

# 6

## Creating a Kingdom: Hawai‘i from 1796 to 1819

Kamehameha followed up his victory with a cautious and conciliatory policy of power sharing with his key long-term chiefly supporters, rather than power monopolisation. This maintained the coherence of his support base. United, they increased their coercive advantage by monitoring all localities in the realm to anticipate and stifle rebellious sentiment before it developed into a serious challenge. A devastating epidemic on the island of O‘ahu in the early 1800s decimated many of those trained in warfare, while each year of peace and the cessation of widespread training for warfare after 1796 reduced the military capacity of the population. Kamehameha’s clique monopolised firearms and demilitarised the islands, including their own capacity once their relative coercive advantage was assured. In the decade before his death in 1819, Kamehameha showed himself to be a cultural conservative in adhering to the old gods and leaving much of the day-to-day running of the kingdom to a bureaucracy that combined old offices and the new practices that responded to and were influenced by the increasing visits from Western vessels. He left a secure and peaceful kingdom, but one in which a powerful clique – centred on his wife Ka‘ahumanu – sought a greater embrace of Western ways and an erosion of traditional religious beliefs, in the face of the looming prospect of more direct Western interference in the kingdom’s affairs. Life for most Hawaiian commoners, away from a few ports frequented by Westerners, continued to exhibit much continuity with past beliefs and

ways, beyond the periodic arrival of new diseases and increasing demands from chiefs for labour and produce with which to purchase luxury items for their own consumption.

The transition of societies from advanced chiefdoms to early states is generally seen as a process involving the centralisation, secularisation and institutionalisation of power. The creation of a permanent administrative body and an effective full-time military force, both of which are loyal to the state, is usually seen as essential to the success of this transition. The state needs access to income sufficient to maintain these institutions and retain their loyalty. The ability of the ruler to appoint candidates to offices within these bodies is an important yardstick with which to measure the consolidation of a monarch's power.

From 1796 until his death in 1819, Kamehameha made much progress in ensuring that the necessary conditions for centralisation existed. In Samuel Kamakau's list of Kamehameha's reforms after the crushing of Namakeha's rebellion, the implication is that reform was initiated rapidly in a relatively coherent package. No significant opposition is mentioned. Modern commentators have not questioned this representation, despite the limited detail Kamakau provides on events during the crucial years immediately following the cessation of hostilities. The lack of open confrontations in this period obscures the fact that Kamehameha's power was by no means unassailable, even after reforms to the structure of power. On closer examination, it appears that his consolidation of power was a gradual and, at times, fragile, process. This process can be broadly divided into three relatively distinct phases: 1776–1804, 1804–12, and 1812–19.

## 1796–1804: Oligarchy

The four Kona uncles continued to be crucial to Kamehameha's power in this period. With a large, multi-island moku to hold together, and temporarily weakened by their losses in the Kaua'i channel, it made sense for the Kona clique to share the burden of controlling the newly conquered lands. Keaweheulu, Ke'eaumoku, Kamanawa and Kame'eiamoku were given charge of the islands under Kamehameha's control. Each also received large tracts of land throughout the islands. It was specified that Kamehameha could not alienate these lands from them.<sup>1</sup>

1 Kamakau (1961), pp. 175–76; and Kame'eleihiwa (1986), p. 103.

Power within the ruling clique was carefully balanced and restricted. Land grants that were scattered throughout different localities on different islands inhibited the development of local power bases. John Papa Iʻi's description of Kamehameha's division of lands on Oʻahu among his important followers is typical:

The ʻiliʻaina land of Kaneloa in Waikiki and the ahupuaʻa of Punaluu in Koʻolauloa to Keliimaikai; Hamohamo and the ahupuaʻa of Kaaawa to Keawe a Heulu; Kaluaokau and Pau and the ahupuaʻa that includes the two Lai'e's to Kalaimamahu; Kalaepohaku and a part of Halawa for an ahupuaʻa to Isaac Davis; Pahoa and the other part of Halawa for his ahupuaʻa to John Young; Kanewai and a Kalana land division of Moanalua to Keeaumoku; Kapunahou and Moanalua for his ahupuaʻa to Kameeiamoku; Waialae together with all the large ʻiliʻi kupono within the lands of the King to Kaʻahumanu.<sup>2</sup>

Iʻi also mentions that all prominent chiefs were given parcels of land in Waikiki, as it was a site favoured by aliʻi. Kamehameha's lands included rich agricultural tracts at Nuʻuanu, Puaaliʻiliʻi, Kapalomo, Keoneʻula, Puʻupueo, and a residence at the increasingly busy port of Honolulu. Kamehameha's full brother, Keliʻimaikai, his half-brother, Kalaimamahu, his favourite wife, Kaʻahumanu, and his two closest European advisers, John Young and Isaac Davis, also did well out of the land redistribution. The mōʻi's sons, however, do not appear to have been granted significant landholdings.<sup>3</sup> The fragmentation of landholdings increased the number of overseers on the land as chiefs increasingly became absentee landlords and settled junior kin to see to their interests on their scattered fragments.

Chiefly power was not only diminished by the fragmentation of landholdings but also counterbalanced by the establishment of an independent administrative structure. The aliʻi Kalanimoku was particularly powerful within this structure. He was designated pukaua (commander in chief) as well as puʻuku nui (chief treasurer). As puʻuku nui, he was given the task of dividing the lands among Kamehameha's followers, and his consent was required for any gifts Kamehameha wished to bestow upon his supporters.<sup>4</sup> Land and gifts were two crucial tools for securing loyalty in the traditional system. Kalanimoku's powers, therefore, represented a major concession by Kamehameha as mōʻi.

2 Iʻi (1959), p. 70; see also Kamakau (1961), pp. 175–76.

3 Iʻi (1959), pp. 26, 69–70; Kameʻeleihiwa (1986), pp. 98–99, 101; and Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 49.

4 Kamakau (1961), p. 175.

In another passage, Kamakau notes 'Kamehameha appointed men to serve under the different chiefs as stewards. There were several hundred of these, all well-educated for the position, alert and strong'.<sup>5</sup> The only existing groups that could have fulfilled this function were possibly lesser ali'i within retinues or the priesthood. In 1810 Archibald Campbell claimed that 'The principal duties of the executive were, however, entrusted to the priests, by them the revenues were collected, and the laws enforced'.<sup>6</sup>

In an undated passage, Kamakau mentions that Kamehameha appointed commoners to govern the islands 'lest a chief stir up rebellion'.<sup>7</sup> This conflicts with his earlier statement that the four uncles were made kuhina (governors) of the islands. The only kuhina who was not one of the four Kona uncles in this period was Young, who administered Hawai'i from 1802 onwards. But this may have been because Kamehameha launched another expedition against Kaua'i in 1802 that presumably involved all four uncles and their contingents. Marshall Sahlins makes a convincing argument that these so-called 'commoners' were in fact kaukau ali'i (the children of unions between mō'i and women of lesser rank). It was this group that David Malo described as the backbone of the king from which the ali'i nui chose his executive officers and advisers.<sup>8</sup>

The checks and balances within the ruling clique appear to have been a mutually agreed-on attempt to preserve their power by reducing the potential for fission. Kamanawa suggested the idea of fragmenting landholdings to avoid the danger of chiefly rebellion. The strategy worked and there are no accounts of tension within the ruling group. Kamehameha continued to rule with his uncles' approval. His powers were restricted by the functions of Kalanimoku's office. Kamehameha maintained a large court with the usual kahuna, craftsmen, fishermen and retinue of warriors, but this alone was insufficient to maintain his rule. The fledgling bureaucracy would eventually enhance the ruler's power relative to his vassal ali'i. The restriction of Kamehameha's power and the granting of land in perpetuity was enough to secure the Kona uncles' approval for the formation of a bureaucracy, particularly as it also enhanced their

5 Kamakau (1961), p. 178.

6 Campbell (1967), p. 123.

7 Kamakau (1961), p. 184.

8 Campbell (1967), p. 97; Kamakau (1961), p. 184; Lisiansky (1967), p. 100; Sahlins (1981), p. 57; and Malo (1951), pp. 54–55.

control over the rest of the ali'i. Kamehameha's council was enlarged to include more advisers who were experienced in the old ways of warfare and government, such as Kai, Kapalaoa and the kahuna Kalaikuaulu.<sup>9</sup>

The ruling clique had a large enough power base to ensure that, as long as it remained united, it could dominate the islands. There was a significant coercive gap between their power base and that of other ali'i. According to the testimony of Kekuanio'a during land hearings after Kamehameha's death, each one of the four uncles received 60 to 80 'lands', while lesser ali'i, such as Kekuanio'a, received only one or two 'lands' each. The previously cited reference in I'i to the division of land in O'ahu suggests that the lands Kekuanio'a refers to were probably ahupua'a or even smaller units. Furthermore, those outside of the ruling clique were not guaranteed hereditary rights to the lands.<sup>10</sup>

The new bureaucracy served as Kamehameha's eyes and ears, ensuring that his orders were obeyed, and notifying him of any ali'i gathering men about them with rebellious intent. Kamehameha is also said to have scattered informers and female spies throughout his domains to watch for signs of trouble.<sup>11</sup> Crews of paddlers headed by skilled canoe masters conveyed Kamehameha's messengers between islands.<sup>12</sup> In this way, rebels had no secluded haven within the realm in which to mobilise without attracting the attention of their overlord. The main ali'i were required to accompany the mō'i and his court so that he could keep a close watch over them. Removed from a personal landed base, these ali'i depended upon Kamehameha for sustenance, and could not feed and maintain large retinues themselves. Campbell noted that these ali'i numbered between 20 and 30 in 1810.<sup>13</sup>

The economic power of the ruler was also enhanced by the formation of a bureaucracy. As in the past, all land grants carried the obligation of providing tribute, corvée labour and military service when needed. Kamakau states that the level of tribute was set at one-tenth of the hogs and crops raised, as well as a proportion of manufactured goods, such as nets, mats, tapa and fishing lines. Kamehameha used his officials to

9 Kamakau (1961), pp. 175, 177–78; Westervelt (1922), pp. 25–26.

10 Kame'eiehiwa (1986), p. 80; I'i (1959), p. 116.

11 W. D. Alexander, *A Brief History of the Hawaiian People* (New York: American Book Co. 1891), pp. 149–50.

12 Kamakau (1961), pp. 177–78.

13 Campbell (1967), pp. 92–93; Turnbull (1810), p. 141; and Kamakau (1961), p. 178.

tighten up the collection of tribute. Instead of imposing a head tax on households, tribute was now correlated with productivity. Tax assessors were appointed to fix individual tenants' tribute according to the size of their holdings. Others collected and recorded tribute once a year at a location nominated by Kamehameha. While it is unclear what form the payment took, Campbell's observation that priests made up much of the bureaucracy could mean that the collection was in the form of the annual makahiki offerings. Samuel Kamakau, however, refers to these payments as taxes, implying that they were distinct from religious offerings.<sup>14</sup>

It is unclear whether the mō'ī's traditional kō'ele lands and stock herds were sufficient to maintain the new structure of government. Kamakau quantifies kō'ele lands as 10 per cent of all cultivated land. The old problem of utilising production was addressed by improving the transport of produce between localities and islands by canoe. In 1801, for example, Young sent canoes to Maui for supplies when no fish were to be had off Kawaihae on Hawai'i. European trading ships were also occasionally commissioned into service for this task.<sup>15</sup> This may have been enough to ensure that kō'ele lands alone could support the new government structure. There is also reference to Kamehameha not setting seaward and upland boundaries to ahupua'a so that they were not 'hemmed in'.<sup>16</sup> The implication is that rights of access to offshore fishing and upland resources were loosened.

