

PRINCIPLES OF SHAMANIC PRACTICE

by Serge Kahili King

Shamanism is often associated with magic, as opposed to science, and that may be either a criticism or a compliment, depending on the speaker. The fact is that shamanistic magic is an applied science, the practical aspect of what today is called Paraphysics and Parapsychology. Like all sciences it must follow natural laws or it won't work, though it is true that some of the magical laws are unfamiliar to and not yet accepted by modern Western scientists. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, however, a science is "a systematized knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation." That definition certainly describes the kind of magic practiced by true shamans.

There are basically two kinds of magic. One is illusory magic (sometimes called "low" magic), which is the kind most often used by stage magicians as well as in movies and television. At its best it requires great skill and technique, but it is based on creating the appearance of an event rather than the event itself. The other is true magic (or "high" magic), which is concerned with actually creating events or "making things happen."

What follows, then, are the Seven Principles of Huna and several of their corollaries as they apply to shamanistic magic.

The Principle of *'IKE* - KNOWLEDGE

In Hawaiian, the word *'ike* has many meanings, including knowledge, and that will be the focus here.

The concept behind this principle is that knowledge brings power, or influence. The more you know about something, the more potential influence you have over it and the more power you have in the sense of being able to act effectively. The more you know about engineering, the more power you have over everything in that field. The more you know about weather, the more you can influence the weather because you will know what to do to bring about a certain effect. Shamanistic magic generally takes into account mental and emotional causes and effects even for things like weather, and so it is often able to produce apparently miraculous results. The degree of power is directly related to the degree of knowledge.

If you really know yourself, if you know all of your capabilities, talents, and potentials, and if you know yourself so well that you can bring these out at will, then of course you have immense power. Once you have power over yourself, then you can control conditions around yourself because it is a fundamental of life, not just magic, that you create your own experience through your mind. The ancient kahuna shamans spent a tremendous amount of time on self-knowledge, self-discipline and self-expansion.

The Corollary of Names

It has been a part of magical lore since time immemorial that names have power. Unfortunately, the idea has been distorted through the centuries to the point where many have thought that just the stating of a "secret" name would produce miraculous results. Seeking out such names, however, is a fruitless endeavor. The secret lies in the fact that names are essentially descriptions. The "true name" of something is a complete description or complete knowledge of that thing. And, as stated above, knowledge confers power. The reason that names in ancient languages are so frequently used in magical work is not that they have some special quality of their own or that they just sound mysterious. The fact is that names in some languages, such as Hebrew, Polynesian and Sanscrit, contain a wealth of information hidden in their roots and structure. In addition, knowing the true name of a thing implies knowledge that goes far beyond words and into direct experience.

Names are also used for associative purposes in various kinds of shamanic work. For instance, among the kahuna shamans of Polynesia the use of a particular fish, vegetable or herb in a ritual would be important because its name carried a hidden meaning. The power was derived from association in the shaman's subconscious mind between the name of the object used and the hidden or extra meaning of the object. As an example, the *kava* plant was extensively used in ancient Hawaiian rituals because it had another meaning of "to channel power." So the mere act of using the *kava* and calling it by name set off an inner process of generating power. In comparison with some of the ancient tongues, English can seem like a very weak kind of verbal shorthand, but a knowledge of English word origins can be quite helpful to the English-speaking shaman.

In spite of the foregoing, certain words or combinations of sounds can change or expand one's perception of reality. It isn't a question of saying a "magic" word like *abracadabra* and producing instant results. Rather, it is like using a particular word to alter your state of consciousness. One of the best examples, because it produces the most striking results, is the Sanskrit word, *Om*, often pronounced "a-u-m." With the body relaxed, a repetition of this sound can fairly quickly cause sensations of lightness, energy flow, and a transition into what is now called an "alpha" state of consciousness. The word in Sanskrit relates to the qualities of a god-like being called *Ishwara*, but one doesn't even have to know this to get results. The power of it may be related to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people have chanted it for centuries. Another single word with very similar effects is 'Oia'i'o, pronounced "ohya-eee-ohhh," Hawaiian for "truth" or, according to some Polynesians, "God."

