

The Hawai‘ian Calendar and Its Influence on Hawai‘ian Birth Omens

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Preface

Before we can begin to understand Hawai‘ian birth omens, we must attempt to understand parts of the Hawai‘ian Lunar Calendar. We gain tremendous insight in the role that the day played in the relationship to the birth omen. When I first began this writing I attempted to roll the two together, however I quickly realized the calendar and the birth omens are two distinct, but intrinsically related, discussions – we cannot understand one without understanding the other. Even though they are described separately here you will easily note the extensive calendar influence on the birth omens and daily lives of Hawai‘ians who used this system.

Often in Hawai‘i today we may hear the Hawai‘ian language phrase “A ‘ohe pau ka ‘iki I ka halau ho‘okahi (not all knowledge is taught in one school). To that end we must remember that there may be many different ways of drawing conclusions from a history that, until “recently,” had no written form. Understanding and accepting the Hawai‘ian way of thinking requires that we put ourselves in a pono (good, correct, at peace) state of being. As you are reading I would like you to remember that the recognition of a past period in time must faithfully mirror that time and must not be lost to neglect. What you are learning today is one of your further steps in maintaining a culture that has existed for generations.

I have used many Hawai‘ian words and phrases without reference or definition. If you are unfamiliar with the Hawai‘ian language (‘Olelo Hawai‘i) you may want to keep a Hawai‘ian/English dictionary handy.

As I start this writing, I am reminded of a saying taught to me long ago – “In the Hawai‘ian heavens are the sun, the moon and the stars above. Below these are volcanos and oceans. Below the volcanos and oceans are mountains and valleys full of legends and thousands of years of geneology. Below them are kings and queens, knowledge and poetry, which celebrate all the things above them. Below all of these are a history of a people and my kumu. Under my kumu is me.”

Nā pō mahina: The Hawai‘ian Lunar Calendar

The moon, the stars and their alignment in the heavens were important to the lives of the “pre-contact’ Hawai‘ian people. The alignments proclaimed seasonal transitions and ceremonial periods. The worship of certain gods, and the announcements of important events were all fortold by the observation of the heavens. In Hawai‘ian mythology, the stars were thrown into the sky by the god Kane. The sun was referred to as “the great star of Kane.”

The Seasons

The Hawai‘ian year consists of two distinctive seasons. The dry season, called Kau, and the wet season called Ho‘oilō.

Kau (summer) begins in the month of Welō when Huhui Hoku (“star cluster” - the constellation of Pleiades) sets in the western skies as the sun rises. Kau was the time of great heat and dryness on the islands. For the fishermen, this is the kapu (forbidden) season on the opelu (mackerel) fish. This kapu season has been in effect since the month of Hihā‘ia ‘ele‘ele, three months before ‘Ikuwā. Toward the end of Kau, Huhui Hoku appears in the eastern skies at sunset and denotes the time of the Makahiki celebrations.

Ho‘oilō (winter) begins in October, when the weather turns wet and cool. The month of ‘Ikuwā starts the rainy season which lasts through the next three months known as Welehu, Makali‘i and Kā‘elo (and occasionally the four months - Welehu, Welehu-lua (see “thirteenth month), Makali‘i and Kā‘elo.) These are the wet and soggy months, and not much work could be done in the fields. The final two months of the Ho‘oilō season are Kaulua and Nana, which approximate the western months of February and March in the modern calendar.

Although the Hawaiian calendar was considered a “lunar” calendar (moon, mahina), control of the seasons was found by the ancient astronomer kahuna to be directly related to the declination of the sun to the northward during the summer and to the southward during the winter. On the island of Hawai‘i the positions of the sun were marked by four large stone markers by the ancient astronomer kahuna at their astronomical station in the midst of the desolate and contorted pahoehoe lava fields at Cape Kumukahi.

Legendwise, the four lava markers represent the four wives of chiefs Kumukahi and Palamoa. One day, while engaged in a holua (sledding) race, Kumukahi had a quarrel with Pele, the goddess of the volcano. Kumukahi had no idea that his opponent was Pele until he saw her summon her lava and ride on the crest of the rolling, molten wave after him, his wives, and his subjects. The subjects fell into Pele's grasp, one after another. Then Paūpoulu, the first of Kumukahi's wives, fell and was transformed instantly into a pillar of lava. The second wife, Ha'eha'e, was similarly transformed into a pillar of lava further to the east by the sea. The other two wives barely reached the sea but fell into Pele's molten hands and were transformed into pillars of lava - Hanakāulua was caught to the north of Kanono. Kumukahi was also caught by Pele but his soul escaped, soaring away into the eastern sky. Since that fateful day, Kamono (southern limit) and Hanakūulua (northern limit) have spent their lives pushing the sun northward and then southward in an eternal vigil to keep the seasons in their proper course as the sun voyages each day from Ha'eha'e (eastern portal) to Paūpoulu (western portal).

Kahuna (experts and teachers – those with knowledge) were extremely adept at perceiving and interpreting the expanse of the sky. By observing the phases of the moon, they were able to plan when to harvest, when to fish, the best times to begin a journey and when to let their land and their bodies rest.

The ancient calendar divided the two seasons into 12 moon cycles and the beginning of the year was determined by the position of the seven stars known as "Makali'i" or "small eyes." These seven stars, referred to as "Huihui" ("bunched") or "the Seven Sisters" are part of the 85 stars of the constellation we know as the Pleiades. The year began on the first night after the first New Moon, after the kuhuna observed and hailed the arrival of the Makali'i. (To keep things in perspective please note that over a thousand years ago, because of the earth's ever changing position in the heavens, the annual vigil to observe the rise of Makali'i in the eastern sky in November occurred a month earlier.) This system set the pattern of the seasons and all other activities for the ancient Hawai'ians.