Kamehameha's political and economic innovations contrasted sharply with his religious conservatism. He remained a strong supporter of traditional religion until his death. Makahiki and annual fishing kapu were maintained. The first fish caught and the first fruits continued to be reserved for the gods. Kamehameha retained his strong devotion to Kū'kā'ili-moku, as well as his other personal gods, Kalaiapohā and Pele. In 1801, for example, Kamehameha attempted to stem the flow of lava from Hualalai by appeasing Pele, the volcano goddess, by throwing hogs into the lava followed by cuttings of his own hair. Many heiau were restored and others constructed to gods such as Kū'kā'ili-moku, Ku ke olo'ewa and Kū ho'one'enu'u. Luakini heiau continued to be built and human sacrifice persisted. Both, however, diminished in frequency after the ending

14 Kamakau (1961), pp. 176–77, 192; and Westervelt (1922), p. 26.

15 Kamakau (1961), pp. 177, 190–91; Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 42; and Young, *Manuscript Journal* (Hawai'i State Archives, n.d.), fl.5.

16 Kahananui (1984), p. 202.

of hostilities in 1796.<sup>17</sup> A number of important kahuna were included among his valued advisers, including Pu'ou and his son Hewahewa of the Pa'ao priesthood, Kuaiwa and Halo io lena of the Nahulu class, and Ka pou kahi of the Hulihonua class. New laws issued by Kamehameha continued to be framed in terms of kapu, with kahuna prominent in ensuring compliance.<sup>18</sup> Kamehameha groomed his son, Liholiho, to be his successor by teaching him the correct procedure for heiau ceremonies and other religious events. The declaration of Liholiho as heir apparent was formalised by bestowing the kapu of the heiau upon him.<sup>19</sup>

During this period, Kamehameha issued decrees that were designed to reinforce traditional kapu, and to preserve the civil peace brought about by the end of wars between mō'i. Murder, theft, destruction of property, disobeying the kapu of the gods and sorcery were all prohibited. Perhaps the most celebrated decree was the so-called law of the broken paddle, by which it was forbidden to rob or murder the defenceless and the innocent. The law was prompted by a meeting between Kamehameha and a fisherman who some years earlier, had injured Kamehameha with a paddle near Laupāhoehoe in Hilo when the fisherman sought to defend himself against raiders seeking sacrificial victims. Instead of seeking revenge, Kamehameha is said to have criticised his own actions as an unjustified move against a weaker party who had done him no previous harm. The man was pardoned and an edict issued forbidding such actions in the future.<sup>20</sup> These decrees seem to have generally been adhered to without need for punitive measures and, for example, only one account of a murder occurs in the pages of I'i and Kamakau. This was an incident where the ali'i Kāne i halau killed Mokuhia at sea in an attempt to win the governorship of Hawai'i.<sup>21</sup>

Certain events between 1796 and 1804 suggest, however, that Kamehameha's consolidation of power was by no means complete or smooth. While Kamakau and I'i do not mention any rebellion in this period, William Westervelt claims that there were rebellions, and that

17 Kamakau (1961), pp. 175–76, 179–80, 183–88; I'i (1959), pp. 70, 72–76, 115; Campbell (1967), pp. 95, 128–29; Westervelt (1922), pp. 33–34; and Alexander (1891), pp. 151–52.

18 Kamakau (1961), pp. 187, 191–92; and Campbell (1967), p. 123.

19 Kamakau (1961), p. 188, 221; and see, for examples, I'i (1959), pp. 56–59.

20 Kamakau (1961), pp. 175–76, 181–83; Westervelt (1922), pp. 24–25; and Alexander (1891), p. 151.

21 Kamakau (1961), p. 191.

Kamehameha left his kuhina to deal with them.<sup>22</sup> Much of Kamehameha's efforts were directed towards preparations for another attempt at conquering Kaua'i. One of the reasons Kamakau gives for Kamehameha's desire to subdue Kaua'i was the need to 'satisfy the clamour of his chiefs and warriors who had endured so many privations to make him ruler, [to satisfy them] in their desire for more lands to conquer'.<sup>23</sup> This was a legacy of the past emphasis on martial prowess. Such ingrained attitudes would not die out overnight. The retinues of old rivals might be disbanded, but a large number of ali'i and kanaka still remained skilled in the arts of war. Their presence necessitated the continued maintenance of Kamehameha's own forces, and the age-old problem of diverting their restlessness in times of inactivity remained.

After crushing Namakeha's rebellion, Kamehameha remained on Hawai'i until 1802. The troublesome windward districts of that island may have required Kamehameha to personally oversee a lengthy period of incorporation, as Kahekili had done on O'ahu in the 1780s. Much of Kamehameha's efforts during this time seem to have been directed towards ensuring that the 1796 disaster in the Kaua'i channel was not repeated. He ordered his ali'i to construct larger, sturdy canoes called peleleu. According to 19th-century Hawaiian educator and historian William Alexander, most of the fleet was constructed on Hawai'i, particularly from trees felled in the interior of the district of Hilo. The fleet was five years in the making and, eventually, may have numbered as many as 800 peleleu. Several small European-style vessels were also constructed by Hawaiian carpenters under the direction of foreigners, particularly James Boyd, who had been in the islands since the early 1790s.<sup>24</sup>

When the trader Ebenezer Townsend visited Hawai'i in 1798 he saw a 55-tonne schooner being constructed at Kawaihae under the supervision of Young. A large peleleu was also under construction there. Its twin hulls were 21 metres long, 1.8 metres deep and 60 centimetres wide. The sides of the hulls tumbled inwards to avoid taking in water. The hulls were lashed

22 Westervelt (1922), p. 25.

23 Kamakau (1961), p. 187.

24 Kamakau (1961), p. 187; Ebenezer Townsend Jr., *Extracts from the Diary of Ebenezer Townsend Jr* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, n.d.), pp. 71–72; Alexander (1891), pp. 150–51; Daws (1968a), p. 42; R.S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. 1: 1778–1854, *Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1938), pp. 48–49; Thomas Bargatzky, 'Beachcombers and Castaways as Innovators', *Journal of Pacific History*, 15 (1), 1980, 95; and Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 43.



together with a 1.5-metre space between them. This gap was covered by a platform at the stern, which made the vessel more seaworthy. They were also equipped with a mast (*kia*), mainsail (*pe'a ihu*) and a jib (*kiakahi*) similar to those on European-style sloops. Townsend also noticed a large number of single canoes of various sizes.<sup>25</sup> The construction of the fleet may have served to satisfy the competitive spirit of the *ali'i* and to occupy the attention of their followers.

By 1802 Kamehameha was ready to move against Kaua'i. Young informed the Russian explorer Urey Lisiansky that the force assembled numbered 7,000 Hawaiians, 50 Europeans and an artillery train of 14 cannon, 40 swivel guns and six mortars with large quantities of powder and shot. Lisiansky also found that Kamehameha controlled trade and had all the firearms and other European military technology he needed. Cloth was now the trade item most in demand.<sup>26</sup> The composition of this force is uncertain. Training with traditional weapons continued and the obligation of military service still existed for *maka'ainana*. John Turnbull noted that the supplies were transported to the warriors on each island, implying that each *kuhina* had his own forces.<sup>27</sup>

Kamakau mentions that Kamehameha divided the 'warrior-chiefs' into companies. His description suggests that this process may have been used to incorporate former enemies and replacements. He states that the companies were decided according to certain classes and that Kamehameha:

put every man into one of these classes: the Keawe, the Mahi, the I, the Ahu, the Pulena, the Luahine, and the Paia. For young stranger chiefs he made three classes: the Okaka, the 'Ai 'ohi'a, and the Uouo.<sup>28</sup>

Some of the first group bears the names of families that had been traditional rivals of Kamehameha. The same practice is attributed to Kalani'ōpu'u on Hawai'i. In both cases, it is unclear if there was a central force loyal to the ruler, or if those combatants were distributed amongst his followers. A reference to the invasion force on O'ahu in 1804 suggests that forces were still drawn in large part from a number of chiefly retainers – Kamakau refers to the whole company as including:

25 Townsend (n.d.), pp. 23–29; and Kamakau (1961), p. 187.

26 Lisiansky (1967), pp. 11, 133.

27 Kamakau (1961), p. 178; I'i (1959), p. 189; Lisiansky (1967), p. 116; Turnbull (1810), p. 226.

28 Kamakau (1961), p. 176.

Kamehameha's sons and daughters with their households and those of his brothers and sisters, his councilors and chiefs, over a hundred in each household, running into a thousand.<sup>29</sup>

Kaumuali'i, the mō'i mō'i of Kaua'i, told Lisiansky that his own forces consisted of five Europeans, three cannon, 40 swivel guns, a large number of muskets with an ample supply of powder and shot, and 30,000 warriors.<sup>30</sup> While the figure of 30,000 is probably an exaggeration, it may indicate that the gravity of the situation caused Kaumuali'i to call up the maka'ainana, while Kamehameha's force of 7,000 represented a force of trained warriors only.

The only indication of any break with tradition patterns is Lisiansky's reference to the large stocks of firearms possessed by Hawaiians, and his mention of a small bodyguard within Kamehameha's retinue who wore blue European-style coats and drilled in European style. The reference to drill presumably means that they at least used firearms, although Lisiansky also noted that they were said to be the best warriors in the islands.<sup>31</sup> The pursuit of power was beginning to increasingly involve the use of European goods during this time. There was a noticeable increase in agricultural production during these years, particularly on O'ahu and, to a lesser extent, around Kealakekua Bay, Kailua and Kawaihae. All were ports of call for European vessels and the new fields developed tended to cater to the visitors demands for yams and potatoes as well as taro and 'uala. As Ross Cordy has noted, chiefly power stood to be enhanced through arming retainers with firearms and maintaining loyalty through the redistribution of European trade goods.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of this period Kamehameha had also collected an impressive fleet of European vessels. Turnbull notes that Kamehameha had upwards of 20 European-style vessels ranging between 22 and 63 tonnes. Some were even copper-bottomed like the best European vessels, although there was a shortage of naval stores in general. The largest of these vessels were used as men-of-war and some mounted a few light guns. Most vessels seemed to be used solely to transport provisions between the islands to Kamehameha's forces. These vessels were ideal for this task because of their

29 Kamakau (1961), p. 189.

30 Lisiansky (1967), p. 113.

31 Lisiansky (1967), p. 116. See also Turnbull (1810), pp. 160–62.

32 Kamakau (1961), p. 190; Cordy (1972), pp. 407, 411–12; and Kirch (1985), pp. 235–36, 310 ff., esp. 313.

relatively large holds and ability to cope with rough seas. Soon afterwards, Lisiansky noted a similar number of European vessels and commented that some were armed with swivel guns and commanded by Europeans.<sup>33</sup>

The impressive force gathered for the invasion of Kaua‘i never saw action. After leaving Young to govern Hawai‘i and formally declaring Liholiho to be his chosen successor before his assembled councillors and kuhina, Kamehameha sailed to Maui at the head of the peleleu fleet. The fleet touched at Kipahulu and Kaupo before stopping at Lahaina. Heiau were consecrated in all three landing places. They were probably luakini heiau, given Kamehameha’s intentions. Alexander implies this was the case when he refers to the ‘usual cruel rites’<sup>34</sup> which attended their consecration. As guardian of the kapu of the heiau, Liholiho now presided over these ceremonies.

