

Title: Conversations

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Author: qOLOp

Date: 1138194077

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The Gods and Goddesses

The ancient Hawaiians had a polytheistic religion. Over the years, they developed a system of gods and goddesses of various rank and form. This system of gods and goddesses was closely tied to the Hawaiian class system. The Hawaiians had main gods, local gods, and different types of gods.

The Hawaiians had six male gods and two female gods. Included in the sacred eight was the god, Keawe. Keawe is believed to be the original spirit present at the beginning of time. He is the ancestor of all of the gods. Kāne is his son, who is a conduit for his father's power and Lord of the West. Nāwahine, daughter of Keawe in female form, is the goddess of the Moon and the Holy Mother of Heaven or the Moon Goddess. Kāne and Nāwahine had three sons: Lono, Kanaloa, and Kū. Lono was the god of the East and fertility, Kanaloa was the god of the South Pacific Ocean. Kū was the god of the North and War. The gods Kū and Wākea were the rulers of nature. Keawe, Kāne, Na'Vahine, Lono, Kū, Papa, and Wākea composed the sacred eight.

Through devotion to the eight, a person could gain entrance to the gates of Heaven. Human actions on Earth were reported to the court of Heaven, which rules on earth through the eight gates. Angels, called the *āwākā*, observed human actions and presented them to the court for judgment.

Each Hawaiian region had individual gods or goddesses. For example, Liliha, Haleakalā, and Poli'ahu, goddess of Mauna Kea were worshipped by the people of the region. These local gods often received offerings at sacred stones or sacred places.

Each Hawaiian profession had its own gods. For example, hula dancers worshipped Kalaipaho. Often, the priests of the particular profession would set elaborate kapu. A fisherman would have to follow certain rules during, and after in order to ensure the capture of his fish and to prevent the loss of his catch.

The Hawaiians also had volcano gods or goddesses. The personification of the volcano was the explanation of their actions. When one of the volcano gods or goddesses erupted, offerings were thrown into their lava streams in order to appease them.

Each Hawaiian family had their own *ʻaumakua*, family god. This family god was believed to be an ancestor. It was believed that sickness or bad luck is caused by displeasing the *ʻaumakua*.

There were a group of humans who were considered demigods. These humans were believed to be the offspring of a god and a human.

magic that had some effect on the gods, such as Maui. Maui was believed to have captured the sun, and brought fire to mankind.

The Kahuna

The rank of kahuna was the second highest rank in Hawaiian society, which was based on connection to the divine. Within the rank of kahuna, there were various types of priests, kahuna lapa`au, necromancers, sorcerers, and diviners.

The priests lived within the heiau, temples made of lava rock. Priests of the gods were the only ones allowed in to the kapu or inner court. A Hawaiian priest could declare kapu, forbidden acts or land. Hawaiian priests also had the power to perform human sacrifices. The priests of the gods and goddesses passed down their knowledge through an oral tradition. Often each priest was responsible for flawlessly reciting the words of a ceremony. On very important occasions, the head chief would present a prayer and the priest would pronounce the conclusion.

Chiefs offered human sacrifices in the cases of grave illnesses, for the success in war, and to prevent natural disasters. Their religious rituals were based on the stars, moon, and sun in the sky. For example, the rise of the constellation Pleiades, at sunset signaled the return of the sun's warmth. At this time a festival for the god of fertility, was held.

The kahuna lapa`au, medicine men, were called to treat illnesses. They would perform rituals and search for omens. He would use that information to find a way to please the gods.

Necromancers came in several different varieties, but they operated on the same principle. Necromancers employed spirits often called `unhipili. The ways in which they operated determined the type of necromancer. For example, a kahuna ho`ounāunā would find the cause of an illness and exact revenge.

Sorcerers, like necromancers, also had various divisions according to their methods. The `anā`anā performed their rituals at night in secret. The kuni performed theirs during the day. Both the `anā`anā and kuni used a part of their subject's hair for example. They would bury the part of the victim. An `anā`anā would cause the death of his subject. A kuni's subject was already dead. The kuni would find the murderer and then killed the murderer. The ho`opi`opi`o and pāh`iuhi`u , classes of sorcerers, operated in the same manner. They would mark a spot in the road with a death spell, and the victim would pass.

Another class of sorcerer practiced `apo leo . These sorcerers would strike their victim and steal his voice.

The diviners, kilo kilo, came in several different varieties: kilo `uhane, kilo po'i`uhane. The kilo` uhane and po'i`uhane worked using the same basic principle. They were believed that the human had two souls. One soul resided in the body. The other could roam about and return to it again. The kilo `uhane could see the free soul of a potential client that his free spirit was troubled. An elaborate set of rituals was used to help the client.

prescribed. The po'i`uhane could capture the free spirit within a calabash

Astrologers studied the heavens to predict the fortunes of various chiefs

Summary

The ancient Hawaiian religion is structured similarly to their society. At the top of power a god or goddess wields. Keawe is at the top of the hierarchy. From which all of the other gods and goddesses descended. The structure of the priesthood also reflected this trend. Within the kahuna, there were different jobs further divided by jobs.

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arcturus.pomona.edu/islands/hawaii3.html