *punalua* relationship, somewhat akin to the levirate among the Hebrews was the obligation of

younger brothers or sisters to marry the mate of an older deceased sibling.

The *hanai* or fostering of children is practiced extensively among the Hawaiians today, in most cases, regardless of blood relationship. Not infrequently the social worker hears the statement, "I gave my first child to my younger sister, because she did not have one of her own, and it was promised to her before birth." Households have been broken up because of lack of understanding, as the following case will reveal:

Upon the death of his wife, the client's child had been turned over to its grandmother. The child grew up with the knowledge and belief that its grandmother was its own mother. One day, the client came to his mother's home, and demanded the child. His mother told him of the Hawaiian saying, "Kukae ka ka hanai," implying that after she had undergone so much toil and labor in order to bring up her moopuna or grandchild as her very own, the child is grossly ungrateful and unappreciative to want to go with its father. Literally, the phrase used by the client's mother means, "the foster-child is indeed like dung," which was interpreted by the father as an insult to his child.

The *hookama*, or legal adoption of children is carried on today, not so much to preserve status, but rather to insure economic security.

A client's wealthy mother had legally adopted her elder daughter's children, which action placed them on the same level as her own children, enjoying the same income as provided by law. Her son wished to get married and thought that since he was her own son, he should receive a higher monthly allowance than his adopted brothers and sisters. He could not see why his sister's children should receive as much as he did.

The *punalua form* of relationship, especially the modern version in which one partner is unfaithful to the other, is widespread in Hawaii. Social workers are familiar with the type of client who, although legally married to one woman, lives in a common-law relationship with another woman. The Hawaiians refer to the relationship of the two women as *punalua*.

However, not very many social workers are familiar with the following type of situation!

When one of my clients was fourteen years old, his father requested him to live with an older brother who was married. Not long afterward, the older brother died, and the father lay down the law that the younger brother must marry his brother's widow, or live with, and care for her. She is very much older than he is, and they do not seem to be able to get along. Neither care to marry the other, let alone live together, but the 81 year old father who owns the home has spoken. When he was approached as to the reason for his stubbornness in this situation, he replied, "it is the custom among the Hawaiians that a man's younger brother marry his widow so that she be taken care of for the rest of her life, even if they both cannot get along together. I have given them a home in which to live, and it seems to me that they should make the most of it." This client goes out with other women around his age, and when his brother's widow hears about his activities,

she flies into a rage.

Many more examples may be cited, but the few already mentioned are sufficient to illustrate the varied forms of relationship among Hawaiians which still persist and confront the social case-worker in Hawaii.

In ancient Hawaii, the above forms of relationship made for unity and solidarity; today, they make for apparent disorganization.

THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM, 1778-1854

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(The University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1938)

A comprehensive, chronological picture of the effects of Western civilization upon the culture and social organization of a primitive and backward Hawaiian race can be seen in this well-documented and carefully prepared history of pre-Republican Hawaii.

At the time of the arrival of Captain James Cook at Waimea, Kauai, on January 18, 1778, the Hawaiians were practicing a simple agricultural economy and were organized politically under a feudal autocracy sustained by a rigid, ceremonial code—the *kapu* system. The latter was a system of rules which regulated in minute detail the lives of people in the different classes of society and gave religious sanction to the subordination of the lower to the higher, thus helping to maintain an aristocratic type of government and a caste system.

The discovery of Hawaii precipitated the contact with European cultures whose impact upon the indigenous people brought disastrous biological and social changes. The *kapu* system was abolished in 1819, paving the way for the arrival of Christian missionaries. The introduction of diseases, the exploitation of human labor in the early sandal-wood and whaling industries, and the breakdown of their social organization, contributed to the decline in the native population.

By 1840 the Hawaiian race was dying out and, and succeeding in its place was a growing number of mixed-bloods.—I. M.