Groups of words in chants have the power to alter states of consciousness, partly because of the rhythm and partly because of the sound frequencies. Also important is the environment and the state of mind of the practitioner. Not only do the right sounds induce an altered state, but they can generate a high degree of energy as well. Examples are the Hindu chant *Om, mane padme hum*, the Nicheren Shoshu chant *nameyo horenge kyo*, and the Hawaiian chant *aumakua kia manawa*. However, virtually any group of words chanted in rhythm can induce an altered state. As Krishnamurti said, even "Coca-cola" can do that. Finally, certain words have or can have

powerful associations for particular individuals, and these can be discovered or programmed for use on a personal basis for great effect.

The Principle of KALA - FREEDOM

Like *'ike*, the Hawaiian word *kala* has many meanings, and I choose to use the one meaning Freedom for this focus.

Another translation of this principle is "There are no limits." This includes the understanding that, while there actually are no limits to anything, we can and do create our own limits, as in games, and we can interpret phenomena in terms of limits that we perceive. Knowing that all limits are arbitrary, however, can be very helpful to the practicing shaman.

The Corollary of Infinite Data

Very simply, this means that there is always something new. You are never going to run out of things to learn. At the end of the nineteenth century there was a director of patents in the U.S. government who resigned and suggested that the U.S. Patent Office be abolished, because everything had been invented. And just imagine what has been done since then.

There is no end to knowledge because this is an infinite universe and there are an infinite number of things to learn about it. A person practicing shamanism who feels he/she has learned everything and has no more need to learn more goes backwards. Such a person has not recognized that the universe is infinitely creative. Part of the excitement of living the magical life is knowing that just around the corner something new and wonderful is going to bump into us.

The Corollary of Infinite Dimensions

If you have read a lot of science fiction, then this concept might be familiar to you. What I am saying here is that at this very moment there are an infinite number of parallel, vertical and perpendicular dimensions existing right now in the same space where you are at. For example, we perceive physical reality through some relatively narrow doorways of frequency ranges that we call sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. We cannot directly perceive frequencies outside of these ranges, such as ultra-violet light, x-rays, gamma rays, radio and television waves, etc., although they may produce physical effects that we can perceive. Now just suppose there were "physical" beings like you and I, but whose perceptive "doorways" were just off to one side of ours. In that case they could occupy the same space as you without your even knowing it. There might be a university campus in your living room or a forest in your kitchen. If that seems too wild, think of the fact that you are sharing space right now with innumerable television and radio shows.

<p>Another idea included in this corollary is that no two beings sense the world in the same way, even within this dimension. We may agree on general things, such as the fact that several of us are looking at a painting, but when, say, three people are looking at the same painting one may see the artwork or the brush technique of the artist; the second may see it in terms of its composition or beauty; and the third may be seeing the frame, the canvas and the nature of the

paint itself. This is a simplistic example, but you can realize that different people can experience the same thing in different ways. People also perceive differently in terms of their beliefs and attitudes about the world, as when one sees this life as a joy and another as a vale of tears. And so the concept of infinite dimensions carries with it the idea that we can change our conditions, change what seems to be our destiny, by restructuring our beliefs and our choices.

The Corollary of Infinite Energy

This not only relates to the idea that energy is unlimited, but that everything is energy, and in this dimension the basic energy rules are those of electromagnetism. So thoughts are energy, feelings are energy, and physical matter is energy. And within this corollary the concepts of voltage, current, resistance, fields and frequencies are as important and useful in the mental and emotional realms as they are in the physical.

The Principle of MAKIA - FOCUS

Another translation is that "Energy flows where attention goes." This principle relates directly to such concepts as manifestation, karma and telepathy.

The Corollary of Cause & Effect

Of course, this is also the fundamental basis of Western science, and it means that the same actions under the same conditions will produce the same effects. It is the same experimental process used in modern laboratories. If one desires to reproduce a given effect, then insofar as possible every process in the original experiment is duplicated. If a variable is introduced, i.e., a condition or action that is different from the original, then the results are likely to be different. Since shamanistic magic deals with very subtle energies, it extends the possible variables to such things as mental attitude, emotional state and phases of the moon. In a deeper sense, however, Huna puts forth the idea that "we" (subconscious self, conscious self and super-conscious/God self) are the ultimate cause of all the effects we experience.