According to my understanding there was great diversity in naming the months and activities appropriate to each of them. One source mentions that on the island of Hawai'i the months (*malama*) were named as follows:

The Months

Makali‘i (last of November, first part of December) The month of Makali‘i was named for the guiding stars celebrating the first month of the lunar year. It is also known as Huihui, meaning “bunched,” to denote the togetherness of the Seven Sisters which collectively are perhaps also known on other islands as Kupuku (Pleiades.) Although the weather is generally pleasant, strong cold winds along with thunderstorms and drenching rain may occur. This was also the time when Poli`ahu (the goddess of snow) “spread her mantle” as the first snow of the season on the great peaks Mauna Loa and the aptly named MaunaKea (mountain of white.) The weather was cool and wet so much time was spent around the fire. The Makahiki season, a time of celebration, healing, peace and no war, (discussed later) continues from the previous month.

Kā‘elo (last of December, first part of January) Kā‘elo is the guiding star for this month. Kā‘elo is believed to be the first magnitude star Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion. Since Hawai‘ians used a lunar calendar it would seem to make sense that since the longest night (shortest day) is around Dec 21st that the Hawai‘ian yearly calendar would start about here. However, that is not the case. The beginning of the year was based on the position in the heavens of the seven stars known as “Makali‘i” (the name of the previous month.) Like the previous month of Makali‘i, thunderstorms and drenching rain continue. The Kona storms subside as winter ends. The kapu on opelu (mackerel) fishing ends and the kapu on ahi (tuna) fishing begins. All other fishing is good. The Makahiki season, a time of celebration, healing, peace and no war, concludes this month.

Kaulua (last of January, first part of February) One of the many names for the first magnitude star Sirius in the constellation Canis Major in the southern sky. This is a time of alternating warm and cold weather affecting people’s indecision on whether to work indoors or outside. Trade winds increase. The very beginning of the growing season, Kaulua is a good month for planting.

Nana (last of February, first part of March) Spring - a time when nature is full of excitement. There is more sunshine and the winter dampness vanishes. Baby birds get ready to leave their nests. New, fresh growth in plants. The earth this month is beautiful and green. However, it is a poor season for wild fruits such as guavas and lilikoi (passion fruits) because the new growth is just starting and the fruits from last season have probably fallen off or have been

eaten by people or birds. The annual migration of whales from the polar seas may be observed in Hawai‘ian waters.

Welo (last of March, first part of April - Equinox begins around March 20th) Possible reference to the tradewinds of springtime. (Welo – to flutter or float as in the wind.) Temperature continues to increase but the tradewinds will moderate the warmth. Humidity will decrease. Farming good, for all things continue active growth. Deep sea fishing starts this month. This is the time you can begin viewing the Southern Cross in the evening sky. This constellation, known as Hanaiakamalama, or "cared for by the moon," is part of the modern Polynesian navigational "star line" called Ka Iwikuamo‘o, ("The Backbone.") In Polynesian navigation, Ka Iwikuamo‘o is one of the four reference lines of stars that run from the northern to the southern sky. It starts with the North Star, Hokupa‘a, flows through Ursa Major, then Hokule‘a (the star Arcturus), then Hikianalia (Spica) in Virgo, then Me‘e (the constellation Corvus), and finally to the Southern Cross.

Ikiiki (last of April, first part of May) Rainfall and humidity is less than preceding months however, a decrease in the tradewinds may cause perceptible discomfort. This sensation provides the name for this month: Ikiiki means “warm and sticky.”

Ka‘aona (last of May, first part of June) Humidity decreases and sunshine increases. Flowers are in bloom everywhere, in the fields, gardens and aboretums. Fruits that had bloomed earlier in the spring, such as mango, begin to ripen now. “La‘a ulu” – spring, a time of growth.

Hināia‘ele‘ele (last of June, first part of July – (in the Western calendar summer begins around June 20th) As in most of the Northern hemisphere this is the best weather of the year. Days are clear and dry (minimal humidity) with lots of sunshine and an occasional rain shower.

Mahoe-mua also known as Hili-Na-Ehu (last of July, first part of August) sudden storms, occasional rain, hot weather. Hurricanes. “Ehu” refers to the mists which float in from the sea along some coasts. Tradewinds decrease so humidity increases (warm and humid). The first of the “twin months” – Mahoe-Mua (literally “twin-first”) and Mahoe-hope (“twin-last.)

Mahoe-hope also known as Hili-Na-Ma (last of August, first part of September) sudden storms, occasional rain, hot weather. Precipitation shall be

higher than the previous twin month because of “cyclonic” activity - *Hurricanes*. The second/last of the “twin months” – Mahoe-Mua and Mahoe-hope. Preparations are made for the coming Makahiki season.

