



Huna Article

What Am I Really Looking At?

By Graeme Kaponu Urlich

This article has been inspired by a discussion I had with a person I can only describe as a “New Age Shaman”. I say this not to criticise the person but to distinguish the difference between their perceptions of what a shaman is and how shaman typically might have thought about reality in ancient times. Naturally, this varied from culture to culture. A forest people would see the world quite differently from a coastal culture.

No one can really be sure in this day and age, we weren’t there to see what they did or how they thought and why their practices developed the way they did, but we can extrapolate from threads of information that are around, comparing those to other systems of thought, noticing common threads and testing what works and what doesn’t.

What people call shamanism today has really expanded and in some cases, it has become a trendy label used to market what is fundamentally a different system of thought. That’s a whole different article though.

The person I was speaking to seemed to be more oriented in New Age thinking than anything and this can be useful when working with someone with a strong focus in that way of thinking but when we think that is the only way to think it becomes very limiting. In modern times we encounter many more cultures and ways of thinking than shaman of old ever did.

In my work as a shaman I’ve had to learn to ask myself, “What am I looking at?”, “What am I hearing?”, “What context is it in?”, “How am I interpreting that?” and “What set of assumptions am I using to interpret that?”. Then I have to ask what is likely to work to assist in creating a beneficial change? Sometimes a way that I am not skilled in would be useful so I might send someone to another kind of healer.

A lot of this happens intuitively now so it can be hard to describe the process, sometimes the results are unexpected and don’t fit any logical framework that we can see. Existence is immensely complex and we can’t see it all from the perspective of the conscious mind. I learned a lot about this working with large scale computer systems. The data looked good but the results weren’t right. I had to keep looking for the problem while resisting the urge to ignore areas of the system I had already looked at. The answers always came but often not where I would logically have expected them.

The *Huna* Philosophy and the tradition of *Kalakupua*, as it is taught in modern times, has given me a wonderful structure to ask these questions in, a wonderful set of ideas to use as tools. When I bring any issues back to the [Seven Principles of Huna](#) and the *Four Levels of Reality*, remind myself of the basics, I

find it focuses my mind in an effective way to help navigate the situation to find tried and true options as well as new and flexible answers.

Tried and true together with new and innovative may sound like a paradox but really it isn't. Sometimes we come up with options we've never thought of before or are inspired to use something that has worked before but in a situation we have never thought to try it yet.

The [Seven Principles of Huna](#) are well described in the book [Urban Shaman](#) by Dr. Serge Kahili King but in terms of knowing what we are looking at, what situation we are in and see how we might work with it effectively we could summarize them this way:

Ike. The World Is What We Think It Is. (Shaman talent: Seeing) A primary talent of the shaman is seeing. An awareness that there are many options for how we look at the world and developing some habitual ways of thinking that help focus on a purpose, that we can come back to and trust when life goes pear shaped is very useful.

Kala. There are no limits. (Shaman talent: Clearing) Knowing that there are many ways to look at the world and interpret it and that we are free to reinterpret things is very freeing and empowering.

Makia. Energy Flows Where Attention Goes. (Shaman talent: Focusing) Being able to adjust our focus, on the forest, individual tree, the grass beneath the tree and somewhere in between these is a very powerful skill to develop.

Manawa. Now Is The Moment of Power. (Shaman talent: Presence) Being in the moment helps us to know whether we are really seeing the situation we are in or reacting out of a memory. *Manawa* is also one of the words for patience and includes connotations of persistence as part of that. It doesn't just mean sit and wait for what you are focusing on, it includes taking some action towards that goal, now, and repeating it until we see results.

Aloha. To Love Is To Be Happy With. (Shaman talent: Blessing) The more things in life we can find to appreciate on our path through life the happier and easier the journey becomes. Bless the present.

Mana. All Power Comes From Within. (Shaman talent: Empowering) A primary role of a Hawaiian Shaman is to remind people of their innate inner power and help them find ways to think that offer them more ideas in life. At the same time we must recognise their right to choose one way or another and not be attached to a specific outcome for them. They must choose, we can only plant seeds, encourage and, in some cases, keep our fingers crossed a beneficial choice is eventually made. Trust yourself.

Pono. Effectiveness is the Measure of Truth. (Shaman talent: Dream Weaving) For a shaman, using the original meanings of the word, the purpose is to have a healing effect in whatever situation we are in. Learning to look beyond our own preconceptions to see the situation we are really in as best we can is a powerful skill. It allows us to be effective in more situations. Expect the best.

In distant times they didn't have the tremendous mix of cultures and belief systems that we have today. I talk about this a bit in my article "Infusion Confusion". The shaman of old worked with people who had generations of belief in his/her abilities and gave them authority to heal them. The cultural associations with the symbology used was very strong.

In this day and age a shaman, in order to work in a modern urban environment, must be more flexible and be able to find ways of working with people with broad and often mixed beliefs. We must learn to see what is really there and not so much what we habitually expect to be there. The *Huna Philosophy* has given me a flexible yet stable framework to do that.

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