The Corollary of Similarity

This is the idea that effects resemble causes, or that lookalikes are alike. Herbal lore, for example, dictates that the best use for plants and herbs is to remedy that which they resemble. In other words, if you have a plant that looks like a liver, then you use that plant for liver ailments. If you have an herb that looks like a heart, then you use it for heart conditions. The ginseng root somewhat resembles a whole human being, and so it is used for nearly everything. To the normal way of thinking, which uses mechanical logic, this seems very simplistic and superstitious. But magical thinking requires functional logic. Similar patterns must share a similar essence and have some kind of resonant link. This idea has been put to practical use by a researcher in California who claims that seeds keep better in seed-shaped bottles, and in my experience, flowers keep longer in green vases. As far as herbs go, it is a fact that many of the claims of ancient herbalists have proven justified in modern pharmaceutical laboratories.

This corollary also applies to the realm of thought. If an imaginative thought is held with concentration for a certain length of time, it will tend to produce or attract the equivalent

physical experience. The Unity Church, among others, encourages this kind of work through a system called "treasure mapping," whereby one uses pictures of desired conditions to focus one's concentration in order to produce a real experience. And in experiments with pyramid energy it has been shown that under the right conditions of focused attention an imagined pyramid can produce all the effects of a physical one.

The Corollary of Association

Whatever two things have in common can be used to influence one or both of them. The more they have in common, the more they influence each other. While similar names and shapes are some of what two things may have in common, there is also contact. The idea here is that things once in contact may continue to interact after separation. This corollary provides the basis for most forms of "sympathetic magic," including voodoo, psychometry, absent healing and radionics. It is as if things in contact retain the memory of each other's "electromagnetic" pattern, and that this memory can then be tapped to provide a resonant link for the transfer of energy and/or information. The contact doesn't have to be physical; it may also be sonic (by means of sound, as in hearing a name), emotional (as in sharing a feeling) or mental (as in imagining a symbol of the person or situation). In Huna this kind of contact is often symbolized by *aka* threads or cords.

The Principle of MANAWA - PRESENCE

As a principle, this can be translated as "Now Is The Moment Of Power."

"Presence" can be connected with "Identity." Every living being, every object, every concept or idea has a uniquely individual identity that can be called its essence. Another term, taken from Huna, is its *aka* pattern. Your *aka* pattern, for instance, is a combination of your physical characteristics, of your ideas about things, of what you represent and what you stand for, and, in short, everything that is included in your mind and what presents itself outwardly. This is the Total You, your *aka* pattern of the moment, your essential identity. Everything has an essential identity that exists in the present moment. So do plants, animals, cells and even rocks.

According to this principle it is possible for you to merge your consciousness with another pattern - to identify with it - and thus know it and make use of that knowledge. A fairly common mystical/magical/ shaman practice is to identify with a plant through meditation.

The person who does this becomes one with the plant. He/She can then travel in consciousness from point to point within the plant and describe sensations and effects and the cellular structure in great detail because he/she is that plant at that moment. Much of the knowledge of the ancients was achieved through such identification. They had no need to use instruments to tear things apart and tack them up on a board in order to understand them. They were able to study life directly, and were not limited to studying death as so many modern scientists think they must do. Our modern technology has been useful in many ways, but in other ways it has only served to separate us from life.

Through identification one can learn to do and feel as the object of identification does. It bears some similarity to the kind of in-depth role playing some actors use. A good actor playing the role of another person will identify with that person so well that for the period he is on the stage or in front of the camera he will be that person. This can even be done with a purely fictional character, because even these have their *aka* patterns formed from the thoughts of others about them.

As an example, books have been written about the psychology of some of Shakespeare's characters like Hamlet and Falstaff which go deeply into their supposed thinking patterns, and the same has been done for Sherlock Holmes and others.

