

SPIRITS SPEAKING THROUGH MEDIUMS.

Spirits ('*uhane*) of various types—gods (*akua*), ancestral guardians ('*aumakua*), disembodied souls endowed with *mana* by worship ('*unihipili*), and individual nature-spirits (*kupua*)—could “possess” or enter into a human being and control the body and its faculties.

Noho, meaning “to sit” or “to dwell,” is applied to the temporary dwelling-with or sitting-upon a chosen person who is the medium (*haka*) for a particular spirit, which may be an '*uhane* (disembodied human soul), an '*aumakua* (ancestral guardian) or an *akua* (god). The characterization of the person, when the spirit is in possession of the medium's body and faculties as *haka*, implies the conception that the spirit *perches upon* the medium rather than entering by way of the mouth into the stomach (as in the Marquesas, for example), for the word *haka* means literally a bird's perch, or a rack to hang things on. Nevertheless, the spirit is heard speaking through the mouth of its *haka*, and who it is that is speaking can be recognized sometimes by quality of voice. In Hawaiian the *haka* is, in fact, referred to as the “speaking-mouth” (*waha-'olelo*) of the spirit.

The *haka* was chosen by the spirit, or spirits, to serve as “speaking-mouth.” The spirit, be it '*uhane*, '*aumakua*, or *akua*, was, in family seances, always one to whose lineage the *haka* belonged: that is to say, the spirit was a relative. It is said that in the old days there was no lineage, or '*ohana*, which did not have someone who served as a channel of communication. We know of no Hawaiian today who is a true *haka*. We are, however, fortunate in having very full notes describing this phase of Hawaiian psychism from an old lady of Ka-'u derivation who had served as *haka* for her '*ohana* for many years before she died.

Some *akua* imposed strict *kapu* of one sort or another, others did not. The *kapu* would forbid the eating of particular foods. The *haka* referred to above ate only vegetable foods, and even vegetables like the varieties of taro and banana whose sap was red, suggestive of blood, were forbidden. The *kino-lau* of the *akua* were of course *kapu*. The person who helped the *haka* (*kanaka lawelawe*) was subject to the same rules. These were positive also in the matter of colours, suitable offerings, etc. White is Pele's colour, pink is Hi'iaka's, red is Kapo's. And it was necessary

for the *haka* to avoid behaviour that would be offensive to an *akua*; cursing, malicious talk, adultery, stealing. The *haka* would find herself deserted if the *akua* was angered.

The spirit would refer to the *haka* as *iwi* (bone)—i.e., a solid or substantial thing (*he mea pa'a*) upon which to sit or into which to enter. Where the *haka* lived and slept was *kapu*. No menstruating person might come there. A woman could become a *haka* only after menopause. There must be no filth, no treading about. The *haka's* clothing was sacred, and must be kept clean and free from contact with pollution.

A helper (*kanaka lawelawe*) was charged with the duty of setting the mat on which the *haka* sat, preparing the cup of '*awa*, knowing the proper clothing for robing the *haka* when the *akua* was to come. This attendant was also the one who prayed (*kanaka pule*), inviting the spirit, and the one who transmitted the message or carried out the commands. These weighty duties must be performed by a man, a pre-adolescent girl, or a woman past menopause.

In more recent times the place for the work (*papa hana*) would be a table and a spread of trade cloth, and glass tumblers, for liquor. The tumblers, after the seance, were thrown into the sea or buried, and the cloth or mats were folded or rolled and put away in a high, clean place. But the true old Hawaiian setting was a *kapa* mat, especially plaited. There was always the '*awa* bowl (*kanoa 'awa*). On the mat was laid the mantle of bark cloth (*uhi kapa*), its colour depending on the *akua's* preference. In the middle of the *kapa* were laid *la-'i* (ti-leaf)—one, two crossed at right angles, or three, perhaps, with points to centre and stems out; or four braided flat like a mat. On this was set the bowl of '*awa*. Then all was sprinkled with salt water with *olena* (tumeric) in it, for purification.

When the *akua* would come upon the *haka* he (or she) would fall into a deep sleep, like a person under ether. He knew nothing, heard nothing. Just before falling into this state a *haka* was conscious of some kind of weight upon the shoulders before being entirely “covered” (unconscious). Some *haka* have a sort of quivering at the time of covering. But while the '*uhane* was in possession, there was a change of facial expression. If the *akua* were one youthful in body, then the *haka* looked youthful, even though the *haka* be old. If the *haka* were young and the *akua* coming had

the body of an old woman or of an old man, the *haka* would exhibit the feebleness and shakiness of the aged spirit.

