

I was taken at birth by my grandmother, Katherine Keakaokala Kanahale, to be the chosen one for the hula kapu. I was reared in the area of Marconi Wireless Station in Kahuku, and it was there that I received my hula kapu training until age eight. To prepare for my training, Tutukane and Tutuwahine went to the mountains and picked certain greens. A room within their home was set aside that no one could enter. Within this room the greens were hung without water on chicken wire upon a kuahu.

On the day that I was born, tutukane selected a black pig and brought it to the kuahu. Tutuwahine would begin to chant and slowly the animal would grow drowsier and drowsier. The pig would fall into a deep sleep and in its sleep it would pass away. A weapon could not be used to kill this sacrifice. Accompanied by a chant, I was given a taste of certain portions of the animal: the brain, the front legs for my hands, and the back legs for my feet. This ailolo prepared my body for the training to come. Absolutely none of the hulas or chants were put down in writing so the ailolo served to heighten my senses and sharpen my memory. Whatever was not consumed was wrapped in greens and taken to the ocean.

For eight years all I did was live the hula. Hawaiian chants were chanted to me like nursery rhymes are sung to other children. Throughout the day and the night all I did was practice and study chants. A hula kapu student has to be chosen before birth. I could not be touched by unclean hands, and my meals had to be prepared at the kuahu in the halau by tutuwahine alone. The mullet that I ate had to come from a pond in Marconi Wireless and not from the ocean. The pigs that were fed to me could not be fed swill but only the best of grain. They also had to be spotlessly clean so they were raised in a cement pond by tutukane.

When I came of age for school, I had to be taken to school. I was not allowed to share any part of my lunch with my friends nor was I allowed to exchange any food. Because of my kapu training, I was not allowed to play with the neighborhood children. If I had a cold and went outside, I had to carry a ti leaf with me. I was told to spit only in the ti leaf and then to come home and have tutuwahine dispose of it.

At the age of eight, the child knows right from wrong and the kapu is oki. The day before my uniki, tutuwahine graduated me in front of the kuahu. All that I had learned I performed before the kuahu. I took a vow in front of the kuahu that I would never again practice the kapu rituals that I had learned. Accompanied by a chant, the kuahu was taken down, wrapped in dried mats along with my ipu, uliuli and costumes, and taken to Makapuu. Tutuwahine went down to the beach and began to chant. The ocean was very calm and suddenly one wave appeared. Tutukane threw the kuahu greens and implements into the wave and it all disappeared. At the point of the cliff, near the ocean, two ladies appeared in kikepas, one in red, one in yellow. This sign meant that I was accepted from tutuwahine and from that hour on the kapu was oki.

Tutuwahine and her assistant, Lui Kapele Kaio, were students of Niulaa and Kamawai so the next day every well-known teacher in Hawaii came to see what tutu had passed on through me. Among them were Ilalaole, Kao'o and every well-known kumu of that time. The year was 1926 and I was the last hula kapu student to be graduated from tutu Keaka.

After my uniki, I entertained with tutu at Hawaiian Town and at the military clubs around the island. At nineteen I stepped aside and began to train students but I have discontinued my hula for a long time now. The hula kahiko that was taught during my time is dying away now. People cannot recognize what is authentic or newly created in the hula anymore. I will not perform my hula ilio or hula kupe because I'm afraid of what people will do to it. People don't understand it anymore. I performed it in front of elderly Hawaiians who had never seen hula ilio before. This hula is the sacred temple dance of the dog and the people laughed and called it crazy hula.

The reason my knowledge of the hula has survived is the hula kapu. Nothing was written down but yet I can remember every mele, every hula motion, every chant that I learned at the kuahu.

Eleanor Hiram Hoke

Eleanor Hiram Hoke is the the third child of Moses Kealoha Hiram and Kekaikuihala Keanui. In the 1920's her father Moses Hiram held the fishing rights for Laie, Oahu. *Konohiki*

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