Now, these were fictional beings limited to some lines on paper, and yet people have identified with these characters so totally through acting and reading that they have almost become like individually living beings. You might say that their essence was expanded to the point where people could write things about them that were never actually written in the plays or stories, but which have become implicit.

In various parts of the world there are men who play a traditional role in identifying with certain animals. One of the most well known cases is that of the "leopard men" in West Africa. These young men go into a trance brought about partly through drugs and partly through dancing and wearing the skin of the animal. They will so totally identify with that animal, transferring their consciousness to a leopard pattern, that in their own minds they actually become leopards.

Within the limits of human anatomy they do everything that a leopard would do. Psychologically, they become leopards in every sense of the word. Of course, this is an extreme example. The skillful shaman will always reserve a portion of his own identify - we often say at least 1% - so that the transfer of consciousness is under his/her direction and is never total. For this reason he/she will usually undergo a period of training with a competent guide, as I did with my African mentor M'Bala.

Mystics often reach for identification with spiritual beings and achieve states of ecstasy and profound knowledge of other dimensions. Mediums or channels go through a similar process. The principle of identification does not have to be carried to such lengths, however. It can be done by degrees so that one only gains the knowledge that one desires.

The Principle of ALOHA - HAPPINESS

For this we use the translation "To Love Is To Be Happy With (someone or something). The word *aloha* in Hawaiian has many meanings, including Love, Compassion, Mercy, Sympathy, Pity, Kindness, Sentiment, Grace, Charity, Greeting, Salutation, Regards, Sweetheart, Lover, Loved one, Beloved, Kind, Compassionate, Charitable, Lovable, To Love, To Be Fond Of, to show Kindness, Mercy, Pity, Charity, Affection, To Venerate, To Remember With Affection, To Greet, To Hail, Greetings, Hello, Goodbye, Farewell. These are all from the Hawaiian Dictionary. Also from that dictionary are the roots of the word: *alo* means "to be

present” and has the connotation of being happy with someone, as in *ka mo'opuna i ke alo* - “the favorite grandchild.”; *oha* means “to show joyous affection of friendship,” and *ha* means “breath, life,” related to *honi*, the Hawaiian custom of greeting someone by pressing noses and inhaling each other’s breath.

Happiness exists when things fit together smoothly and successfully. Unhappiness is a state of conflict arising from an excess or a lack or a direct opposition, and it generally causes pain and/or failure. In practical terms, cooperation produces better results than competition. Using this principle, the practical shaman always seeks to work with Nature, events and circumstances to achieve goals, and doesn't try to force or control things. The old stereotype of the powerful magician who controls Nature by the sheer force of his will just doesn't work in actuality. It is not sheer force of will or anything else that does it except an entering into a happy relationship with Nature and requesting cooperation or directing it from the inside.

The Corollary of Personification

In shamanic thought, everything is alive, aware and responsive. And as human beings we have a tendency to personify things which are not human. This is often useful and therefore it is true that anything can be considered to be alive and have a personality. What this does is allow us to communicate with things we couldn't communicate with otherwise. Everything does have a form of consciousness, and personification makes it easier to achieve usable contact. Ancient shamans would personify abstract concepts such as Love, Power, Change, etc. by visualizing them as humanoid gods, and thus be able to learn more about them through meditative conversation. It is also common to personify objects such as weapons, tools, boats, cars and so on, and thereby establish a more effective working relationship with them. It is a natural way of building a psychic link and exerting more influence than would otherwise be possible.

The only problem with personification is when you forget that it is only a useful tool and begin to attribute negative human emotions and intentions to what you have personified and imagine it has power over you. This is a mistake that people have made with gods and demons for ages.