The expedition remained at Lahaina for a year ‘feeding and clothing themselves with the wealth of Maui, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i and Kaho‘olawe, and worshipping the gods’.<sup>35</sup> It is unclear why Kamehameha remained on Maui for so long. He may have been disturbed by a prophecy that warned against undertaking the expedition uttered by one of his diviners before the fleet left Hawai‘i. Perhaps the mobilisation was intended to intimidate Kaumuali‘i into submission and deter potential rebels within Kamehameha’s domains. When Turnbull visited Kaua‘i in 1802, he found Kaumuali‘i, gloomy and fearful of the prospect of the invasion, constructing a European-style vessel in which to flee. During the expedition’s stopover on Maui, one of the Kona uncles, Kame‘eiamoku, died at Lahaina, and was replaced by his son Hoapili.<sup>36</sup>

Towards the end of 1803 the expedition moved to O‘ahu. Again they settled down for a lengthy stay. They were camped on O‘ahu in 1804 when an epidemic struck the island. Offerings of hundreds of hogs, coconuts and bananas failed to stem its ravages. The sacrifice of three kapu-breakers at a Waikiki heiau also failed to satisfy the gods. The disease has not yet been identified. Kamakau described it as:

---

33 Turnbull (1810), p. 160; and Lisiansky (1967), p. 133.

34 Alexander (1891), p. 152. See also Kamakau (1961), p. 188; and Lisiansky (1967), p. 100.

35 Kamakau (1961), p. 188; and Turnbull (1810), pp. 141, 158.

36 Turnbull (1810), p. 149; Kamakau (1961), p. 188; and Alexander (1891), p. 152.

a very virulent pestilence, and those who contracted it died quickly. A person on the highway would die before he could reach home. One might go for food and water and die so suddenly that those at home did not know what had happened. The body turned black at death. A few died a lingering death, but never longer than twenty-four hours. If they were able to hold out for a day they had a fair chance to live. Those who lived generally lost their hair, hence the illness was called 'Head stripped bare' (po'okole).<sup>37</sup>

Lisiansky was told the epidemic 'destroyed the flower of his [i.e., Kamehameha's] army'.<sup>38</sup> Hawaiian traditions suggest that the epidemic may have killed up to two-thirds of the army gathered there. Patrick Kirch and Marshall Sahlins dispute this figure, and imply that most of the army survived and later settled on O'ahu. It is unclear what the death toll for the civilian population was and whether the epidemic spread throughout the chain. While the epidemic may not have killed as many as some claim, it still dramatically altered power relations in the islands. The army would have suffered many more deaths than ever occurred in indigenous warfare, and a number of politically influential ali'i died, including the three remaining Kona uncles. Kamehameha barely escaped with his own life.<sup>39</sup>

## 1804–12: From oligarchy to autocracy?

Kamehameha moved decisively to reconstitute his power base after the 1804 disaster. The sons of the three dead kuhina took their places and Kamehameha conferred their fathers' privileges upon them. Koahou replaced Kamanawa, Kahekili Ke'eaumoku replaced Ke'eaumoku, while Naihe replaced Keawe a Heulu. With Hoapili, these men formed the new backbone of the king's power. All proved to be loyal supporters of Kamehameha. A particularly close relationship developed between

37 Kamakau (1961), 189.

38 Lisiansky (1967), p. 133.

39 Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 44. See also Alexander (1891), p. 152; Westervelt (1922), p. 29; Daws (1968a), pp. 42–43; Stannard (1989), pp. 55–57; Bushnell (1993), pp. 115–61, 149–51; and A.W. Crosby, 'Hawaiian Depopulation as a Model for the Amerindian Experience', in Terence Ranger & Paul Slack (eds), *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 190.

Kamehameha and Hoapili. The young ali'i was allowed to take Kamehameha's wife Keōpūolani as a wife and was given the future honour of hiding Kamehameha's bones to protect them from enemies.<sup>40</sup>

Kamehameha remained on O'ahu until 1810, from where he administered the affairs of the whole realm with a firm hand. Young continued to act as his administrator on Hawai'i. Ke'eaumoku was made kuhina of Maui.<sup>41</sup> With Kamehameha's approval, kuhina appointed tax collectors, district heads and other local officials. On Hawai'i at least, old established chiefly families were increasingly marginalised from influence by the kuhina and the lesser ali'i who made up his local officials. Campbell describes how the tenants paid 'rent' to ali'i four times a year. The payments were made in kind, usually in pigs, cloth or mats. The lack of agricultural produce in the tribute and frequency of payment implies the mō'i's lands were sufficient to provide for government needs, and that this rent or tax was distinct from makahiki tribute. The produce of Kamehameha's estates, ho'okopu (offerings) and levies ('auhau) satisfied his logistical needs.<sup>42</sup>

Sacred authority continued to be a key aspect of Kamehameha's power. Human sacrifice and execution for kapu violations still took place, but rarely. Most of the population seemed to adhere to the kapu, if Campbell's observations at Honolulu are representative. Campbell heard of no sacrifice during his 13-month stay on O'ahu, but did note the execution of one ali'i for violating a kapu that Kamehameha had placed on others having sexual relations with Ka'ahumanu. Alexander claims three men were sacrificed at Leahi heiau on O'ahu in 1807 because their eating of kapu coconuts was thought to be responsible for the illness of the ali'i nui Keōpūolani. Others were willing to risk the consequences of breaking kapu. Campbell noted that women took advantage of the presence of European vessels to swim out to them at night and eat forbidden foods away from the eyes of other Hawaiians. Campbell once encountered Ka'ahumanu breaking a kapu in this manner. She asked for him to keep it a secret, implying that a revelation would endanger her life.<sup>43</sup>

40 Kamakau (1961), pp. 189–90; Westervelt (1922), pp. 29–30; and Kame'elehiwa (1986), pp. 103, 106.

41 Kamakau (1961), pp. 184, 191; and Campbell (1967), p. 97.

42 Alexander (1891), p. 150; Campbell (1967), p. 118; and Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 44, 50–51.

43 Sahlins (1981), p. 64; Campbell (1967), pp. 128–29, 136, 155; and Alexander (1891).

Kamehameha was well aware of the benefits of his traditional sacred status to his position as ruler. With Davis acting as interpreter, Kamehameha told a European visitor:

I should be afraid to adopt such a dangerous expedient as Christianity, for I think no Christian King can govern in the absolute manner in which I do, and yet be loved by his subjects as I am by mine: such a religion might perhaps answer very well in the course of a few generations; but what chief would sanction it in the beginning, with risk of its subverting his own power, and involving the islands in war? I have made a fixed determination not to suffer it.<sup>44</sup>

Campbell and other European visitors to the islands during these years found Kamehameha to be popular with his subjects.<sup>45</sup>

European interactions with Hawaiians suggested peace and prosperity reigned. But tensions loomed beneath the surface. Trade was booming in part because many ali'i were using trade to enhance their power base. Kamakau noted that it was from these visiting vessels that:

the chiefs and people bought arms and gunpowder. Kamehameha had several storehouses well stocked with foreign arms, but nobody wanted money or clothing. On the part of the foreigners potatoes and yams were in great demand. The chiefs accordingly went into the cultivation of these foods, and grew potatoes on the hill of 'Ualaka'a between Manoa and Makiki, and yams at Ka'akopua, and sold them to the foreigners.<sup>46</sup>

Kamehameha's impressive supply of munitions seems attributable more to his considerable trading skills and ability to meet European requirements than his capacity to exclude other ali'i from trade.<sup>47</sup> Despite the increasing concentration of most European trade at Honolulu after 1805, Kamehameha was still unable to halt the diffusion of firearms. His continued residence on O'ahu was probably in large part due to his desire to exercise influence over trade after the disruption of his power base in the 1804 epidemic.

44 John Martin, *Tonga Islands: William Mariner's Account* (4th edn) (Tonga: Vava'u Press Ltd, 1981), p. xxxiv.

45 Campbell (1967), p. 131; H.W. Bradley, *The American Frontier in Hawaii: The Pioneers 1789–1843* (Stanford University Press, 1942), p. 10.

46 Kamakau (1961), p. 190; I'i (1959), pp. 68–69; and Cordy (1972), pp. 406–07.

47 Daws (1968a), p. 44; Howe (1984), p. 161; and Turnbull (1810), p. 159.

The coercive gap between the power of the Kamehameha's supporters and other ali'i now became weak enough for some of the latter to contemplate challenging the ruling clique. Much of the opposition to Kamehameha seems to have centred upon his favourite wife Ka'ahumanu. She had always refused to devote herself entirely to her husband, either emotionally or politically. She had a significant power base, controlling considerable landholdings, and possessing genealogical links with the old ruling line of Maui as well as important families on Hawai'i. As the senior member of her generation, Ka'ahumanu exercised much influence over her close relatives. Her brother Kahekili Ke'eaumoku was now kuhina of Maui, while she was inducted into Kamehameha's council. Although she bore Kamehameha no children herself, Ka'ahumanu sought to increase her influence over Liholiho by declaring him to be her hanai (adopted child).<sup>48</sup>

Before he died, Ka'ahumanu's father warned Kamehameha to be wary of his daughter, and suggested that she was the only ali'i in the realm who posed any real threat to his rule. Kamehameha declared it a capital offence for anyone but himself to sleep with her, probably fearing that dissidents might coalesce around such a union. In 1809 Kanihonui, a nephew of Kamehameha, was discovered to have defied this edict. While drunkenness may have accounted for his defiance of Kamehameha's prohibition, Kamehameha feared the worst and had Kanihonui executed. Ka'ahumanu was furious. She attempted to organise a revolt to overthrow her husband and install Liholiho in his place. Kamehameha mobilised his supporters and prepared for trouble. Liholiho refused to endorse the revolt in front of the assembled malcontents. With Kamehameha displaying a determination to contest the issue, Liholiho's action was enough to dissuade the assembled ali'i from openly challenging their ruler. The gathering disbanded and conflict was avoided for the meantime.<sup>49</sup>

Tensions simmered until September 1811, when Kamehameha moved to quell trouble on O'ahu. It had come to his attention that ali'i in Ko'olaupoko, Ko'olauloa, Waialua and 'Ewa were gathering men around them. At the same time they were increasing their agricultural production and storing guns and powder. Heeding the advice of his councillors, he announced that he was returning to Hawai'i and that he required the ali'i

48 On Ka'ahumanu's power and influence, see Kamakau (1961), pp. 313, 315; I'i (1959), pp. 26, 53; Sahlins (1981), p. 58; Daws (1968a), p. 56; and Kame'eiehiwa (1986), p. 109.

49 Kamakau (1961), pp. 189, 194; and I'i (1959), pp. 50–51.

to turn over their guns and ammunition and go with him to his home island accompanied by no more than two men each. The conspirators were faced with the prospect of either declaring their intentions by mobilising prematurely or allowing themselves to be disarmed. None seem to have resisted.