‘Ikuwā (last of September, first part of October - Equinox is around September 23rd) Kahela, also known Kauka-Malama, is the guiding star for ‘Ikuwā. Legend says that this star is visible all through ‘Ikuwā and vanishes on the first night of the following month. This time of year is known as “La‘a ‘ula” – beginning of autumn. *Lit.*, red time (of leaves). Weather becomes noticeably bad in ‘Ikuwā, as indicated by the name for this month – ‘Ikuwā means “loud voice” (thunder in the uplands, wind in the lowlands, pounding surf. According to one Hawai‘ian moon calendar, the Makahiki season arrives during the month of ‘Ikuwā. The Makahiki season is the time for the coming of Lono, the deity of agriculture, healing and peace. No war or battle is permitted during Makahiki. It was during the previous month, Mahoe-hope, in which preparations were made for the four-month Makahiki season. These preparations included harvesting, drying and storing both agricultural and aquatic foods for the celebrations.

Welehu (last of October, first part of November) Weather turns wet as the “Ho‘oilō” (winter) season begins and continues through Welo. Makahiki continues. Usually the “last” month of the year.

Welehu-Lua (last of November, first part of December) Unfortunately, at times, the Hawai‘ian New Year’s Day cannot be celebrated after the twelfth lunar month of the year because Pleiades has not risen in the eastern sky at sunset before the end of the twelfth month. This phenomenon occurs because the lunar and zodiacal cycles are not in phase. Because of this disjunctive condition, the date of New Year’s Day advances each year. To correct this drift of the Hawai‘ian New Year through time, the kuhuna made the twelfth month pass much like a refrain in a symphony, and waited for Pleiades to rise in the eastern sky at sunset in the thirteenth month. New Year’s Day was then celebrated at the beginning of the next lunar cycle. Since this corrective, or extra month, basically repeats much of the previous month, this “thirteenth month” has the name of Welehu-lua (“Welehu” – last month of the year and “lua”, meaning “second” or “copy.”) This correction does not occur every year. Weather is wet – the rainiest month of the year – heavy cloud cover, less sunshine. Makahiki continues.

The lunar calendar was an important part of the spiritual lives of the Hawai‘ians. Except for the Makahiki and a few other rites, Hawai‘ians lacked yearly rituals. Instead, they observed monthly rites of worship, putting aside work in favor of prayer.

The Hawai‘ians seemed to know what farmers everywhere know – the phases of the moon appear to have a direct influence on animals and plants. The lunar calendar is the farmer’s almanac. It governed fishing, agriculture, kapa making, and prayer as well as many other facets of human life including birth and consequently birth omens.

The lunar month and the passage of days were marked by the phases of the mahina. The 29.5 days of the moon cycle were divided into three 10-day periods known as “anahulu” – there were three “weeks” in the Hawai‘ian month.

Following is a typical Hawai‘ian calendar, however, information is limited. Some variations in name and purpose for each day also exist. Though the basic structure of this calendar was universal in old Hawai‘i, the names for each night varied considerably, even on the same island. Ironically, even though the calendar days are regulated by the moon, the “day” actually begins with the setting sun in the western sky. The day begins when the last rays of the sun disappear on the horizon. What is important for understanding habitat is the night sky, as this is the time of gathering information. The moon that arises at night continues its influence the following day. Every night of the month has its own name and attributes.

The first 10-day period (anahulu) was called “ho‘onui,” (growing bigger, to enlarge) beginning on the first crescent.

On the first 2 or 3 nights of the month when the moon casts little or no shadow, the ali‘i and the kahuna might go out and do certain activities that, if done during daylight or a brighter moon, caused them to cast a shadow. Casting a shadow required a whole set of protocols. Refurbishing a heiau or temple, for example, was often done on moonless nights. A turned position of the Big Dipper and the lowering of a point of the moon indicates a wet period approaching.

The Days

1. Hilo: *'O Hilo ka pō mua an aka mahina (Hilo is the new moon.)* The Hawai'ian word Hilo has three meanings. First, Hilo was a famous Hawai'ian navigator. Second, the word Hilo can mean twisted or braided. The third meaning for Hilo is the first, or new moon, and it was derived from the other two meanings. As the slender new moon sets in the western sky it often has a twisted appearance thus having the name Hilo. Also, because this is the first moon it acts as a navigator for the moons to follow. Traditionally it was felt that this was a good moon for deep sea fishing but bad for reef fishing. A good night for planting anything except bananas but bad for gathering of any below ground roots and vegetables. This new moon appears as a 'slender' or 'twisted' sliver (*hilo*) "wispy". This is the night of the new moon and the first night of the kapu period of Kū during which his worshippers performed various rites. Generally, this is a bad day for healing.
2. Hoaka: *Hoaka i ka 'ili i ka aka (Hoaka appears as a crescent.)* Second night of the Kū kapu. As with all words in Hawai'ian, the word Hoaka has many meanings. The most literal meaning is crescent and this is indeed the first real crescent moon. A moon this night may be the first moon to cast a shadow. Shadowless acts and work (see Hilo) cease. It is a bad night for fishing as the 'uhane (soul of a spirit (ghosts)) cast shadows and frighten fish away. Specific kahuna could persuade akua (gods) to "cast their shadows" on the worshippers. Excellent night for healing and planting.

3-4-5-6. Kūkahi, Kūlua, Kūkolu, Kūpau, (Third to sixth night) These are the first, second, third and fourth nights associated with the god Kū. The kapu period of Kū ends with the 'First Kū'. This to be a good time to plant sweet potato ('uala) and taro (kalo), as they will grow 'upright' or 'erect' (kū). Although ocean currents will soon change these are good fishing days.

3. Kūkahi: *Kūkahi uala (plant sweet potatoes.)* First Kū - Kū kapu ends.
4. Kūlua: *Kūlua lua kalo (plant kalo.)* Kalo planted now will have two shoots.
5. Kūkolu: *Kūkolu limu.* Low tides are ideal for gathering limu (seaweed).
6. Kūpau: End of the Kū nights. Little direct information for this day is known; however, the general "Kū" period applies.