The Principle of MANA - ENERGY

Mana is not some weird esoteric fluid, as so many Westerners think. Even the Hawaiian Dictionary falls into that trap a bit, but it does give the basic meanings of “power” and “authority,” which can be further reduced to “influence.” There are many forms of influence, but the preferred shamanic interpretation is energy. Everything is energy, as Einstein has stated. Only the forms or patterns or frequencies are different. One kind of energy can be transformed into another kind of energy, as water can be used to make electricity or friction can produce heat. And one kind of energy can influence or direct another kind of energy, like the gravity of the moon that can move the ocean to form the tides. Thoughts are energy, too, and they can influence or direct all the other kinds of energy to bring about various events and circumstances. In addition, other kinds of energy can influence or direct thoughts. Energy can also amplify energy, so shamans and others can use crystals, pyramids and other things to amplify their physical, emotional and thought energy.

The Corollary of Polarity

Also called relativity, this means that anything, including energy, can be divided into opposite characteristics, which are really only opposite relative to each other. A famous representation of this corollary is the Chinese symbol that used to be popular on weighing machines. It consists of a circle divided by a curved line. The space on one side is black and the space on the other side is white. Actually, the complete symbol would have a dot of white in the black and a dot of black in the white, signifying that each has the potential of the other within it. In other words, there is no absolute black nor absolute white, but only black relative to white and white relative to black. A lighted match, for instance, looks black when held against the sun. In modern science this corollary is applied to electromagnetism. In an electrical circuit one can measure a point of negative polarity only in relation to a further point of positive polarity. That further point becomes a negative polarity when it is measured against an even further point. Thus there is no good or bad energy; just energy perceived as good or bad relative to some other form of energy.

The Corollary of Synthesis

This refers to a union of relatively opposite energies in order to produce a third new energy. In philosophy this is known as dialectics, whereby a mixture or contact between two different ideas results in a completely different new idea. We can find abundant evidence of this corollary in the world around us. Fire and water produce steam; two opposite magnetic fields moving against each other produce electricity; the union of a man and a woman produces a new and unique human being. A shaman may make use of this corollary by combining two different elements, such as electrical and dielectrical materials, to produce an energy field that did not exist before, or to gain knowledge of two scientific disciplines in order to produce new shamanic techniques and experience.

The Corollary of Synergism

Synergism describes what happens when two different things produce a third which is greater than the simple sum of the first two. The mixture of water and a seed produces a sprout which is more nutritious than either of the first two. This corollary often applies to socio-economic development. In Africa I introduced a very simple type of credit union which was only moderately effective until one of my field agents introduced a simple Asian abacus that had been unknown before. The result of this combination was the flowering of a nationwide credit union movement that affected the whole country. Two simple ideas were brought together and produced an effect far greater than either of the two alone. In shamanistic magic this synergistic effect is most pronounced when two or more people gather together to combine their thoughts and energy.

The Principle of PONO - EFFECTIVENESS

Also stated as "Effectiveness Is The Measure Of Truth. This is an extremely important and simple principle which means that "if it works, it's true." Regardless of whether or not it is supposed to work, if it does work then it must be true. As an example of how this has been exemplified in history, we have the story of the Wright brothers. About two weeks before they

flew their plane at Kitty Hawk, a very distinguished scientist proved mathematically that it was utterly impossible to fly a heavier than air machine. Fortunately, the Wright brothers didn't read his report or they might not have tried. It worked for them because they believed it would.

On an individual basis, if something works for you then it's true. It doesn't matter whether it works for anyone else or not. If it works for you then it's true as far as you are concerned. Truth is a function of belief in any case, at our physical level. If you believe something is true, then it becomes true for you until you change your belief. However, the primary thing to consider is effectiveness. Do your beliefs really make life work for you? If not, then feel free to change the beliefs and use what does work.

The Corollary of Paradox

This means that two or more contradictory truths can be held at the same time and they can still work. For instance, you hold the truth that the sun is going to rise tomorrow morning and it is useful in terms of planning your daily activities. At the same time you can hold the truth that it is really the earth that is turning, and this can be useful in other ways. Just remember that if it's useful, it's true in the context you choose to use it. If you have luck when carrying a rabbit's foot, then it's true that the rabbit's foot is a good luck charm for you, even if it wasn't lucky for the rabbit. Paradoxical truths can also be held in sequence, as when beliefs change according to changing perceptions of a situation. Practicing shamans become skilled at holding many contradictory beliefs without conflict, ready to use when the situation calls for them.