

‘A‘ahu is ritual regalia, an extension of the dance, the individual, and an added layer to the living myth that is hula.

I bind my extremities therefore bound to the teachings of our forest teachers.

In 2005, Tangarō invited me to attend WiPC:E. It was a two-week long stay in Aotearoa. There, I was immersed into Unukupukupu and it was this journey that sparked my interest to intimately know hula. It took me two years to finally embark on this journey. In 2007, I was invited to a 10-day retreat that was focused on ho‘opa‘a and the protocols of kuahu. This cohort became known as Unuolehua. After this retreat, I reorganized my “mo‘o” as did Hi‘iaka in her quest, and I left California for Hilo, literally stepping into new territory. When I know the foundation is solid, I willingly step onto it. If it is not, I tread lightly. Through the gesture of binding the extremities, I reaffirm my commitment to step into the sacred.

I adorn my consciousness, making meaningful connections, and bringing the furthest of points together, to know it, to understand it.

In the summer of 2012 I was asked to consider lecturing at Hawai‘i Community College. I journeyed on this path of lectureship while still being a student. Teaching revealed things about me that I did not know about myself. When a student is put in front of you and you are responsible for their journey too, albeit for a semester length course, the responsibility can be heavy, especially for a new lecturer. I share what I know and speak from a place that is concerned with the well being of the spirit. Through teaching I continue to make meaningful connections, not just for my students, but also for myself, allowing me to continue to be a learner in the classroom. It is through this process that my total self is revealed, over and over again.

I fasten my loins for here lies the seat for that, which was established before me, and the seat for that, which I will establish.

Winter solstice marks our ‘ūniki. Collectively, Unuolehua will step into the ranks of a kumu hula. Currently, I am working on my M.A. in History and Culture and will receive my degree after ‘ūniki. After these milestones, I will be reintegrated into the communities that have raised me, but now functioning in a new space, new for myself and new for the relationships established. Through this journey I have discovered that my function needs to be concerned about what lies beyond the horizon. It is hula and the Unukupukupu process of “insearching” that is my foundation from whence I will continue what the forest has established, continue to make meaningful connections, continue to dance so my spirit lives in the intensity of passion, and continue to create and heal as do our sacred deities.

To be adorned in full ‘a‘ahu is to assume full responsibility that I am an extension, not mere decoration.

Pele Kaio

Hula as a transformative process: Glimpses into Unuolehua

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