7-8-9-10. ‘Ole Kūkahi, ‘Ole Kūlua, ‘Ole Kūkolu, ‘Ole Kūpau (The four ‘Ole days, literally, First, Second, Third, and Last ‘Ole Kū. ‘Ole Kūlua was the first quarter of the moon; the names for days 7-10 match the names of days 21-24 of the last quarter moon. Days 7-10 mark the transition from less than half-lit moon to the more than half-lit moon.) These days were named because fishing is poor due to high tides and rough ocean. Little planting was done until the final day where the ending “pau” (Kūpau), which means done or finished, marked the end of the rough weather.

7. ‘Ole Kūkahi: Considered unfortunate for planting and much of anything else, including fishing. The seas are rough. Kahuna Lapa‘au wait to begin healings until after these ‘ole nights were passed.
8. ‘Ole Kūlua: See ‘Ole Kūkahi.
9. ‘Ole Kūkolu: See ‘Ole Kūkahi.
10. ‘Ole Kūpau: End of the ‘ole nights.

The second 10-day period (anahulu) was called “poepoe,” “round” or “full,” as the moon became full and round.

11. Huna: *Huna wini e nalowale ka mahina (referring to the somewhat horn like appearance of the remaining shadow of the moon.)* Unseen, secret or hidden day - Recommended for planting root plants and gourds. Good fishing.
12. Mohalu: *Mohalu poepoe o ka mahina (when the moon achieves round.)* Blooming day - Sacred to Lono, akūa (god) of vegetation. Fish, fruits and seaweed are kapu to eat. However, this night was also good for planting vegetables for which you wanted them to resemble the roundness of the moon. This is the first of two nights that are sacred to Lono. After offering prayers to Lono, farmers would eat a large meal so that their stomachs were round and full and then plant seed of ipu (gourds) so that when they grew they would be round and full like the moon. Since the moon was still “growing”, it would have a tendency to “pull” the sprouting gourd vines to the surface and give them a hefty start on their circle of life. Lono “kapu” period observed.

On the next four nights the moon is considered to be “full.” It was an especially auspicious time for farming. Hua marked the first of these.

13. Hua: *Hua mahina mahuahua nui (Hua is a moon of strong growth.)* second sacred night of Lono. Hua has many meanings however it is believed in this

reference to mean egg, or fruit and/or seed. The meaning egg referred to the near full shape of the moon. It was good luck for planting and fishing. The land is fruitful.

14. Akua: *Akua 'aka 'aka o ka mahina (on Akua the moon smiles.)* Akua can translate to mean god, goddess as well as corpse, devil and idol. This is the second full Hawai'ian moon and is near the full round shape. This was a good night for fishing however it is also a time of anxiety and dread. It is believed on this night the moon was torn from the earth, and in this act, was transformed into a god. After sunset, Hawai'ians were on the lookout for Ka Huaka'i a ka po or "Marchers of the Night" (ghostly processions) which are commonly seen on these nights. Offerings were often made on this evening but it is a night generally kapu to all the akua. Offerings are made to increase food.
15. Hōkū: *Hōkū ka mahina nui mālama (Hōkū is the fullest of the moons)* The third day of the four Hawai'ian full moons was believed to be the fullest moon and was good for anything that was planted in rows. Though they would be small-fruited, root plants and bananas will be prolific if planted this night. Good fishing.
16. Māhealani: *Māhealani mahina hapa lua hope (Māhealani is the second night of the full moon.)* This 16th lunar phase is the last night of the four Hawai'ian full moons and was good for all types of work, planting and fishing. Fertility of all plants. "Luck." A good night during which to divine the future or to ask for omens from the akua to find hidden objects. Interestingly, Māhealani was considered "THE full moon" as noted in *Native Planters in Old Hawai'i* by Handy and Handy, (1972). Referencing our own birth date on a modern (solar) calendar and then adding or subtracting days to find the full moon is one way we can attempt to determine our own birth date on the Hawai'ian lunar calendar and consequently our Hawai'ian "Birth Omen." However, as you are beginning to understand, Hawai'ian kahuna often made adjustments to the calendar on the fly, so to speak. As Hawai'ians had no written language these adjustments were rarely recorded and have been lost to history. Therefore the comparison of your birthdate to the Hawai'ian calendar can only be an approximation. As you can see, the Hawai'ians took full advantage of the four full moons.
17. Kulu: *Kulu ka moana iho ka mahina (Kulu is the moon that descends to the ocean.)* Fishing is considered good. This first moon following the four full

moons was considered a time to give gifts of the first harvests to the gods and goddesses.

18-19-20. Lā‘au Ku Kahi, Lā‘au Ku Lua, Lā‘au Pau

This is the first, second and last lā‘au nights. The Hawai‘ian word Lā‘au means just about any type of vegetation, trees, etc. Thus these three nights were associated with trees and plants, although, interestingly, planting of certain types of fruit were discouraged during this period. Uala, melons, ulu and ipu will run to woody (lā‘au) vines. For medicines (lā‘au lapa‘au), this is a time favored for gathering herbs and for their preparations by healers (kahuna lapa‘au). It is a good time for planting banana (mai‘a) and other trees necessary to support them. It is a favorable time for planting other crops and fishing.

