

0. Lehua, Ka'ao a ka Wahine: A Hawaiian Noble Woman Comes of Age - Story Preface

1. Coming of Age, "Kuleana", In the Times of Change in Hawaiian Culture
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3. Hawaiian Royal Traditions
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Imagine that you lived in a culture that honored all of nature, but that had not been exposed to the mechanical and electronic aspects of today's world. What if this society was governed by a royal structure and you were a member of a noble family? What would life be like as the "advances" of the developed world entered your society? Imagine being a teenager, when you yourself are changing so dramatically. What would it be like to see the only world you knew transformed so quickly? This is what we find in the story told through the eyes and heart of Lehua.

Hawai'i is the most culturally diverse and newest of the fifty United States. Hawaiian history includes centuries of royal rule terminating in the first wobbly American experiment in Pacific colonialism. The nature of that colonialism included forced political and religious upheavals attacking the Kingdom of Hawai'i with the death of King Kamehameha I in 1819. Our character, Lehua plays a role in this transition as she and her *ohana* (family) live their lives and loves against the backdrop of a dying Polynesia. Lehua and her part Hawaiian, *paniolo* (cowboy) lover find each other amid these clashes and finally wed amid the scenic glory of a Kauai valley.

This story is of a young Hawaiian *ali'i* (noble) girl becoming a woman during this time of great cultural change. When she is seventeen her entire way of life crumbles all around her. As it does, we learn about the rich Hawaiian culture and the losses suffered when white merchants and planters exploit the land. Ignorant Christian missionaries, bent on the 'White Man's Burden', replace the *kapu* of the *kahuna* (holy men) with the 'fear of God' and subsequently disrupt the spiritual, political and, even agricultural, lives of the *Kanaka* (natives).

These changes force Lehua to recognize the *kulena* (responsibility) to lead that is thrust upon her.

Families separate, self-destruct and form new liaisons across cultural divides under external pressures. There are invasions of foreign disease, behavior, politics and new religious taboos. Even strange clothes and food impact a native society struck by the suddenness of their arrival and the total smothering of the old culture.

If Lehua were greeting you now as her story is introduced, she would say "*aloha!*" That word is widely recognized around the world as a greeting of exceptional warmth. Like so many of the Hawaiian words used in her story, it engenders that warmth because it is so personal. The *Kanaka* (native Hawaiians) traditional greeting was to face one another, *alo*, and exchange *ha* (breath)--the evidence of the sacred gift of life. What more precious thing could one share in greeting than the very essence of life?

In 1898, American sugar planters overthrew the Kingdom and created the Republic of Hawai'i prompting annexation of the Islands as the first US colony six years later.

Aloha, dear reader.

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Lehua, Noblewoman of Hawai'i

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Lehua, a young noblewoman of Hawaii

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