



The Bowl of Light: Ancestral Wisdom from a Hawaiian Shaman

Hank Wesselman

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A paleoanthropologist by training, Hank Wesselman captures for a new generation the stories and wisdom nurtured over eight years of friendship with the late Hale Kealohalani Makua, one of Hawaii's greatest ancestral leaders and shamans.

The author's concerns are palpable when Hawaii's chief *kahuna* appears at a reception and presentation, checking him out. From this first meeting grows an abiding friendship, and the enduring spirit of *aloha* runs throughout the recounting: "to be in the presence of divinity; or in the presence of (alo) the divine breath of life (HA)." Eventually the relationship is cemented by a duplicate ancestral walking stick.

Wesselman has written both shamanic and scientific works; here he gains access to rarely shared spiritual wisdom and invites readers along on the intimate journey. As we visit the sacred sites of Hawaii, with Makua's talk-story illuminating every page, it's as if we are seated beside the author, his wife, and Makua, joining the circle as the teachings flow.

The "Bowl of Light" of the title represents the light or spark of the divine that illuminates each soul from within, starting at the first breath. Most people's negative life choices, those that injure others, fill this bowl with stones until the light nearly goes out. Makua observed, "Hopefully, we wake up to what is going on... become aware...there is almost no light shining forth." Wesselman then describes him gently taking the bowl and turning it over, shaking it vigorously and advising, "We simply dump it out."

Makua imparts specific spiritual messages, including those called the "Ancestral Grand Plan" and "On Becoming Gods," as well as the risks of following dark polarities. Modern spiritual seekers will find the section explaining the seven life roles especially insightful.

Some readers may wonder about Makua's claim that cetaceans like whales and dolphins are embodiments of our ancestors while others might question details about the book's actual production: if it's disrespectful to take notes when a Hawaiian elder speaks, then how did this tale get written in such scrupulous detail? Trusting in Wesselman's abiding respect and love for Makua, we must assume that his text captures the essence of Makua's message—notes or not.

In *Bowl of Light*, Wesselman composes a masterpiece, sharing Makua's profound talk-story—the indigenous way of imparting wisdom—as the oral tradition is effectively transmitted into the written word. The book is essential for any world wisdom collection and for those on a spiritual path to discover the soul's true heritage, from "the last living holder of this knowledge."

BOBBYE MIDDENDORF (May / June 2011)

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