18.Lā‘au Ku Kahi: On La‘au Ku Kahi, the moon has waned so much that the sharp points of its horns can once more be seen. A day favored for gathering medicinal plants and for creating medicines.

19.Lā‘au Ku Lua: See La‘au Ku Kahi.

20.Lā‘au Pau: A good day for planting. See La‘au ku kahi.

The third 9 or 10-day period (anahulu) was called “‘emi” - “decreasing” or “waning,” as the moon continues to lose much of its light. The last quarter moon rises around midnight and sets around noon. Muku, the new moon, is unseen between the earth and the sun. Usually not good for fishing, conducting meetings, making decisions or starting large tasks.

21-22-23. ‘Ole Kūkahi; ‘Ole Kūlua; ‘Ole Kūpau (Literally, the first, second and last night of nothing.) First, Second, and Last ‘Ole Kū; ‘Ole Kūlua was the last quarter; the names of days 21-23 match the names of 7-10 days of the first quarter moon, and mark the transition from more than half-lit moon to less than half-lit moon.) Again, we enter a series of three unproductive (‘Ole) nights. The word “ole” itself means ‘no.” During this time, people avoided planting and fishing, though farmers would weed and otherwise tidy up.

21.‘Ole Kūkahi: Not recommended for fishing, planting, or much of anything else. Not good for healing.

22.‘Ole Kūlua: see ‘Ole Kūkahi.

23.‘Ole Kūpau: This final ‘Ole day belonged to and is the first kapu day of Kanaloa. Offerings of sacrifice (not human) are made, and prayers said. Good for healing.

24-25-26. Kāloa Kūkahī; Kāloa Kūlua; Kāloa Pau (Literally, First, Second, and Last Kāloa Kū. Kāloa is short for Kanaloa, a major akua, or god.) These three nights are associated with vegetation. Planting of some types of fruit is discouraged during this period because they will be woody instead of tender, though other types of plantings can occur. Planting of long stemmed plants as well as vines are encouraged. Fishing is good through these three days, especially shellfish. This period is also an important time for the healers to go out and locate herbs for medicines. Offerings and prayers. Healing.

24.Kāloa Kūkahī: Second kapu day of Kanaloa - This first night of the Kāloa period continues the worship of Kanaloa from the previous 'Ole Pau night.

25.Kāloa Kūlua: Good for planting plants with long stems (such as banana, hala, sugar cane, bamboo). Good for healing.

26.Kāloa Pau: End of Kanaloa kapu period.

As with the first 3 nights of the month, on these final nights when the moon casts no shadows, the ali'i and the kahuna would plan and execute certain activities that, if done during daylight, caused them to cast a shadow.

27.Kāne: Sacred to the akua after which it is named. The 27th lunar moon marks a two day period of worship to the Gods Kāne and Lono. This was a very strictly enforced kapu and most of this period was devoted to prayer to the Gods. No planting or fishing is allowed – such activities are kapu. No fires are made, no kapa is beaten, and all sound is forbidden. Another night on which the Night Marchers, ghosts, and spirits are often seen. Good for healing. Families who recognized sharks as 'aumakua might choose this day to transfigure their recently deceased relatives into sharks.

28.Lono: Second day of Kane. Kapu. The 28th lunar moon continues from the previous night of worship to Kāne and Lono, with emphasis switching to the God Lono and prayers for rain. Gourds planted at this time were fruitful (gourds were the kino lau of Lono.) Good for healing and all positive things. Sound kapu again in effect.

29.Mauli: *Mauli nei (the moon of Maui is here.)* This moon usually rises with daylight. Fishing was encouraged due to lower tides and marriages were often performed on this day.

30.Muku: *Muku nei (the moon of Muku is here.)* This final lunar phase finds the moon rising completely with the shaded side of the moon facing the earth. The moon vanishes (muku). Fishing is good but healing kuhuna

shouldn't begin treating patients on this night, as the name also means "cut-off," which is inauspicious. As with the Mahealani day, by referencing our own birth date on a solar calendar and then adding or subtracting days to find this NEW moon is one way we can help approximate our own birth date on the Hawai'ian lunar calendar and consequently our Hawai'ian "Birth Omen.

Astronomical knowledge, gathered and stored in the minds of the kahuna, was responsible for the creation and perpetuation of Hawai'i's calendar. Obviously, a calendar of this type isn't totally astronomically correct. The night of Hilo had to fall on the new moon; Mahealani on the full. Therefore, one day had to be dropped at regular intervals. The determination of the number of nights in a month was forecast on the fifteenth night by observing the position of the moon. If the month had 29 days the only change in the sequence of names for a 30 day month was to delete the name Mahealani, which was listed as the sixteenth day. Thus, Kulu, the seventeenth night in a 30-day month, becomes the sixteenth night in a 29-day month instead of Mahealani. In essence, Hawaiians subtracted days to correct the lunar month cycle and added months to make up for the celestial yearly cycle (see the "thirteenth month" - Welehu-lua). Such periodic corrections are necessary with any calendar.

As can be seen by the above, there were four kapu periods each month:

1st, 2nd, and 3rd days were sacred to Kū

12th and 13th days were sacred to Lono

23rd and 24th days were sacred to Kanāloa

27th and 28th days were sacred to Kāne

Thus, there was a kapu period about every week. During these times, only those who prayed to these deities observed their kapu. This usually meant that they didn't work or play, avoided eating certain foods, and prayed and gave offerings to their deities. Such kapu weren't universally recognized since there wasn't one religious structure, but were rigorously kept by those who were impelled to do so.

