

'Ohana and Hāloa

“Members of the ‘ohana, like taro shoots, are all from the same root.” said Mary Kawena Pukui.

The comparison comes from an ancient tradition. ‘*Ohā*, the root or corm of the taro plant, was not only the "staff of life" in the Hawaiian diet, but it was closely linked with the origin of the people. Legend tells that the progenitor of the Hawaiians was a mystic man-and-taro named Hāloa.

With Hawaiians, family consciousness of the same "root of origin" was a deeply felt, unifying force, no matter how many offshoots came from offshoots. As Mrs. Pukui explained, "you may be 13th or 14th cousins, as we define relationships today, but in Hawaiian terms, if you are of the same generation, you are all brothers and sisters. You are all ‘*ohana*."

This close tie among distant cousins indicates that in the past ‘*ohana* meant "family clan" more often than "nuclear" or "immediate" family. Today, the word means either.

The ties of ‘*ohana* as an extended family were closest but not limited to the living or to those born into blood relationship. The core of the ‘*ohana* were the living *pili koko* (blood relatives). However, non-related persons could be admitted to ‘*ohana* status. And when a family member died, he remained—as a spirit—very much a part of the ‘*ohana*.

Reference – Nānā I ke Kumu – Volume 1

E kuahui like i ka hana

“Let everybody pitch in and work together.”

‘Ōlelo No‘eau # 323

‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kokua aku, kokua mai; pela ka nohona ‘ohana

“Watch, observe. Help others and accept help. That is the family way.”

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #1200

‘O ka makua ke ko‘o o ka hale e pa‘a ai.

“The parent is the support that holds the household together.”

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #2424

