

OF SACRED TIMES AND SACRED PLACES

The continuity of a people's spiritual and cultural consciousness is the taproot of a nation's survival. It is in the cherishing and the observing of their sacred times and sacred places that a people are most able to nourish their national consciousness.

A nation's conquest is complete, not by military subjection, however thorough, nor by imposition of foreign governmental structures, however longstanding, nor by creation of economic dependence, however extensive. The conquest of a nation is only complete by the destruction of the national consciousness within its people.

Of those sacred times and sacred places, we dedicate ourselves to caring, observing and celebrating as a central part of the Hawaiian national existence.

Aloha Kākou:

It is said that a nation identifies itself by the observances of its sacred times and its sacred places. These times and places become important in nations struggling to maintain a continuity of national consciousness, a way of passing on to the succeeding generations the values and dreams of the preceding generation.

Holidays, if we can somehow rescue them from the monopoly of merchants in a society, are supposed to play that role of marking these sacred times. Historic sites mark these sacred places. Folklore also marks times and places. We can survey our individual experiences with the American nation and see how this has come about, a marking of national consciousness by the celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower's arrival, Thanksgiving, the Boston Tea Party, and other early colonial stories which stretch before the formation of the government by the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

Let's come back to Hawai`i and consider how the Hawaiian nation, presently subsumed under the United States of America, is preserving its continuity of consciousness. How are those who identify with the Hawaiian nation observing their sacred times and places?

We can see those observations in the practice of the oral and dance traditions, in the `oli and the hula, now undergoing a tremendous explosion of interest in Hawai`i and elsewhere. We have seen it in the marking of significant events, in 1993, the 100th anniversary of the U.S. invasion and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchical government where thousands gathered at `Iolani Palace grounds. In 1995, we have marked the great battle on O`ahu in which the forces of Kamehameha faced that of Kalanikupule which brought about the unification of the Hawaiian islands.

An interesting dual occasion is the 4th of July - a date of special significance in the history of the American and the Hawaiian nations. On that date, the Americans observe their declaration of independence and the Hawaiians the theft of their independence, (1894). It may seem curious for some that Hawaiian nationals observe that date as well. The observations of such occasions are not done necessarily to rejoice or celebrate an occurrence but to merely note the occasion as an important event.

A small consortium of people from various organizations have come together under the common belief that one way to maintain the nation is by the observances of our sacred times and sacred places. Several occasions have been organized to provide anyone in Hawai`i an opportunity to join in sharing such times and places with one another. In this way, we play our small part in continuing the life of the nation.

Aloha `āina,
Pōkā Laenui, December, 1995,