

Instructions in Ancient Hawaiian Astronomy

As taught by Kaneakahoowaha, one of the Counselors of Kamehameha I, according to S.M. Kamakau, translated by W.D. Alexander, from the Kuokoa, Aug. 5, 1865. ⁶⁴

64. Hawaiian Annual, 1891.

Take the lower part of a gourd or hula drum, rounded as a wheel, on which several lines are to be marked (burned in), as described hereafter. These lines are called: "Na alanui o na hoku hookele (highways of the navigation stars), which stars are also called "Na hoku ai-aina" (the stars which rule the land). Stars lying outside of these lines are called "Na hoku o ka lewa," i.e., foreign, strange or outside stars.

The first line is drawn from the Hoku-paa (North star) to the most southerly of Newa (Southern Cross), the portion to the right or east of this line is called "Ke alauloa a Kane" (the dawning, or bright road of Kane), and that to the left or west is called "Ke alanui maaweula a Kanaloa" (the much traveled highway of Kanaloa).

Then three lines are drawn east and west (latitudinally), one across the northern section, indicates the northern limit of the sun, about the 15th and 16th days of the month Kaulua (Jan-Feb), and is called "Ke alanui polohiwa a Kane" (the black shining road of Kane). The line across

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the southern section indicates the southern limit of the sun, about the 15th and 16th days of the month Hilinama (Aug-Sep), and is called "Ke alanui a ke Kuukuu" (the road of the spider), and also "Ke alanui i ka piko a Wakea" (the way to the navel of Wakea).

Between these lines are the fixed stars, "Na hoku-paa o ka aina." On the sides are the stars by which one navigates. The teacher will mark the position of all these stars on the gourd. Thus he will point out to his scholars the situation of Humu (Altair), Kece (Vega?), Nuuanu, Kapea, Kokoiki, Puwepa, Na Kao (Orion), Na Lalani o Pililua, Mananalo, Poloahilani, Huihui (the Pleiades), Makalii (the Twins), Ka Hoku Hookelewa (Sirius), Na Hiku (the Dipper), and the planets, "hoku hele" Kaa-wela (Jupiter), Hokuloa (Venus), Hokuula (Mars), Holoholopinaau (Saturn) Ukali (Mercury), etc.

During the nights from Kaloa to Maui (the dark nights of the moon) are best times for observation. Spread out a mat, lie down with your face upward, and contemplate the dark-bright sections of Kane and Kanaloa, and the navigating stars contained within them.

If you sail for the Kahiki groups, you will discover new constellations and strange stars over the deep ocean.

When you arrive at the "Piko o Wakea" (Equator), you will lose sight

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of the "Hoku-paa" (North Star), and then "Newa" will be the southern guiding star, and the constellation of "Humu" will stand as a guide above you.

You will also study the regulations of the ocean, the movements of the tides, floods, ebbs and eddies, the art of righting upset canoes, and learn to swim from one island to another. All this knowledge contemplate frequently, and remember it by heart, so that it may be useful to you on the rough, the dark and unfriendly ocean.

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