This was the case for about eight months each year. However, these ritual periods were not observed during the annual four-month long Makahiki festival. During the Makahiki, when all attention was turned toward making offerings to Lono, (Lonoikamakahiki) rituals, and sports competitions. People were "freed" from the

kapu of Ku. It began with an initial 4 days of rest, followed by one month of labor, during which the konohiki (a lesser chief placed in charge of a plot of land) would travel in a procession through his district with his entourage, bearing the symbol of Lono, (a large sheet of kapa attached to a crosspiece mounted on a central staff) for the purpose of tax collection. The taxes were in the form of kapa, feathers, pigs, dogs, kalo and other produce. When enough taxes had been collected from an ahupua'a (a division of land), it would be declared noa (free) and then the games and festivities could continue for the next three months. Once the period of Makahiki ended the period of Ku was again ascendant. People returned to work, planted their crops, raised animals and tended their fish ponds. (When Hawai'i was converted to Christianity, Sunday became the only kapu day, as it was "sacred" to the new god.)

A chant for remembering the days of the moon:

(Note: this chant begins with the day "Muku" which appears to be in contrast with the recorded days of the month. Muku is usually recorded as the last day of the month. Is this purposeful or is it for some other reason? We can only conjecture and make note.)

Kamali'i 'ike 'ole i ka helu pō

[Little children who do not know how to count the nights]

Muku nei, muku ka malama

[Muku is here, cut off (shortened) is the moon/month]

Hilo nei, kau ka Hoaka

[Hilo is here! (Threadlike or faint streak of light), the Hoaka (Crescent) rises]

'Eha Kū, 'eha 'Ole

[Four days of Kū, four days of 'Ole]

Huna, Mōhalu, Hua, Akua

[Huna (Hidden), Mohala (Blooming), Hua (Fruit), Akua (God)]

Hoku, Māhealani, Kulua

[Hoku (Full Moon Night), Māhealani (Full Moon Night), Kulua (Like tears, flowing away)]

‘Ekolu Lā‘au, ‘ekolu ‘Ole

[Three Lā‘au (Plant) days, Three ‘Ole days]

‘Ekolu Kāloa, Kāne, Lono, Maui no.

[Three Kāloa (Kanaloa) days, Kāne, Lono, and Maui (Life-Spirit). Kanaloa, Kāne and Lono are three major gods of ancient Hawai‘i.]

Nā ‘ōuli hānau: Hawai‘ian Birth Omens

Like those who study astrology and the Zodiac, Hawai‘ians were particularly interested in the moon, both as a highly visible calendar and also as an indicator of character traits for those born during each of the lunar months. This information was apparently compared with that obtained from the day of the lunar months upon which the birth occurred, as each day also indicated specific future traits. From the incomplete information that was recorded, we can gain a fairly complete picture of the influence of the month and moon (mahina) on human character. (Many of these traits appear to be concerned solely with males.)

Note: Our western months do not precisely fit with those recognized in Hawai‘i due to internal structural differences so only approximate comparisons can be made. Also, as you are reading, please remember my earlier precaution regarding putting yourself in a “Pono” state of mind. To the western way of thinking many omens may appear derogatory, however, in the Hawai‘ian way of thinking may have been highly esteemed.

Makali‘i - Makali‘i is the guiding star for this first month of the lunar year. It is also known as Huihui, meaning “bunched” or tightly huddled in reference to the togetherness of the “Seven Sisters” (Pleiades). Large families will dominate those born in Makali‘i (last of November – first part of December). If both the man and woman were born this month, their family will be even larger. Children born in this time were considered noisy talkers.

Ka‘elo - Ka‘elo believed to be “Betelgeuse” in the constellation Orion. Those born in Ka‘elo (last of December – first part of January) are highly affectionate to their spouses and families. These men and women enjoy many friendships and are very charitable. Their friends are showered with affection by the man or woman born in Ka‘elo.

Kaulua – The guiding star is “Kaulua,” which is short for its full name Kauluaahaimohai (pit of sacrifice.) Kaulua is the first magnitude star Sirius in the constellation Canis Major in the southern sky. Those born in Kaulua (last of January – first part of February), a time of violent storms, have short tempers and make mighty warriors in battle and will be victorious in all pursuits.

Nana – Nana is the guiding star for this month. A highly auspicious month in which to be born is Nana (last of February – first part of March). Those born this

month are confident and will succeed in whatever profession is chosen: farming, fishing, kapa beating, and so on.

Welo – Welo is the guiding star for this month. “Illustrious” is the term to be applied to those born in Welo (last of March – first part of April). They are highly skilled at divination and counselling, and their children will follow them in their profession with great success.

Ikiiki – Kaulia is the guiding star for this month. Those born in Ikiiki (last of April – first part of May) are fond of agriculture. Although their families enjoy much of their attention, their houses will always be open to strangers and friends. This is a great month to explore the wonders of the reefs as the moon pulls the tides to a very low level.

Ka‘aona - Ka‘aona is the guiding star for this month. Those born in Ka‘aona (last of May – first part of June) are fortunate, for they will be a favorite of chiefs and, if male, greatly desired by women. Such persons are known as the “intoxicating shrub of makalei” (a plant used to stupefy fish). Children born during this month are said to have pleasant speaking and chanting voices.

Hināia‘ele‘ele - Hināia‘ele‘ele is the guiding star for this month. Those born in Hināia‘ele‘ele (last of June – first part of July) are lazy and ignorant, desire only pleasurable activities. Learning is avoided by such persons.