There are several kinds of "possession" (*noho*), in which gods (*akua*) or guardian spirits (*aumakua*) speak to the family through the *haka*. An *'unihipili* (the disembodied spirit of a person who has died, which has been endowed with psychic potency or *mana*, by means of food offerings and prayer, *ho'omanamana*) may "sit" upon a relative who is a *haka* for the purpose of explaining the cause of some trouble that is afflicting the house. Such an *'unihipili* would be a beneficent *'unihipili*. These *'unihipili* were beneficent or malevolent, depending upon the good or evil motives and purposes and practices of its *kahu*, or keeper (the person who has endowed it with *mana*).

There is another type of possession that is personal rather than familial. But it might be a family problem, if, for instance, the adhering spirit excited the jealousy of a parent or spouse. This is the *noho ho'ohihi* (covetous, or adhering (possession)). Some disembodied human soul (*'uhane*) or a nature spirit (*kupua*) embodied in rock, tree, or the like, may take a fancy to a person and enter into that person, who will then behave strangely, without being seriously ill. If a *kahuna* who knows about such matters is consulted, he will induce the *kupua* to speak through the person "possessed" in order to find out what it covets. If it is companionship, then the person "possessed" knows that he has a friend who will help him when in need, and all is well.²³

²³ In the *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*, Third Series, Memoir, Vol. 6, No. 1, Part 1 (Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1919-1920), pp. 112-114, edited by Thomas G. Thrum, there is an inexplicit reference to spirit possession, termed there *ho'onohonoho akua*, induced by a *kahuna makani* (wind [spirit invisible like wind] -expert), or spirit dispatcher, a practitioner skilled in diagnosing the cause of sickness, detecting theft, and the like. *Ho'onoho* is the true term for induced spirit-possession; while the reduplicated *ho'onohonoho* signifies "pretended possession," a word commonly applied by missionaries with disparaging implications. (M.K.P.) It is mentioned in David Malo's *Hawaiian Antiquities* (Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1903, Dr. N. B. Emerson, Editor), pp. 135-141 and 155 *et seq.*, in relation to witchcraft. The Fornander and Malo references are clearly sources descriptive of pre-discovery practice in Hawai'i (E.S.C.H.).

In "Hawaiian Customs and Beliefs Relating to Sickness and Death" by Laura C. Green and Martha Warren Beckwith (Am. Anthropologist, N.S., vol. 28, 1926, pp. 176-208) there is a brief account of mediumship in historic times (pp. 204-208).

There are other types of mediumship besides the simple *noho* or "dwelling." *Noho* is the "covering" entirely of the thought of the medium by the *'uhane*, as described. *Ho'oulu* is a definite lighting upon a *haka* for the purpose of "causing to grow" (in knowledge). *Ulu-kau*, on the other hand, is the unexplained growth of knowledge in a person without visible "possession," until he has acquired prophetic powers and the gift of interpretation. Another type is *kihei-pua* (the "mantle of flowers"), which is, precisely, the strengthening of the physical body by the *akua* for purposes of guidance.

This latter involves not merely guidance in the sense of revelation. It is the animation of the body of a person without "covering" the mind. If a feeble old woman receives the gift of *kihei-pua* she becomes as lively as a young girl. If there was work to be done that she was unskilled in, or even unused to seeing done, she became skilful in that work, through this good gift of animation from an *akua* who loved his *'ohana*. Although aged and feeble to behold, yet there was strength in the limbs to farm, to fish, to dance, to travel far. Young people might weary, but the old man or woman kept on. If the *'uhane kihei-pua* is with one who is sick he can get up out of bed to do some special needful task as though there were no sickness in his body. Only when the *'uhane* has left him does he feel his body to be weak again. The sickness is never made worse by this moving about.

Because of this gift of *kihei-pua* many strange things have been seen. For example, there was an old woman whose son-in-law had died. Then her daughter also died, leaving their small children to the old woman's care. The youngest was an infant in arms. The grandmother was saddened because there was no milk for him, and any nursing mother lived far away. She prayed for her breasts to yield milk for her grandchild: and it was seen that her breasts did flow and it was she herself who nursed the baby until he grew big. The *kahuna* of that community recognized an *'uhane kihei-pua* that dwelt with and helped that old woman.