According to Hawaiian sources, the accumulated weapons were loaded onto one of Kamehameha's European vessels, the *Keoua*. A carefully stage-managed leak saw the *Keoua* return to Honolulu and disembark its passengers but not its cargo of munitions. The leak was fixed and Kamehameha sailed to Hawai'i. Here the confiscated military hardware was stored with two trusted men: Young at Kawaihae and Kamakau at Kealakekua Bay. However, a European resident of Honolulu claimed that the initial confiscation of the firearms was sufficient to diffuse the situation, and that the confiscated weapons were not transported to Hawai'i until almost a year later. I'i also mentions that, just prior to returning to Hawai'i, Kamehameha closed the schools of combat that had been set up.<sup>50</sup>

The ease with which Kamehameha was able to disarm his potential enemies suggests that he had a decisive coercive advantage over them. This advantage probably occurred as a result of a general reduction of military forces rather than through a major build-up of Kamehameha's forces. Many of his forces must have perished at sea in 1796 and in the epidemic on O'ahu in 1804. This was also where the armies of Ka'eoekulani and Kalanikūpule had last been assembled. Certainly there may have been some movement from the island after 1795, and garrisons would have been maintained on other islands during the attempted assault on Kaua'i, but the epidemic was still a major blow to the military forces concentrated there.

There is no indication that Kamehameha's regular forces on O'ahu numbered more than 500 men in this period. These men were described as 'disciplined native soldiers',<sup>51</sup> by a visitor to Honolulu in 1806. The

50 Kamakau (1961), pp. 197–98; I'i (1959), p. 103; Alexander (1891), pp. 157–58; and Ross H. Gast & Agnes Conrad (eds), *Don Francisco de Paula Marin – A Biography with the Letters and Journals of Francisco de Paula Marin* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1973), pp. 201, 206, 207.

51 Fitzsimmons (1969), p. 171, citing missionaries visiting from Tahiti in 1806. See also Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 45, citing William Shaler, 'Journal of a Voyage Between China and the North-Western Coast of America Made in 1804', *American Register*, no. 3, 1808, 164; and Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon and Columbia River* (London: Smith, Elder, 1849), p. 147.



only body of full-time troops witnessed by Campbell during his stay in Honolulu in 1809 and 1810 was a guard of approximately 50 men stationed at Kamehameha's residence in Honolulu. They had no uniform beyond a malo. Each man carried a musket, a bayonet and a cartridge box.<sup>52</sup> It is unclear if this guard formed all or part of the body of troops that I'i watched practicing gun drill when he was a boy in Honolulu. I'i's description of the drill suggests that European tactics now accompanied the adoption of European weapons also:

Drilling in those days was not quite like that of today, for they had only half of the present knowledge. Their soldiers stood in line from the front all the way to the back, and so it was with each line. At the proper command, those in the front row, which extended from one end of the field to the other, raised their guns in unison and fired. Then they placed the guns on their shoulders, turned left about face, marked time, and began to advance. So it went until the drilling period was over.<sup>53</sup>

Campbell's observations on the drill practices confirm I'i's assertion that the troops were still learning to use their weapons. He noted that:

rapidity, and not precision seemed to be their great object. The men stood at extended order, and fired as fast as they could, beating the butt upon the ground, and coming to the recover without using the ramrod, each man gave the word 'fire' before he drew the trigger.<sup>54</sup>

Campbell describes these men as guards, implying they were the same men he saw stationed at Kamehameha's residence. I'i noted that the troops he watched were the successors to an earlier company of troops, organised by Kamehameha and known as the kulailua ('knocked down') in reference to the ramifications of a musket discharge when not held tightly against the shoulder. This evidence of poor handling of muskets casts doubts on the degree to which they were used prior to this. It is unlikely that the 1804 epidemic entirely wiped out Kamehameha's veterans and required a totally new intake of recruits for training. I'i claims that Kamehameha's warriors were still unequalled in their ability with traditional weapons. Such skills took more than a few years of drills to achieve.

Other forces existed besides Kamehameha's troops. Davis had a company of warriors who protected him. The ali'i Kuakini had his own European vessel and was given six cannon for it by Liholiho. Quality, rather than

---

52 Campbell (1967), pp. 149–50.

53 I'i (1959), p. 54.

54 Campbell (1967), p. 158.

relative numbers, may have been the decisive factor in giving Kamehameha a coercive advantage. I'i states that, while Kamehameha's fighting schools were not the only ones, they were the best of the schools. Kamehameha's men not only drilled regularly with firearms but also trained with spear points exposed in a much more rigorous manner than anyone else. While no descriptions of other schools of fighting remain, I'i's reference to Kamehameha's schools implies the other schools practised with the spear points covered over.<sup>55</sup> Campbell mentions that throwing and catching sugarcane stalks was a popular pastime and that the general population trained for war from youth.<sup>56</sup> A mock battle described by I'i suggests, however, that most of the population was poorly prepared for battle and the only weapons used appear to have been stones. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Two chiefs who had gone from Honolulu to Puuloa with some chiefs of that locality landed at Aioloalo in Waikele, and the battle was staged between them and residents of Waikele that very afternoon. The two sides gathered at a place above Aioloalo on the slope of the hill leading down to Kupapaulau.

The spectators noticed that both sides were equally skilled in stone throwing and in dodging the stones that flew back and forth. No one was hurt or harmed, and the skill of the participants and the chiefs who arranged the sham battle was praised. It seems that the chiefs watched to see how skilled their people were in battle.<sup>57</sup>

It is possible that the most proficient participants were inducted into the fighting schools as their predecessors had been into chiefly retinues. The relationship between these schools and chiefly retinues is unclear. During the 1809 crisis, supporters were called up, only to be dismissed when the anticipated confrontation did not arise.<sup>58</sup> Kamehameha kept important chiefs at his court and moved against the outer districts of O'ahu only when ali'i there began to gather supporters and arms. Ke'eumoku may indeed have been right when he asserted that the only danger to Kamehameha came from Ka'ahumanu.

55 I'i (1959), pp. 30, 54, 66, 69, 83.

56 Campbell (1967), pp. 149–50.

57 I'i (1959), p. 76.

58 I'i (1959), p. 51.

Kamehameha's power rested upon more than just manpower. In 1806 he was reported to have 2,000 stands of arms stored in a fortified residence that dominated the Honolulu foreshore. A palisade protected its land approaches, while a battery of 16 cannon faced out to sea. These guns were from Kamehameha's ship the *Lily Bird* (*Lelia Byrd*) that lay unrigged in the harbour. Within the enclosure were situated the king's and queen's huts, a store, a powder magazine and a guardhouse. Two storehouses brimming with European trade items, including munitions, stood nearby.<sup>59</sup> As most European trade now came through Honolulu, Kamehameha's compound provided a means of controlling or at least monitoring the flow of arms into the realm. The 1811 crisis may have been more of a pre-emptive strike by Kamehameha than a reaction to a serious challenge. It was one thing to acquire firearms, but quite another to maintain and replenish one's stock, and to drill followers in their use before the government noticed and took action.

Rival ali'i might attempt to match Kamehameha's strength in muskets, but they could not hope to compete against his naval strength. By 1810 Kamehameha possessed over 40 European vessels. Most were scoops and schooners weighing under 36 tonnes that had been constructed by Kamehameha's carpenters. These carpenters were now highly skilled boat builders and operated from his naval yard at Honolulu. European captains were generally still used to command Hawaiian crews. No naval threat existed within the archipelago and, by 1810, Kamehameha seems to have abandoned his plans to invade Kaua'i. As a result, Campbell found most of Kamehameha's European vessels hauled up on Waikiki beach in boat sheds, with their spars laid alongside and their riggings and cables under cover. Only 10 to 12 of his vessels were moored in Honolulu harbour and only one scoop was in regular use, sailing between O'ahu and Hawai'i. The peleleu fleet lay drawn up on Waikiki beach, exposed to the elements, and slowly falling into a state of disrepair.<sup>60</sup>

The problem of Kaua'i was resolved diplomatically, without need for naval or military action. While Kamehameha never publicly declared an end to his campaign to invade Kaua'i, he had been sending conciliatory signals to Kaumuali'i since 1804 in the form of gifts and embassies inviting him to visit O'ahu. Kaumuali'i received the embassies hospitably but was

59 Campbell (1967), pp. 91, 149–50.

60 Campbell (1967), pp. 111, 144; I'i (1959), pp. 103, 105, 109, 113; Ross (1849), pp. 38–39; Daws (1968a), p. 43; and Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 43.

understandably reluctant to travel to O‘ahu to visit the slayer of Keōua. Eventually he agreed to meet with Kamehameha through the mediation of Nathan Winship, an American trader. Although Kaumuali‘i had a body of musket-armed Europeans and continued access to European trade at Waimea, he could not hope to match Kamehameha’s military resources. Reasonable peace terms were preferable to the constant threat of invasion. The meeting went well and ended with an agreement by which Kaumuali‘i would rule Kaua‘i as a tributary ‘King’ acknowledging Kamehameha as his sovereign. There was also a veiled reference to Liholiho becoming heir to Kaumuali‘i’s lands as well as those of Kamehameha.<sup>61</sup>

While the arrangement satisfied Kamehameha, it did not please some of his ali‘i. Perhaps angered at the prospect of missing out on the spoils that would follow the conquest of Kaua‘i, they attempted to sabotage the meeting of the two leaders by trying to poison Kaumuali‘i. Davis learnt of the plot and warned Kaumuali‘i in time, only to be poisoned by the conspirators. The idea of killing Kaumuali‘i had actually been raised in Kamehameha’s council, but had been rejected after Kamehameha and Kalaikuaulu had argued persuasively against it. I‘i names the main conspirator as Naihe. Naihe’s fate is unclear, as is the degree of support for him. It may be significant that, soon after this event, Kamehameha moved to disarm the ali‘i on O‘ahu and sailed for Hawai‘i.<sup>62</sup>

## 1812–19: Sacred kingship and bureaucracy?

Sahlins suggests that Kamehameha’s move back to Hawai‘i may have been an attempt to preserve his sacred power by insulating himself from increasing exposure to foreign influences on O‘ahu. Foreigners and their goods were outside the kapu system and did not usually conform to its needs and expectations. For all of his political innovations and military reforms, Kamehameha remained a religious conservative until his death. After his return to Hawai‘i he continued to worship his personal gods and to rebuild heiau. Liholiho’s sacred role as intermediary between the gods and his people to ensure successful harvests continued to be emphasised. The makahiki remained an important event. Kamehameha

61 Kamakau (1961), pp. 195, 196; I‘i (1959), p. 83; and Daws (1968a), pp. 42–43. See commentaries in Daws (1968a), p. 42; John M. Lydgate, ‘Ka-umu-ali, the Last King of Kauai’, *24th Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society for the Year 1915* (Honolulu: 1916), pp. 26–27.

