

## THE SOVEREIGN NATION OF HAWAII



In 1998, the nation of Hawai`i entered the international community of sovereigns - 105 years after the United States of America had colonized the Hawai`ian islands.

The reborn nation of Hawai`i encompasses three major islands in the Hawai`ian archipelago, while the United States governs the other five islands in a cooperative, protectorate relationship.

The sovereign nation of Hawai`i is comprised of Mokupuni O Keawe, or the Big Island, Moloka`i and Kaho`olawe - in addition to ceded lands and Hawai`ian homelands on the other five islands.

Native Hawai`ians of any blood quantum are citizens of Hawai`i. They are entitled, through an international treaty between the neighboring countries, to dual citizenship of Hawai`i and of the United States of America.

Thus, citizens of Hawai`i may elect to have either or both citizenships. Dual citizens pay taxes to both nations, including U.S. Social Security, state and county taxes, while receiving all entitlements, such as Social Security retirement and Medicare.

Hawai`i citizens who forgo U.S. citizenship, taxes and entitlements must seek a visa for any long term stay in the U.S. islands - except in homeland and ceded-land areas.

Citizens of the sovereign nation of Hawai`i must join in a covenant, or "Blueprint," which (1) states that all citizens must abide by the "Blueprint" for a period of two generations - approximately thirty-six years; (2) requires that during this gestation period of nationhood, there is a concerted effort to renew and revitalize the indigenous language and cultural practices; and (3) broadly outlines these cultural practices.

Governance in Hawai`i follows the decentralized, more purely democratic format conceived by the Protect Kaho`olawe `Ohana - that is, most decisions are made at a grass-roots level, among members of the respective ahupua`a.

An ahupua`a is a land division which runs from the mountain to the sea, often in a pie-wedge configuration.

Under the decentralized governance of the ahupua`a system, all members of an ahupua`a gather weekly for a community meeting. The residents - from old-timers to youngsters - are encouraged to voice their opinions, and everyone participates in decision making.

Above all, an atmosphere of mutual respect prevails. This exemplifies "ho`oponopono," which is at once a state of, and a way to achieve, familial accord. In this case, the family is the entire ahupua`a.

Deference is accorded to those persons who, because of their mana (or spiritual power), emerge as leaders. The ahupua`a may send representatives to governmental bodies that make national decisions on, for example, levying of international tariffs.

There is a system of cooperative exchange within the ahupua`a on a need (vs. a want) basis. For example, the shore dwellers exchange fish, shellfish and limu for taro and sweet potatoes from the farmers, or for canoes and paddles fashioned from woods from the uplands.

As in ancient Hawai`i, the sovereign nation of Hawai`i is a values-oriented society.

The underpinning of the sovereign nation of Hawai`i lies in the traditional values, such as malama, or care; aloha, or love; and `ihi, or respect.

Malama is a part of Hawai`ians' genetic memory. Malama one's self and one's surroundings: Care for the self through healthful food, regular exercise, hard work, discipline, pure thought. Care for everything around one through conservation, recycling, sharing, operating out of need instead of want. These constitute pono, or right action, in Hawai`i.

Traditionally, a Hawai`ian would invite a passerby into her or his home and ask if the visitor is hungry before even asking the stranger's name. This behavior epitomizes malama.

Thus, malama (caring for one's family, neighbors, co-workers, the land, the environment, one's self), along with aloha and `ihi, is a value that propels Hawai`i and its ideology, governance, laws and commerce.

Two other preeminent concepts in the nation of Hawai`i are spirituality and `ohana. Spirituality is the touchstone ... the foundation ... the axis mundi of the Hawai`ian experience.

For example, all gatherings and tasks in Hawai`i start with a pule, or prayer, in Hawai`ian.

Also, there is great reverence for heiau (outdoor places of worship found in every ahupua`a on every island)

and for the heiau's kahu, or caretakers, historians and researchers.

In the formative days of the sovereign nation, there was a great effort to rediscover and rededicate the heiau - the fountainheads of Hawai`ian culture.

The kahu, or keepers of the heiau, merit special respect. Part of their mission is to document and teach their craft and rituals to na `opio - selected young people.

`Ohana is the binder in Hawai`i. The concept of `ohana cements relationships, interactions and so-called contracts. `Ohana is a motivating element for most action.

Interpersonal relationships hinge on the sense of familial and communal `ohana, or family. Everyone, it seems, is related, or wants to be related, or acts as if they are related. Thus, the terms hanai (adopted) and calabash (pretend relative) take on added significance. A hanai child receives the same love and affection as the natural child, because they are considered to be alike; the same could be said of calabash relations.

Therefore, spirituality ... `ohana ... mutual respect underpin the society and web of interrelationships in the fledgling nation of Hawai`i.

On the international stage, one of Hawai`i's principal identities is as a role model, consultant and negotiation center for emerging nations to decolonize in an effective, culturally appropriate and nonviolent way.

These diplomatic activities also provide a source of revenue in global commerce

Another revenue source stems from the nation's cultural retreat programs, which last up to six months. People from other countries pay for a unique, exclusive "immersion experience" in Hawai`ian values, culture and language.

The flag of Hawai`i is a tricolor standard in earth green, sea blue and sun gold, with the motto: "Ua mau ke ea o ka `aina i ka pono" - The life of the land is preserved in righteousness.

There is an interisland sailing canoe fleet called "Na Wa`a Ikaika." Citizens are eligible for training, and all trained and qualified canoe sailors are entitled to two round-trip passes per summer month. Interisland canoe sailing strengthens participants and gives them an intimate experience of the elements.

Hawai`i owns and operates network television station KALO, which produces and airs programs on Hawai`ian culture, language, horticulture and entertainment.

The nation also produces and distributes historical documentaries and videos on nonviolent, culturally appropriate decolonization. The United Nations uses the films as educational tools for emerging nations.

Another international activity is "Na Pa`ani O Ka Pakipika," or the Pacific Olympic Games. The Games feature traditional Polynesian sports and athletic contests - especially ocean-related competitions in fishing, diving, canoeing, sailing and swimming. Also, music, dance, drama, fine arts, writing, poetry and culinary competitions. Hawai`i hosts the biennial games at its multi-venue Puna arts and athletic complex on the Big Island.

In conclusion, the nation of Hawai`i embraces more than 200,000 Hawai`ians and part-Hawai`ians. Not for naught are they Polynesians. "Poly" means "many" and the essence of Polynesian cultures is many - many gods, many traditions, many interpretations and, inevitably, many visions of sovereignty.

- Ka`imiloa 3/30/94

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