

THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR OWN NATIVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS

By Henry Kekahuna

(Transcribed by Kekuewa Kikiloi)

To truly understand the native language and culture one must be born in it. One scientist admitted that it takes a native to understand his own culture. As for the technique of Anthropology it can be learned from almost any university or college. The trouble with this technique as a prime scientific requirement is not only that it changes the movement of the times, thus causing confusion, through the true culture and language and culture of a people, with which it deals, remains the same, but that with all their technique scientist cannot but fail to understand the fine points and deep significance of a language and culture into which they were not born, and to which they are practically total strangers. Through this cold-blooded approach that vouchsafes recognition and position to the scientist, but that completely denies them to sons and daughters of the soil who are not scientific, but have been born in the culture and lived in it all their lives, the general public of the world is deluded with much untruth that might have been avoided through unscientific approach by those who really know the culture.

Fortunately, however there have been many men and women of the white race who have lived for many years in close association with the Hawaiian people, and have thus, in spite of many natural mistakes, been in particularly good position to truthfully record much of value. These have dedicated their lives to the preservation of Hawaiiiana without remuneration, with scant recognition, and except for rare cases, without the support of scientific standing. For such unselfish men and women, who have been rescued much of the knowledge of my Hawaiian people from oblivion; I feel deep gratitude and highest regard. I can mention here but a few of the most outstanding. First and foremost there is our great Hawaiian and Polynesian scholar Abraham Fornander. Some others in this bright galaxy are William Ellis, Lorrin, Andrews, Dibble, Pogue, Dr. Jon Rae, of Mu'o-le'a, Hana, Mau, W. D. Alexander, Nathaniel B. and Joseph S. Emerson, Thomas G. Thrum W. D. Westervelt, William H. Rice, of Kaua'i, Martha Beckwith, John F. Stokes, and Rev. Henry Judd, to whom we are also indebted, are at present time doing much to preserve Hawaiiiana.

After more than a hundred years of effort to solve the mysteries of the Polynesian Race, and after spending millions of dollars for the purpose, scientist after scientist, because he knew practically nothing of the native language and culture, has only added more confusion to the subject.

“Why don't Hawaiians do something to preserve their own culture?” it has often been asked. To the large extent the question is justified. A considerable number of highly educated Hawaiians best able to do this have failed to place their knowledge on record as have Malo, Kamakau, Hale'ole, John 'I'i, Kepelino, and a few others.

There is another answer to the question, however, and that is that the white man does not give the Hawaiian an equal chance. If he endeavors to do a work of preservation on his

own initiative he is discouraged and denied required support. As for the white man, he goes to the university, studies the teaching of his own culture for years, acquires letters after his name, and graduates as an Anthropologist, with a university degree, though most likely he knows practically nothing about anything native. But the world of course, believes the scientist with his imposing degree, and disbelieves and disregards the degreeless native who knows much of his ancient culture and mother tongue. No matter how much he may know, or how deservedly he may merit such a degree as Doctor of the Hawaiian Language and Culture, for instance, such an honor would never be bestowed on him. [L L L L]
[SEP SEP]

Through possession of a university degree the door is open to the white man to place record, unchallenged, interpretations of the native language that are not the truth. But he smugly feels that the only trustworthy record is his own, recorded in his way, which he calls “scientific,” even though it may be exceedingly in error. If the native is willing to “cooperate” by handing over to the stranger scientist with the degree everything that he knows, and which his most dear to his heart, he takes the chance of having everything that he says misunderstood and distorted, and is apt to get but a mere “thank you,” while the man with the degree receives most of the credit plus a good salary. Therefore mere crumbs of information, and probably large amounts of misinformation, are obtained from potentially the best informants. [L L L L]
[SEP SEP]

Whenever any legislative appropriation is provided for the preservation for any phase of native culture our “powers that be” see to it that it is used if possible to import from the mainland some literary or scientifically educated stranger with the magic sesame of a university degree, no matter how deeply ignorant he may be of everything native Hawaiian. And not only is it our Hawaiian people who are disregarded. It is also our local white people of Hawaiian mind, who have lived among the natives for many years, gained considerable knowledge of their language and culture, and striven unaided to save all possible of the vanishing native lore of their Islands that year after year is left to perish little heeded. [L L L L]
[SEP SEP]

No legislative appropriation in which money is involved is permitted to fall into the hands of the Hawaiian people for the employment of outstanding members of their own race in their legitimate culture-field of their own ancestors. [L L L L]
[SEP SEP]

I have no selfish end in view. I only state facts that have been known for years.