62 I‘i (1959), p. 83; Kamakau (1951), p. 196; and Daws (1968a), pp. 43–44.

incorporated a number of his own gods into the makahiki procession, and used the offerings to them as de facto taxes. Although his storehouses were soon brimming with makahiki offerings, they mostly consisted of tapa, skirts and malo rather than assets he could use to pay or feed to his administration.<sup>63</sup>

It has been suggested that Kamehameha moved away from Kū'kā'ili-moku and towards other gods during this period. In particular, there seems to have been an increasing association with sorcery gods. With warfare now a distant memory, protection from sorcery seems to have become a more prominent aspect of Kamehameha's worship. Evidence in I'i supports this contention. Liholiho was entrusted with the care of Kū'kā'ili-moku for the return voyage to Hawai'i from O'ahu. When Kamehameha's council met in 1812 to discuss the loyalty of his subjects, it was suggested that the help of the Ololupe god be sought 'to bring hither the spirits of the rebellious to be destroyed'.<sup>64</sup> Kamehameha's faith was apparently more intense than a number of his subjects. The Russian naval captain Otto Von Kotzebue's observations of ali'i behaviour during his expedition's visit to Hawai'i in 1816 reveal apparent inconsistency in their attitude towards the kapu system. A female maka'ainana was killed for breaking an eating kapu, yet ali'i of both sexes openly ate together on board the Russian vessel and drank alcohol. On shore the expedition's naturalist was surprised to find religious ceremonies in a heiau observed with little reverence.<sup>65</sup>

Apart from meeting with his council, Kamehameha left much of the business of government to his administrators. He remained on Hawai'i until his death, and spent much of his time fishing and gardening. He was always consulted on important decisions by his officials, but rarely intervened personally in affairs of state. Kamehameha's withdrawal from political affairs opened the way for other ali'i to enhance their power. Sahlins labels this group the Ka'ahumanu group because their political alignments and kinship relations centred on her. Sahlins bases the group on the ali'i who came to control the government after Kamehameha's death, including Ka'ahumanu's brothers Kahekili Ke'eaumoku, and Kuakini, and

63 Sahlins (1981), p. 46; Sahlins (1995), pp. 218–19; Kamakau (1961), pp. 200, 203; and I'i (1959), p. 104.

64 I'i (1959), p. 123. On sorcery, see Valeri (1982); and I'i (1959), p. 124. On Liholiho and Kū, see I'i (1959), p. 104. Ololupe was an 'aumakua associated with conveying the dead ali'i to their 'aumakua. I am indebted to Jon Osorio for providing this information.

65 Daws (1968a), p. 58.

her collateral brothers Kalanimoku and Boki. Ka'ahumanu's relations were prominent in government because Kamehameha continued the traditional Hawai'i practice of denying collateral kin power bases by using affinal kin for important offices. By the time of Kamehameha's death, Ke'eaumoku governed Maui, Kuakini governed Hawai'i, Boki administered O'ahu while Kalanimoku continued to serve as pukaua and pu'uku nui. They all controlled significant landholdings as well. In contrast, Kamehameha's collateral kin were mainly entrusted with sacred aspects of government, such as the upholding of the ruler's kapu and his gods.<sup>66</sup>

The Ka'ahumanu group identified by Sahlins may not have had a common purpose prior to 1819. Blood ties were no guarantee of cooperation in Hawaiian politics. Although rumours were rife that this group intended to seize power as soon as Kamehameha died, there is no indication that they used their offices to put their interests ahead of Kamehameha's before 1819. Even if they had been united in purpose they would not have monopolised secular power. The designation of Liholiho as Kamehameha's successor must have enhanced his chances of securing the loyalty of the royal administration and army that had taken the place of vassal ali'i and their retainers as the source of secular power. The demilitarisation of the islands continued in this period, consolidating the royal forces' advantage in coercive power.<sup>67</sup>

While martial prowess ceased to be encouraged in the majority of the population, Kamehameha began to create a substantial standing army on Hawai'i. In January 1816, German employee of the Russian American Company Doctor George Scheffer visited Kamehameha's military camp, 8 kilometres south of Kailua. Here he noted that Kamehameha 'taught military discipline to about 1,000 men, two-thirds of who had wooden arms'.<sup>68</sup> Scheffer subsequently went on to scheme against Kamehameha without Russian Government consent so that, when Von Kotzebue visited the Kona coast in November, he found 400 soldiers armed with muskets waiting to see what his intentions were. The force that was mobilised to counter Scheffer's provocative actions in Honolulu came largely from Hawai'i and consisted of 'chief and fighting men who had joined the

66 Daws (1968a), p. 44; Sahlins (1981), p. 60; Kirch & Sahlins (1992), pp. 2, 60. On Kamehameha's distancing himself from government, see Alexander (1891), p. 158; and I'i (1959), p. 117. On Kalanimoku's duties, see I'i (1959), p. 112. On Boki's duties, see I'i (1959), p. 145.

67 I'i (1959), p. 123; Kamakau (1981), p. 208.

68 Cited in Richard A. Pierce, *Russia's Hawaiian Adventure, 1815–1817* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1965), p. 164.

King (Okaka), and others besides'.<sup>69</sup> This seems to imply that the royal forces formed the full-time core of Kamehameha's army, which was supplemented by others in times of crisis. When Vasili Golovin touched at Kailua in October 1818, he was given the impression that Kamehameha could arm 6,000 men. The European resident Portuguese physician Juan Elliot d'Castro told Golovin the figure was 8,000 men, but Golovin chose to believe the lower number, which was given him by another resident, the Spaniard Don Francisco de Paula Marin (known as Manini to the Hawaiians). The difference between these figures and those observed by Scheffer and Von Kotzebue may represent the difference between the full-time army, and the total number of men that could be called up.<sup>70</sup>

Most of the regulars seemed to have used firearms and been subject to European-style drill. European observers were not impressed with these forces. Golovin noted that many of their arms were rusty and that they used 'many peculiar, amusing and strange methods'<sup>71</sup> in their drills. In 1819 the French explorer Louis Freycinet expressed similar views about the appearance of these troops at Kawaihae:

A fairly large number of soldiers scattered here and there lent an air of great variety to this strange picture of the odd and irregular fashion of their uniforms. No order, no uniformity of appearance and movement existed amongst them; each one carried his gun as it was convenient to him or as it was most comfortable. All of them wore a loincloth, but most of them wore in addition an enormous cape of a brownish color and rather coarse material; proud of this odd equipment, they paraded past us quite complacently, not having the least idea that their appearance was to us highly grotesque.<sup>72</sup>

Despite their appearance, these forces acted as an effective deterrent to challenges from both internal and external sources. Few, if any, within the islands could match them. After Kamehameha ended the fighting schools when he left O'ahu, mock battles between communities lost any sense of being training exercises. Sugarcane stalks were used instead of spears and sling stones, to avoid real battles amongst participants erupting as the

69 Kamakau (1961), p. 206.

70 Otto von Kotzebue, *Voyage of Discovery in the South Sea undertaken in the Years 1814, 16, 17 and 18* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1821), p. 84; and V. M. Golovin, *Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817–1819*, Ella L. Wisnell (trans.) (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society and University of Hawai'i Press, 1979), pp. 191–92, 200.

71 Golovin (1979), p. 200.

72 Kelly (1978), p. 14.

result of serious wounds and deaths during the sparring. In some instances, musket-armed soldiers stood by to preserve order. Golovin found the participants in the mock battles he witnessed to be unenthusiastic, although a few fistfights did break out afterwards. Americans he met told him that the Hawaiians had lost their traditional martial skills and the warlike, brave spirit that had characterised earlier generations.<sup>73</sup>

Incidents immediately before and after Kamehameha's death suggest that he not only attempted to monopolise the supply of firearms in the islands, but also restricted the number of firearms issued. Kamakau relates that, when a war of succession seemed inevitable soon after Kamehameha's death, 'Arms and ammunition were given out that evening to everyone who was trained in warfare, and feathered caps and helmets distributed'.<sup>74</sup> The reference to trained forces suggests only the regular forces were given the privilege of carrying firearms. Firearms may have been distributed more widely, just prior to Kamehameha's death, in preparation for possible conflict, however, as Don Francisco de Paula Marin noted on 2 May 1819, 'the King is a little better and Cajumanu [Ka'ahumanu] took all the muskets of the chiefs'. This implies that Kamehameha's demilitarisation had not been total, or that firearms had been reluctantly distributed by those in power as the prospect of a leadership struggle arose, and were re-collected as soon as signs of Kamehameha's recovery occurred.<sup>75</sup> Kamakau's reference to the issue of capes and helmets suggests that traditional weapons were also still in use. An 1819 painting that depicts the bodyguard of the king illustrates him with a cape and helmet, and armed with a spear.<sup>76</sup> (Scheffer's reference to two-thirds of the troops he watched training in 1816 carrying wooden arms could either refer to traditional weapons or wooden replicas of firearms.)

The only serious disturbance in this era occurred in 1815–16 when Scheffer exceeded his instructions to recover property from a vessel wrecked off Waimea on Kaua'i. He sought trade concessions on Kaua'i from Kaumuali'i in return for Russian naval and military assistance. Both made these moves without consulting their superiors, and Scheffer lacked the ability to fulfil his promises. Scheffer set up a trading post at Waimea.

73 James Jackson Jarves, *History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands* (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1843), p. 96; and Golovin (1979), p. 187.

74 Kamakau (1961), p. 227. See also Dibble (1909), p. 133.

75 Gast & Conrad (1973), p. 230.

76 The painting, which depicts a Hawaiian chief in his feathered cloak and helmet, by the French artist Jacques Arago in 1819, is held in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Soon after the Russian sealing ship *Discovery* arrived at Waimea and left 30 Kodiak Indians from its crew with Scheffer. Then, in November 1815, a vessel sent by the Russian governor of Alaska arrived in Honolulu and its crew proceeded to erect a blockhouse. Cannon were placed in the blockhouse and the Russian flag was hoisted.

Young and resident American traders, who saw Scheffer as a threat to their interests, had earlier driven him out of Honolulu. They then followed him back to Kaua'i, where he had to be protected by Kaumuali'i's guards. This new Russian move called for a more organised response. Kamehameha sent Kalanimoku and an armed force from Hawai'i to Honolulu to ascertain the Russians' intentions. If they meant no harm, they were to be supplied with vegetables and pork. If not, Hawaiian forces might once more engage in battle. As it was, the Russians withdrew almost immediately to Kaua'i.<sup>77</sup>

This incident was enough to persuade Kalanimoku to construct a large fort to guard the harbour against similar incursions. Construction began in January 1816. The fort was completed early in 1817 using corvée labour from O'ahu. Sited on the Honolulu waterfront, it measured 103 by 91 metres. Its walls, which were 3.5 metres high and 7 metres thick at the base, were constructed of coral blocks faced with an adobe mix of clay, sand and dry grass. At least 40 cannon were mounted on the walls, ranging in size from four to 18 pounders with the heaviest pieces facing out to sea. Adobe embrasures protected those on the wall on the seaward side, while a parapet protected the landward sides. The fort was called kapapu (the gun wall) and kakuanohu (the thorny back) because of the guns bristling along its horizon.<sup>78</sup>

In the meantime, Scheffer had constructed a fort at Waimea with help from Kaumuali'i's subjects. By 1817, however, information from visiting Russian vessels revealed to both Kaumuali'i and Kamehameha that Scheffer had neither the financial or military backing he claimed. When Kamehameha ordered Kaumuali'i to expel Scheffer, the order was obeyed with little resistance from either Kaumuali'i or Scheffer. Kaumuali'i remained in charge of Kaua'i and Kamehameha's control of Honolulu was now stronger than ever. A garrison trained and drilled by a resident Englishman George Beckley permanently manned the fort at Honolulu.