Mahoe-mua, Mahoe-hope - Hili-Na-Ehu and Wehewehe are the guiding stars for these months. Those born in Mahoe-mua (last of July – first part of August) and Mahoe-hope (last of August – first part of September) have come into this world during the “twin months,” and are enigmas. They can be either good or evil. If their first act is evil, they will continue to be evil throughout their lives. If the first conscious action is good, they shall be good. If the first is good and the second evil, evil shall be their path. Such persons are fond of agriculture and fishing.

‘Ikuwā – Kahela, also known Kauka-Malama, is the guiding star for ‘Ikuwā. Like the loud voices of the thunder in the uplands, roaring winds in the lowlands and pounding surf generated by storms far out at sea, those born in ‘Ikuwā (last of September – first part of October) possess extremely loud voices, which makes them perfect heralds for the chiefs. These men may become chiefs. Their opinions will be akin to the sound of thunder during the month of ‘Ikuwā

Welehu – Welehu is the guiding star for this month. Another highly auspicious month. Those born in Welehu (last of October – first part of November) are very

fertile and will have many children. However, that “fertility” may be explained because of the change in the weather when very little constructive work was done outside because of the storms. People stayed at home with little to do except to rest and sleep because they had completed the necessary chores during the preceding season.) It was said a girl born at the beginning of this wet season would continually shed tears.

At least some of these predictions were based on the nature of the month in which the child was born: “stormy months produce emotionally explosive children.” Many other factors were involved.

After the month had been noted, the specific day was taken into consideration. Please note that the birth omens do not necessarily correlate directly to the omens of the calendar days. This is especially apparent on the days of Kū (3-4-5-6) and the ‘Ole days (7-8-9-10) following. (See Nā Pō Mahina: The Hawai‘ian Lunar Calendar).

As with many other cultures and religions of the world, it should be noted that the Hawai‘ian “day” begins at sunset – not sunrise. This is common among peoples that observe lunar calendars, since the moon, not the sun, is the revealer of the date. Unfortunately, extensive recorded birth omen information is not available.

1. Hilo: (faint thread; puahilo, “faint, wispy”). No recorded traditions.
2. Hoaka: Men born on this day will grumble about everything, will make trouble, and be stingy, unmerciful, and conceited. They will be clever at getting their way. Still they will have some lovable qualities and will be quite efficient. Women will “show their teeth” (i.e., be angry or “huhu”), but will conceal their anger with affability. Dignified and unassuming will be used to describe them, but such women are truly hypocrites and vain. They often wait at the doors of others for free meals.
3. Kūkahi: Men are dauntless, strong of body, quite brave, unyielding and kind-hearted, though they constantly make mistakes. Women are “ensnarers,” have little pride, and constantly eat food left over from the meals of others.
4. Kūlua: No recorded traditions are available, however, since this is one of the 4 days of “Kū” please review day 3 and day 6 for more insight.
5. Kūkolu: No recorded traditions are available, however, since this is one of the 4 days of “Kū” please review day 3 and day 6 for more insight.

6. Kūpau: A man born this day will cling to all that he is taught. He will be a fine man if he is properly taught as a boy. He will be quite evil if he is taught evil. Nothing or no person can alter the character of a person born on this day. Women born on Kū pau are quite independent and virtuous. They are good workers and are ashamed to ask for favors or to go to the homes of others to ask for anything. They will make female enemies without cause but will work hard and have prosperous, handsome men pursuing them.
7. ‘Ole Kūkahi: These men are secretive about their prosperity and will hide it from others. They will gain little, depending unashamedly on women to support them; be lazy, gluttonous, fond of pleasurable activities, and hard-hearted. He will happily steal food from the gardens of women and children, or linger at the doors of others at mealtimes (so that he will be fed). Shamelessly, he’ll send children to other houses to beg for food and other things, and will expect to be paid (in food) for caring for children. They are hard-hearted. Women born on this day will be virtuous and work hard with their hands, yet they’ll also be quick tempered and will often grumble. They’ll also force others to work (As is obvious, this is an ill-omened day for the birth of children – and just about everything else.)
8. ‘Ole Kūlua: Men born on this day will be fond of pleasure but also apply themselves to work with zest. Women born on this day will be bad-tempered, talkative gossipers, fond of praise, and ready to assume honors that don’t belong to them. They will enjoy associating with the ali‘i (chiefs), do only a bit of work, and be widely criticized by other women.
9. ‘Ole Kūkolu: Men and women born this day are quite acquisitive, merciless, and stingy. Everything that they possess will be gained from others.
10. ‘Ole Kūpau: Men and women born this day will enjoy great prosperity.
11. Huna: Men born this day will be kind, modest, and hospitable, full of wisdom. They will also have enemies that speak out against them. They will be despised and troubled by others. Women will share these virtues with men, and their names will become famous.
12. Mohalu: Men or women born on this day will be skeptical but excellent workers. Women born on Mohalu will be lazy at work.
13. Hua: Men born on this day will be prosperous, greatly loved, and kindhearted. They will enjoy a famous name. Women will also be prosperous, but won’t attain a famous name or be greatly loved.
14. Akua: A man or woman born on this day will be prosperous, but will care nothing for his or her parents. “Bad-hearted” describes these people, who

will disgrace their families and give away all of their possessions. However, a man or woman born during the daylight hours on Akua will love everyone. Children born on the night of Akua are aggressive, fighting for right or wrong.