77 Kamakau (1961), pp. 205–06; Alexander (1891), pp. 159–61; Westervelt (1922), pp. 35–36; Lydgate (1916), pp. 31–32; Daws (1968a), pp. 49–53; and Pierce (1968), esp. pp. 20–21.

78 Kelly (1978), pp. 90–91; Golovin (1979), pp. 185–86; Alexander (1891), p. 160; and Westervelt (1922), p. 36.

Strict discipline was observed with a regular watch maintained throughout the night. Inside the fort were chiefs' houses and barracks for the garrison, all arranged around a central flagpole flying the Hawaiian flag.<sup>79</sup>

Kamehameha's naval strength continued to be based on a number of European vessels armed with cannon. He re-established the naval yards at Kailua when he returned to Hawai'i in 1812. Golovin reported that Kamehameha's navy included two or three brigs and several schooners and large decked vessels, all of which were armed with cannon or falconets. Most of the crew and many of the captains were now Hawaiians. The majority of the ships were used only to transport goods between islands. Kamehameha derived great pleasure from acquiring European vessels, right up until his death. In 1819 Freycinet noted that he possessed five brigs of 81 to 90 tonnes each, five schooners of 54 to 63 tonnes, and approximately 10 18-tonne cutters. The king's 170 Hawaiian carpenters constructed some of these vessels, while others were bought. Batteries of cannon were noted at Kealakekua Bay, Kailua and Kawaihae. Golovin was told that, in all, Kamehameha had 100 cannon.<sup>80</sup>

Kamehameha's fort, cannon and vessels served more as pillars of his domestic power base than as ramparts against outsiders. The Hawaiian Islands did not face the prospect of a serious external challenge in Kamehameha's time. Kamehameha's attempts to align himself with Britain met with British unwillingness to risk involvement, while the European powers with a presence in the region tended to counterbalance each other. As long as their European rivals did not move into Hawai'i, they were content to leave matters as they were.<sup>81</sup>

The mounting interest in European goods and ideas became more pronounced after 1810 with the opening up of the Hawaiian sandalwood trade. Ka'ahumanu and her clique were particularly enthusiastic about what they could acquire through such trade.<sup>82</sup> A number of prominent ali'i dressed in European clothing and also began learning English. Liholiho, Ke'eaumoku, Kuakini and Kaumuali'i were among this group.

79 Peter Corney, *Voyages on the Northern Pacific: Narrative of Several Trading Voyages from 1813 to 1818* (Honolulu: Thos G. Thrum, Publisher, 1896), p. 98.

80 Golovin (1979), pp. 182, 191–92, 200; Kelly (1978), pp. 86–87, 90, 91, 114 n. 49; citing Kuykendall (1938), p. 96 n. 94; and Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 60. On cannon numbers, see Fitzsimmons (1969), p. 202. On Kamehameha's purchases, see I'i (1959), pp. 103–04, 128, 129; Kamakau (1961), p. 207; Bradley (1942), pp. 55–56; and Alexander (1891), pp. 161–63, 169.

81 Daws (1968a), pp. 50–51; and Kamakau (1961), p. 209.

82 I'i (1957), p. 128; Kamakau (1961), p. 204; and Sahlins (1981), pp. 60–62.

Denied the thrill of battle, and shut out of military and political power by Kamehameha and a small clique, the ali'i took to the trade in sandalwood with a passion. The accumulation of European trade goods now became the medium for chiefly competition. Liquor, silk cloth and other luxury items were more sought after than metal tools and military hardware. Breaking with tradition, most of these goods were stored away rather than redistributed among followers.<sup>83</sup>

The new chiefly competition brought suffering to the maka'āinana. Ali'i sent their tenants into the mountains to seek sandalwood for months on end. It was hard physical work and their prolonged absences in the mountains resulted in less manpower to grow crops for domestic needs and to provision visiting ships. The use of women in agriculture offered a partial solution. Women were already part of the agricultural workforce in leeward Maui, and Kona and Kohala on Hawai'i. Thus, the diversion of manpower into the sandalwood trade does not seem to have seriously threatened food production. The only famine recorded between 1810 and 1819 occurred on the leeward side of Hawai'i in 1811–12, and European visitors were told the famine was due to low rainfall over the last three years rather than human agency.<sup>84</sup>

Kamehameha moved quickly to try and control the sandalwood trade. He declared a royal monopoly on the trade under which ali'i had to give 60 per cent of the wood collected to the government. Ostensibly this was to deter exploitation of maka'āinana and the neglect of agriculture. According to the chief Kana'ina in the 1820s, however, ali'i kept 60 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of sandalwood while Kamehameha received only 10 per cent.<sup>85</sup> Whatever the division of proceeds was, the trade was so lucrative that ali'i continued to send commoners out to cut sandalwood. One picul of sandalwood, a measure equating to around 61 kilograms of sandalwood, sold for eight to 10 United States dollars.<sup>86</sup>

83 Kamakau (1961), pp. 231–32; Alexander (1891), p. 156; Sahlins (1981), pp. 30–31; Howe (1984), p. 162; Ralston (1984), pp. 26–29; Levin (1968), p. 422; and Golovin (1979), p. 210.

84 Kamakau (1961), p. 231; Cordy (1972), p. 412. On Anahulu, see Kirch (1985), p. 314. On leeward Kohala, see Kirch (1985), p. 178. On sandalwood-induced famine, see Ralston (1984), p. 26 versus Cordy (1972), pp. 409–10. On drought-induced famine, see Levin (1968), p. 422; Schmitt (1970), p. 113; I'i (1959), p. 114; Alexander (1891), p. 158; and Kamakau (1961), pp. 205–06.

85 Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 59, citing Robert Crichton Wylie, *Supplement to the Report of the Minister of Foreign Relations*, (Honolulu: Government Printer, 1856), p. 25.

86 Kamakau (1961), p. 207. See also Cordy (1972), pp. 409, 412; Theodore Morgan, *Hawaii: A Century of Economic Change, 1778–1876* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 63, 66; Bradley (1942), pp. 55–59; and Alexander (1891), p. 161.

Chiefly demand for European items continued to rise, despite inflated prices. Kamehameha was one of the most enthusiastic collectors of European goods. His storehouse in Kona was crammed full of silverware, crystal, shoes and other manufactured items, as well as more practical items of government such as munitions and foreign cash. His sandalwood revenue was such that he was enabled to engage in major expenditure. His purchases of European vessels went well beyond his commercial and defence needs and, between 1816 and 1818, he purchased six vessels. In 1816, for example, he bought the 150-tonne *Albatross* for 400 piculs of sandalwood. In 1818 he paid the same price in sandalwood for a package of assorted items including nails, olive oil, paint oil, brushes, flour, rice, sugar, pitch, kettles and old copper.<sup>87</sup>

Kamehameha's administration closely supervised all trade and imposed a variety of taxes. By 1819, Kamehameha had imposed a one-Spanish piaster tax on his subjects for any transactions with foreigners. When the Hawaiian crews of three of Kamehameha's vessels returned to the islands with European hats and clothing in 1812, government officials confiscated all their possessions. By the middle of the decade it was usual for visiting vessels to direct their business through Kamehameha's representatives. These were usually lesser ali'i with some proficiency in English. They ensured the smooth progress of provisioning and repairs, and even accompanied ships to other islands in the chain away from Honolulu. At the same time, they provided Kamehameha with details of crew needs and ship's trade goods, so that he had an edge over the visitors in setting the terms of trade. All items traded to vessels carried a royal sales tax. In addition, visitors had to pay various dues before they could enter port and conduct their business. The various revenues collected by Kamehameha's government placed its finances in a healthy state. As well as an impressive array of Hawaiian goods collected as payment in kind, by 1819 the state coffers are said to have contained a sizeable amount of foreign currency.<sup>88</sup>

Kamehameha also kept a tight rein on the behaviour of foreigners onshore. While he was on O'ahu, the number of beachcombers at Honolulu had risen to around 100. Many spent much of their day drinking alcohol.

87 See Kelly (1978). See also Golovin (1979), p. 196; Alexander (1891), p. 161; Bradley (1942), p. 56; Kirch & Sahlins (1992), p. 60.

88 On foreign currency, see Kelly (1978), p. 90. On the system for dealing with visiting vessels, see Golovin (1979), pp. 203–05; I'i (1959), p. 88; Daws (1968a), p. 44; and Howe (1984), p. 161.

Kamehameha encouraged visiting vessels to recruit from amongst their ranks and, as a result, most of these itinerants did not stay long and, by 1810, their numbers were down to around 60. Those with desired skills, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, were encouraged to work for Kamehameha and were often given small grants of land as incentives. Honolulu avoided the notorious lawlessness that characterised other Pacific ports such as Kororareka (modern day Russell) in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Ships' crews were made to adhere to a system of harbour rules and the waterfront was policed by government forces to control brawling within the foreign community, and incidents between foreigners and Hawaiians. On 5 June 1812, for example, a man was placed in irons and given 24 lashes for wounding his captain. On another occasion, Hawaiian officials imprisoned two sailors in the fort for striking their first mate.<sup>89</sup> Government forces also controlled relations between locals and visitors. Golovin provides the following description of a shore patrol at Kealahou Bay:

About ten o'clock at night several people with torches and crying something out in a singsong passed from Kaawaroa to Karekekoa along the beach close to the cliff. Later we learnt that this was the patrol walking through the settlements and proclaiming by the King's orders that the inhabitants were not to approach the Sloop in the night and were not to harm us in any way.<sup>90</sup>

Kamehameha also attempted to control the use of alcohol. While Kamehameha was still on O'ahu, rum and distilled ki (*Cordyline terminalis*) had become notable agents of social disruption among European and Hawaiian alike. Ali'i and maka'ainana of both sexes partook. Many of the ali'i who drank regularly also advocated freeing up the kapu system. Eventually Kamehameha ordered all stills destroyed and prohibited the future manufacture of liquor in the islands. Stills continued to be built, however, which only served to confirm their danger to social order.<sup>91</sup>

The royal administration also maintained its control over those areas away from points of European contact. Kamehameha's stores at Kailua still brimmed with tribute in the form of hard poi, dried fish, tapa, malo,

89 On beachcombers, see Daws (1968a), pp. 46–47; Maude (1968), pp. 139–40; Bargatzy (1980), p. 95; I'i (1959), pp. 86, 87; and Campbell (1967), pp. 118–19, 144, 154. On the enforcement of shore regulations, see Gast & Conrad (1973), pp. 206, 225.

90 Golovin (1979), p. 176.

91 Westervelt (1922), p. 37; Alexander (1891), p. 157; Kamakau (1961), pp. 193–94; and I'i (1959), pp. 84–86.

fishnets and fibrous ropes. In 1818, Golovin was told that European resident Juan Elliot d'Castro paid an annual tax of 40 piasters for land upon which he had 10 to 20 people working. In addition a one-piaster tax existed for seasonal inshore fishing.<sup>92</sup> It is uncertain whether these were part of the taxes on production imposed after 1796 or new head taxes. Kamakau does state that the system devised in the 1790s was designed specifically to avoid head taxes.

By 1816 the tax collecting bureaucracy had been centralised, or at least a centralised structure had been imposed over existing local officials. Charles Barnard relates how he sailed from Hawai'i to O'ahu:

having on board between fifty and sixty natives, who were collectors of taxes and receivers of rents ... On the second day after sailing, we arrived at Woahoo, landed the unwelcome visitors, who began collecting the exactions, consisting of tapa, a kind of cloth made of the fine inner bark of a particular kind of tree, and bunches of dried fish. When all was collected, the ship was nearly full betwixt decks.<sup>93</sup>

This passage implies that both taxes and rent were collected.

Europeans were now playing an important role in government. Golovin described Juan Elliot d'Castro as Kamehameha's minister of foreign affairs and secretary of state. Juan Elliot d'Castro assisted in meetings with visiting naval officers and any other interactions with representatives of foreign governments. For this he received the land grant referred to above as well as an annual salary of 800 piasters worth of sandalwood that he sold to visiting traders. Others, such as Marin and the American Oliver Holmes played an important supervisory role in the government's trade with vessels at Honolulu. Marin had come to the islands from Spain in 1791. Fluent in Spanish, English and French, he acted as an interpreter for Kamehameha and as his agent to vessels visiting Honolulu. By the second decade of the 19th century, he had been granted lands on O'ahu and Moloka'i. He resided at Honolulu with 180 people living on his lands. Young continued his close association with Kamehameha and remained a respected adviser as well as becoming a prominent landowner. The writing skills of some of the Europeans in Kamehameha's service facilitated government administration. Golovin noted that, as well as

92 I'i (1959), pp. 120–22; Kelly (1978), p. 90; and Golovin (1979), p. 205.

93 Barnard (1829), pp. 219, 221.

sending messengers to transmit instructions verbally, a written version bearing Kamehameha's seal was also sent. In this way the recipient could check the seal and then compare the written and verbal messages.<sup>94</sup>

It remained to be seen whether the structure of the new kingdom could outlive its founder. Institutional positions had been introduced to replace reliance on powerful vassal ali'i, but the degree to which Kamehameha's mana held the whole edifice together was uncertain. Ka'ahumanu sought to extend her influence over the young heir, Liholiho, from the early 1800s. Kamehameha's actions laid the foundations for a succession struggle between Liholiho and Kekuaokalani, the son of Kamehameha's younger brother Keli'imaikai. Kekuaokalani was Kamehameha's favourite among his collateral kin and was entrusted with Kū'kā'ili-moku as Liholiho was increasingly brought into the running of the kingdom.<sup>95</sup> It was a division of responsibility that echoed the one between Kamehameha and Kīwala'ō in 1782. It has been suggested that this division of responsibilities was intended to ensure that Liholiho would have to prove his worthiness to rule in the pit of battle.

This was not, however, to be a competition between equals. The conferring of the guardianship of Kū'kā'ili-moku may not have been as significant as it had been in 1782. Worship of Kū'kā'ili-moku had declined in importance as peace reigned in the islands. Many of Kamehameha's political and military reforms were designed to minimise the possibility of challenges to central rule. Kamehameha might tell the two young men that, in times past, the god and the government were of equal importance, but he gave his European arsenal to Liholiho alone. Guns, not gods, would secure Liholiho's succession. Kamehameha seems to have expected trouble, as he purchased \$8,000 worth of munitions in March 1819. His attitude to complaints from ali'i about the haughty and provocative behaviour of Kekuaokalani is instructive in this regard. According to Kamakau he replied:

It is well if he robs the chiefs and not the common people; that would be a real fault. He is a fatherless child and can do these things only while I am alive. When I am gone you will not pay any attention to him!<sup>96</sup>

94 Golovin (1979), pp. 177, 192, 205. On prominent Europeans in general, see Daws (1968a), p. 47. On Holmes, see Kamakau (1961), p. 174. On Marin, see Alexander (1891), p. 154.

95 I'i (1959), pp. 139–40; and Kamakau (1961), p. 209.

96 Kamakau (1961), p. 209; and Sahlins (1981), p. 76 n. 19.

## 1819: The question of succession

Kamehameha died at Kailua, Kona, on 8 May 1819, after a lengthy illness. The main ali'i were summoned to Kailua from O'ahu, where they had been cutting sandalwood. Only Boki and a few other notable ali'i were left on O'ahu to see to matters of government administration. In accordance with Kamehameha's wishes, there were no sacrifices to solicit the gods for his recovery, nor were human sacrifices a part of the mourning ceremonies. While kahuna kuni (sorcery priests) sought to ascertain if Kamehameha's death had been caused by sorcery, Ke'eaumoku disturbed proceedings with his drunken behaviour. The kahuna promptly declared that Ka'ahumanu and her family were behind Kamehameha's death.<sup>97</sup>

The assembled ali'i were divided over the future division of power within the kingdom. A week after Kamehameha's death, Marin noted that the chiefs were in an uproar, prompting him to begin cleaning and repairing his own neglected firearms.<sup>98</sup> Most ali'i wanted the royal monopoly on sandalwood overturned to increase their profits. A division of opinion soon emerged over the question of land distribution. Those who felt they were poorly rewarded under Kamehameha's division of his conquests argued that land should be redistributed by Liholiho, as was customary for an incoming ruler. But those who had occupied important posts under Kamehameha and held significant tenure rights argued that they had been granted hereditary rights to their lands. They naturally sought to preserve their privileged position by maintaining the political status quo.<sup>99</sup>

At the same time, the powerful clique gathered around Ka'ahumanu now sought to overthrow the kapu system. Stephanie Levin argues that this was because the kapu system threatened the status quo by requiring rulers to prove their continued mandate from the gods through successful actions. These included defeating attempts to unseat them from power. The abolition of the kapu system would effectively make political succession hereditary. Davenport has argued that the abolition of the kapu, and all the state ritual surrounding it, may also have been seen as a way of freeing

---

97 Kamakau (1961), pp. 212–14; and Kahananui (1984), pp. 207–10. On Marin, see Gast & Conrad (1973), p. 230.

98 Gast & Conrad (1973), p. 231 (15 May, 18 May 1819).

99 Kamakau (1961), p. 219.



up the makahiki produce and other religious offerings for use by the state. On a more personal level, it would free the ali'i nui from the very real restrictions that the kapu imposed upon their daily activities.<sup>100</sup>

Ka'ahumanu was able to gain the support of Liholiho's mother, Keōpūolani, in her attempt to end the kapu. Keōpūolani was one of the highest ranking kapu chiefs in the islands. Ka'ahumanu also succeeded in winning over Hewahewa, the kahuna nui of the Holoa'e priestly order. In return, the priestly orders were promised the retention of their landholdings and their position within the ali'i.<sup>101</sup> These terms suggest that the outcome of the succession was already apparent to Hewahewa, and that he was aligning the priesthood with a force he felt he could not block. During the mourning period, Liholiho and Kekuaokalani left Kailua and went to Kawaihae for 10 days to avoid the ritual pollution present at Kailua while Kamehameha's body lay there. Kekuaokalani suspected Ka'ahumanu's intentions and tried to persuade Liholiho not to return to Kailua. Liholiho characteristically compromised. He answered the summons to return to Kailua, but promised Kekuaokalani that he would boycott any ai noa (free eating), or any other attempt to subvert the kapu system.<sup>102</sup>

The hiding of Kamehameha's bones by Hoapili in the vicinity of the lava-strewn plains of Pu'uotaroa in North Kona signalled the end of the ritual state of pollution at Kailua. Liholiho was officially recognised as his father's successor on 21 May. The council of chiefs, the kuhina, war leaders, and lesser ali'i all assembled at Kailua to witness the event. Armed soldiers were also present. Ka'ahumanu was given the honour of announcing Kamehameha's political will. Instead of declaring Liholiho as the successor, she declared that it had been Kamehameha's will that Liholiho and she rule together. She created the post of kuhina nui for herself. This move made her the senior executive officer in the kingdom and firmly placed her at the centre of power alongside Liholiho.<sup>103</sup>

---

100 Levin (1968), p. 423; William H. Davenport, 'The "Hawaiian Cultural Revolution": Some Political and Economic Considerations', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 71, 1969, 19; Howe (1984), pp. 166–67; Ralston (1984), pp. 29–30.

101 Levin (1968), p. 423; Kamakau (1961), p. 224.

102 Kamakau (1961), p. 224.

103 Kamakau (1961), pp. 215–20. See also Daws (1968a), pp. 55–56; Howe (1984), pp. 162–63; and Kame'eiehiwa (1986), p. 110.

There was no immediate backlash against Ka'ahumanu's initiative. Kamehameha had never declared such a role for Ka'ahumanu publicly, but few influential ali'i were willing or able to oppose her. She represented the interests of the main power group within the ali'i as well as her own interests. While Liholiho refused a request from his mother to join her in a meal to break the food kapu, he would not openly move against the ai noa lobby.<sup>104</sup> As long as Liholiho and his father's top office holders remained in this tense association, the rest of the ali'i proceeded cautiously. There was vigorous pressure for a decision over reform of the royal monopoly on sandalwood and existing land tenure, but no open hostility. While the ruling clique was able to maintain their coherence, the war leaders and royal army had no conflict of loyalty to divide them. None of the other ali'i was capable of mounting a serious challenge to the status quo. Kaumuali'i was probably the only vassal with a sizeable force of his own, but he seemed to have remained on Kaua'i, unwilling or unable to influence events at Kailua.

The future direction of the Kingdom was still uncertain when Freycinet arrived at the leeward coast of Hawai'i in August. Liholiho had delayed making any policy decisions, and most leading ali'i were still assembled there. Freycinet described how several of the principal chiefs of the island had raised claims to which there was still not perfect agreement. There existed a certain vagueness and indecision in the political situation towards which efforts at settlement were being made.<sup>105</sup>

Freycinet's main informant was Young, who was concerned enough to urge the Frenchman to declare his support for Liholiho to deter rebellion. He was particularly worried about Kekuaokalani, who remained apart from the assembled ali'i and was threatening to march against Liholiho and overthrow him because of his wavering attitude towards preserving the kapu system. Kekuaokalani was now openly talking about killing all Europeans to ensure the preservation of the old ways.<sup>106</sup>

Liholiho summoned the council of chiefs to Kawaihae in August. Faced with the threat of Kekuaokalani, he agreed to the ali'i's desire to control all sandalwood on their own lands to secure their support. But he stopped short of agreeing to a redistribution of land rights. It might be desirable

---

104 Kamakau (1961), p. 224; Alexander (1891), pp. 166–67.

105 Kelly (1978), p. 5.

106 Kelly (1978), pp. 20–23.

to avoid driving lesser ali'i into Kekuaokalani's camp, but it was essential to retain the support of the dominant clique, who controlled most of the land in the existing set up. Liholiho made a show of upholding the old ways by attempting to consecrate a heiau at Honokahou, in Kona, Hawai'i. But he did so without enthusiasm and in a drunken stupor. In this state he failed to achieve the faultless rendition of his ceremonial duties that the heiau ritual demanded.<sup>107</sup>