15. Hoku: Men and women born on this day will be famous and prosperous. However, they'll have many enemies. Women will be quite active.
16. Māhealani: This is a highly auspicious day on which to be born. Men or women born on this day will be "strivers."
17. Kulu: A man or woman born on this day will be prosperous, affectionate, and greatly loved by all.
18. Lā'au Ku Kahi: Men and women born on this day will be fine of character. They're eager for knowledge and want to learn and hear new things.
19. Lā'au Ku Lua: See La'au ku kahi. Women born this day may have many husbands and children.
20. Lā'au Pau: No recorded traditions are available, however, since this is one of the 3 days of "La'au" please review days 18 and 19 for more insight.
21. 'Ole Kūkahi: men and women born on this day will be inefficient and ineffective.
22. 'Ole Kūlua: Men and women born on this day will be modest and quiet.
23. 'Ole Kūpau: No recorded traditions are available, however, since this is one of the 3 days of the second "'Ole" please review days 21 and 22 for more insight. Also of value are the first "'Ole" days (7-8-9-10.)
24. Kāloa Kūkahi: Persons born on this day will be good. Kaloa was short for Kanaloa, god of the ocean depths. Kūkahi meaning "first Ku, " or literally "standing first."
25. Kāloa Kūlua: This day is known as an auspicious day upon which to be born however the reasoning behind it has been lost. Kūlua meaning "second Ku" or perhaps "double Ku." Literally "standing second." Is this day double of Kāloa Kūkahi? (twice as good?)
26. Kāloa Pau: ("Last Kāloa") No recorded traditions are available; however, since this is the ending day of the 3 days of "Kāloa" ("Kanaloa") please review day 24 and day 25 for more insight.
27. Kāne: Little information is available; we can assume by the name that those born this day would be compared to Kāne, creator of the heavens and life in general.
28. Lono: Little information is available, however as one of the 4 general gods comparison might be made as Lono was the god of fertility and peace. The

name also means “news, report, remembrance, rumor.” Perhaps it is auspicious to be born on this day.

29. Mauli: Although there is no direct information available the name may be the revealer of the omen. Maui means “life, heart, seat of life, ghost, or spirit.” Perhaps “that which keeps us going” would be a good description.
30. Muku: “cut short or amputated; at the end; ceased; anything cut off short” (this is one of the “adjustment” days of the Hawai‘ian calendar.) Persons born this day may always be lacking or incomplete. They may go through life unnoticed.

Even this fragmentary list of “day” birth omens reveals much. Hawai‘ians had no concept of what westerners know as the zodiac, however, they indeed saw and recognized more than 100 different constellations. They still relied on the moon and stars to determine future character. The importance placed upon such omens cannot today be determined.

It’s All Relative!

Hawai‘ians were quite logical in assuming that humans would be affected by the night of the moon upon which they had been born. Didn’t the moon affect storms, the sea (tides), and fish? Didn’t bananas planted on certain nights grow longer and more flavorful? Such observations naturally led to the conclusion that the moon also affected human behavior. We must always attempt, in any study of Astrology, which includes dates, star positions, births, etc. to remember that it is all relative to place and time. This was especially true for the Hawai‘ians. They came to Hawaii from different longitudes and latitudes. Their “view” of the celestial heavens most assuredly changed as they crossed into the Northern Hemisphere. Birth omens that are derived/derived from some astronomical star charts, often consulted for astrology research, are from star positions in the sky from many, many years ago. As the Earth orbits the sun, it spins on its axis. Early astrologers thought the axis was at a constant angle but it turns out that the earth has a very slow wobble - much like the wobble of a spinning top. The wobble takes 26,000 years to complete one revolution and while this sounds like a very long time this slight oscillation has a profound effect on the relative position of the Earth to the Sun and the stars.

You see, the dates for each of the signs of the Zodiac were defined such a long time ago they have become entrenched in modern thinking. The dates have never been updated to consider the Earth’s “precession” so you probably are not the

Zodiak sign that you think you are. The position of the stars is so different compared to the time of early astrology that the Sun now actually passes through 13 constellations, not 12. The thirteenth sign is "Ophiuchus." Ophiuchus occurs between November 29 and December 18. There are more than 250,000 pages on the internet about this constellation, referring to it as the 13th star sign or 13th sign of the zodiac. Perhaps the ancient Hawai'ians had it correct when they occasionally added the thirteenth month of **Welehu-Lua** to their calendar.

During research for this paper the author investigated his own birth omens. He was born on a full moon during a late spring evening in the western mainland (continental US). Birth occurred at 7:35 PM. The "local" sunset occurred at 7:48 PM local time. In Hawai'i the "local" sunset occurred at 7:15. If he had been born in Hawai'i local time he would have actually been born the next day as the birth occurred after Hawai'ian sundown. However, remember "its all relative." The birth in "celestial" time would have been at the same moment anywhere on earth. This means that the time of birth would have been at 5:35 local Hawai'ian time, well within the definition of the Hawai'ian day.

For your further research!

The US Navy maintains information which will be very valuable in your research of your own birth omen. The best place to begin is by finding your birth date, location, phase of the moon and especially the time of sunset on the day in question.

http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.php

There are other tables here that may be of value also:

http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneYear.php (sunrise and sunset)

<http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/MoonPhase.php> (phase of moon)

For more insight on the Hawai‘ian moon and cyclical or “seasonal” changes and star names visit:

http://archive.hokulea.com/ike/hookele/celestial_sphere.html

www.mauna-a-wakea.info/maunakea/J1_terms.html