After the meeting at Kawaihae, Ka'ahumanu returned to Kailua and continued to press for the ending of the kapu. In November, Liholiho finally agreed. He was now politically and socially isolated. Already his real and adopted mothers, Keōpūolani, Ka'ahumanu and Kaheihimalie, and his wives Kamokau and Kekauluohi were pressing him to give in. Kalanimoku, Naihe, Hoapili and most other powerful ali'i also supported Ka'ahumanu. Short of the desperate option of joining Kekuaokalani, Liholiho had little choice in the matter. He delayed the issue one last time by cruising off the Kona coast, drinking heavily with friends. After a few days he came back into Kailua. At a public feast he sat down and ate with high-ranking female ali'i. The ai kapu was then declared overturned and, to reinforce the point, images of gods in local heiau were destroyed. Messengers were sent to proclaim the abolition of the kapu throughout the archipelago. Few resisted.<sup>108</sup>

Only Kekuaokalani and his supporters attempted to defend the old ways. Kekuaokalani refused to join in the feast at Kailua and now retired to Ka'awaloa to make his stand. Here he was joined by those prepared to risk all to uphold the kapu system – the kahuna Kuaiwa and Holoialena, and members of the priestly lines of Kauahi and Nahulu. They urged Kekuaokalani to take up arms. To men who still believed in the old ways, Liholiho's failure to perform the temple rituals at Honokahou indicated that the gods had deserted him.<sup>109</sup> Kekuaokalani, on the other hand, was the guardian of Kū'kā'ili-moku, a god who had rarely failed his supplicants when appealed to through human sacrifice. Kū'kā'ili-moku might once more vanquish all his worshipper's enemies. The odds were against Kekuaokalani, who may have hoped his stand would galvanise others into action. According to Kamakau, '[M]any commoners and

107 Levin (1968), p. 424; Alexander (1891), p. 167; and Sahlins (1981), p. 64.

108 Kamakau (1961), pp. 221–25; Kahananui (1984), pp. 216–18; and Alexander (1891), p. 169. See also Sahlins (1981), p. 55; Daws (1968a), pp. 56–57; and Howe (1984), pp. 163–64.

109 Kamakau (1961), p. 226; Levin (1968), p. 424; Alexander (1891), p. 170; and Sahlins (1981), p. 64.

chiefs, even those who had practiced free eating, and the brothers of Ka'ahumanu's themselves, wanted tabu eating. Few of the chiefs were in favour of free eating'.<sup>110</sup>

Liholiho and Ka'ahumanu tried to avoid open conflict by offering Kekuaokalani the freedom to observe the kapu if he would return to Kailua. But they insisted that those who chose to do so could also observe ai noa. Kekuaokalani refused the offer.<sup>111</sup> A partial kapu was no kapu at all. Such terms would still leave him in the political wilderness, with Ka'ahumanu's party retaining its grip on the effective sources of power in the kingdom: the army and the administrative infrastructure. With their overture rejected, Ka'ahumanu and Liholiho decided to move against Kekuaokalani before he became a rallying point for other malcontents.

The only other revolt against Liholiho was a local uprising in Hāmākua. When Liholiho sent a lesser ali'i named Lonoakahi to investigate, he and two of his men were killed in a skirmish at Mahiki. The bones of the slain enemy were then taken to Kekuaokalani, presumably as offerings to Kū'kā'ili-moku.<sup>112</sup> Refusing to be distracted by the disturbance in Hāmākua, Kalanimoku advised Liholiho to strike directly against Kekuaokalani and his supporters in Kona. Liholiho agreed.<sup>113</sup>

Kalanimoku marched out of Kailua at the head of the royal army to confront the rebels. The evidence suggests that the royal force numbered in the thousands, although the exact size is uncertain. Hiram Bingham writes that Kalanimoku raised a regiment, while Dibble claims that the army was arranged in nine battalions. Nine war canoes accompanied the army, along with food and water bearers. Kamakau implies that others, who were trained in the use of weaponry, reinforced the regular forces under arms at Kailua. Large supplies of firearms were collected at Honolulu in December in response to the crisis. Marin noted in his journal that, on 2 December, Ke'eaumoku II, the son and successor of the original Ke'eaumoku, arrived at Honolulu on board the brigantine *Bordeaux Packet* to collect cannon, muskets, powder and flints. Marin's entry for 12 December notes that 900 more muskets were brought ashore from a Captain Luis's ship. The rebels' possession of firearms suggests that they had powerful supporters with access to European trade. Nevertheless,

110 Kamakau (1961), p. 226; and Kahananui (1984), p. 219.

111 Kamakau (1961), pp. 226–27.

112 Kamakau (1961), p. 226; Alexander (1891), p. 170; and Sahlins (1981), p. 75 n. 18.

113 Kamakau (1961), pp. 227–28; Dibble (1909), p. 131.

although Alexander claims Kekuaokalani attracted a large body of priests, chiefs and commoners to his cause, accounts of the battle that followed suggest the rebels were outnumbered and outgunned. Freycinet's expedition had noted 40 to 60 cannon and several thousand muskets belonging to the government. Only the royal force had continued to train for warfare in the last decade of Kamehameha's rule,<sup>114</sup> and it had been many years since Hawaiians had been to war. Both sides' determination was probably tinged with a sense of apprehension.

The first encounter took place at Lekeleke, when the royal forces encountered a rebel scouting party. Kalanimoku's men were unsettled by the loss of some of their men to rebel musket fire and retired to regroup behind a stone wall. When it was realised how few rebels opposed them, the royal forces resumed their advance and the enemy scouts retreated. Kalanimoku came on the main rebel force at Kuamo'o between Keauhou Bay and Kealakekua Bay. Kekuaokalani's battle line seems to have run at right angles to the coastline. The royal forces outflanked his right flank and drove the rebels towards the seashore. Here they were exposed to flanking fire from the double canoes accompanying the royal army. The firepower on board the canoes included an artillery piece manned by an unnamed foreign gunner. Inspired by the example of their leader, the rebels resisted stubbornly until Kekuaokalani fell after being hit several times. His wife Manona was struck down beside him in a hail of musket balls. Rebel resistance then crumbled. In 1823 Ellis walked over the battlefield from Lekeleke to Kuamo'o. He noticed piles of stone marking the graves of the dead. These steadily increased as he approached the site of Kekuaokalani and Manona's last stand. The rebel's graves were particularly concentrated around those of their leaders. Alexander dates the battle to 20 December 1819, but it may have been later as Marin wrote that news of the victory only arrived in Honolulu on December 30.<sup>115</sup>

Jarves was told that 10 royalists had been killed as opposed to around 50 rebels. Most of the rebel leaders were killed at Kuamo'o.<sup>116</sup> The survivors hid in fear of their lives until Liholiho eventually announced

---

114 Compare Bingham (1848), p. 76 with Dibble (1909), p. 135. See also Thrum, vol. 5 (1918–19), p. 480; Kamakau (1961), p. 227; Gast & Conrad (1973), pp. 235–36; and Alexander (1891), p. 170.

115 Alexander (1891), p. 171; and Gast & Conrad (1973), p. 236. On Lekeleke, see Kamakau (1961), p. 228; Alexander (1891), pp. 170–71; and Dibble (1909), p. 133. On Kuamo'o, see Kamakau (1961), p. 228; Alexander (1891), p. 171; Dibble (1909), pp. 132–33; Ellis (1969), pp. 122–25; Kahananui (1984), pp. 231–32; and Fitzsimmons (1969), pp. 171–72.

116 Jarves (1843), p. 219. On casualties, see Kamakau (1961), p. 228; and Alexander (1891), p. 172.

a pardon for all surviving rebels. The insurrection in Hāmākua was put down soon after the battle of Kuomo‘o. Hoapili and the royalist forces had little trouble defeating the rebels in Waipi‘o valley after marching against them from Kawaihae by way of the Waimea Saddle.<sup>117</sup>

The overthrow of the kapu consolidated the influence of those who were already in power. Ka‘ahumanu continued to have a strong influence over Liholiho. With the freeing up of the royal share of the sandalwood trade, the ali‘i turned their attention towards increasing the exploitation of their lands by demanding more from their maka‘āinana tenants. The ali‘i became, in the words of one visiting European, ‘a united corps of peaceful merchants’<sup>118</sup> who saw their lands and tenants as merely a means of gaining access to European trade goods. The long-term viability of this commercial focus, however, remained uncertain. It was based on a rapidly declining stock of sandalwood and depended on the demands of distant markets over which Hawaiian ali‘i had little control. In time, mercantile power might rise to rival more traditional forms of power – as it had in Europe centuries before – but, for now, it enhanced the position of those controlling the administrative and coercive resources of government and the landed elite. While the position of many ali‘i improved, conditions for the maka‘āinana declined. There was little opposition to the increasingly skewed exchange of services between ali‘i and maka‘āinana. As Caroline Ralston notes: ‘The awe and respect inculcated over generations were not to be effaced by four or five decades of chiefly refusal to respect customary ideas of reciprocity.’<sup>119</sup>

Some commentators have interpreted the overturning of the kapu as a cultural revolution that was heavily influenced by contact with Europeans, whose exotic behaviour brought into question hitherto accepted beliefs. Kamakau and others describe it as an action taken by a handful of powerful chiefs for political as much as religious reasons. Golovin was told that observation of kapu was most lax among the more important chiefs.<sup>120</sup> Ka‘ahumanu and her chiefly supporters, in particular, had a long history of challenging accepted norms and admiring European ways. The majority of the population was less enthusiastic and merely

117 Kamakau (1961), p. 228; and Kahananui (1984), p. 220.

118 Howe (1984), p. 168; citing Kuykendall (1938), p. 89. On the reign of Liholiho, see Howe (1984), pp. 168 ff.; and Daws (1968a), pp. 49 ff.

119 Ralston (1984), p. 37.

120 Golovin (1979), p. 209.

followed their lead. What disappeared from their lives was state ritual that had usually been remote from the daily routine and domestic religious activities of most *makaʻāinana*.

Decades of European contact may have eroded the coherence of the Hawaiian worldview, but it did not overwhelm it. The potency of Kū and his fellow gods may have been brought into question, but they did not disappear from the thoughts of Hawaiians. Traditional beliefs continued to be widely held well into the following period of missionary proselytising. Idols were still worshipped secretly, as were the bones of dead *aliʻi*, while offerings continued to be made to numerous gods to seek their assistance for a variety of undertakings.<sup>121</sup> For most Hawaiians, the supernatural world continued to mingle with that of humans, sorcerers continued to pray enemies to death, and Pele still displayed her displeasure through the awesome grandeur of volcanic activity.

By 1819, significant European influence was probably still largely confined to the immediate vicinity of the main ports. Despite its importance to the *aliʻi*, Honolulu was then still only a settlement of a few hundred huts and most Hawaiians continued to live in agricultural communities in the countryside. Their world was very different from that which European observers witnessed in ports. Gavan Daws speculates that for most:

As long as the passing seasons were observed in the old way and the *makahiki* festival guaranteed good times to come any exchanges brought in at the ports could be seen as superficial, perhaps curious and entertaining, but easily put off like European clothes, not touching at the heart of things, which was as carefully planted in the soil as the buried navel strings and dead bones of centuries of Hawaiians.<sup>122</sup>

---

121 Howe (1984), p. 168, citing Ellis (1967), p. 287; and Bingham (1848), p. 79.

122 Daws (1968a), p. 49. On 'urbanisation' in Hawai'i, see Cordy (1972), pp. 406–07.

This text is taken from *Transforming Hawai'i: Balancing Coercion and Consent in Eighteenth-Century Kānaka Maoli Statecraft*, by Paul D'Arcy, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.