

CAPTIVE PARADISE

A History of Hawai'i



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To Jody and Lesli,
and Spencer and Kate

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If a big wave comes in, large fishes will come from the dark Ocean which you never saw before, and when they see the small fishes they will eat them up. The ships of the white men have come, and smart people have arrived from the Great Countries which you have never seen before. They know our people are few in number and living in a small country; they will eat us up.

—Davida Malo, adviser to King Kamehameha III

The nation that draws most from the earth and fabricates most, and sells most to foreign nations must be and will be the greatest power on earth.... This is to be looked for in the Pacific.

—William H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State

Preface

Throughout recent years, activists agitating for the independence of Hawai‘i occupy the grounds of the ‘Iolani Palace in Honolulu, the only former royal palace on American soil.¹ They do this periodically. They want to draw attention to what, in their view, was the unconscionable way their country was annexed by the United States in 1898, in the name of cheap sugar and the needs of American imperialism (although, as we shall see, it was much more for the latter reason than the former). The full story of how the United States got its hands on the Kingdom of Hawai‘i is virtually unknown among the mainland general public, and I began this volume as a history of Hawaiian annexation.

I quickly discovered, however, that such a narrow focus could not begin to embrace the kingdom’s tumultuous journey, which ended with its absorption into the United States. Discovered by the British in 1778 as the most isolated and strategically important islands on earth, the country endured the clash of empires as the British, French, Russians, Japanese, and Americans all contended for influence with the native monarchy. From the mayhem of civil war every time a king died, a preeminent conqueror arose: Kamehameha, who waged war and suppressed rebellion for thirty years before he could call himself master of all the islands in 1810. From a precontact culture of idol worship and human sacrifice, refugees from the Kamehameha conquest reached the United States, gained an education, insistently challenged American Christians to send missionaries to end the pagan terror, and in fact led the first missionaries back to their homeland. And then the struggle was on for the next seven monarchs: to balance bringing their people into the Industrial Age while preserving for them some sense of cultural identity; to maintain the sovereignty of their country while dealing with the greediest and most powerful empires in the world; to provide a modern economy and wealth for their people while becoming snared ever tighter in the grip of the American economic colossus. For all this to have taken place in the span of one human lifetime is a pageant of imperial triumph and human tragedy rare, if

not unknown, elsewhere in history.

Dating back from annexation in 1898, the United States could never have captured Hawai‘i politically had it not first come to dominate the islands’ economy, and that moves the story back to the 1860s. Equally, it could not have dominated the economy without first capturing the people spiritually and culturally, and that moves the story back to 1820. But the American hand was felt even before that, in a bullying sea captain who inadvertently provided Kamehameha the technology needed to conquer the country, and in the mostly American traders who introduced the chiefs to luxury consumer goods—and how to go into debt to acquire them. Annexation, then, can only be understood in this broader context of the Americanization of Hawai‘i.

Oddly, there has never been a narrative history of Hawai‘i. There was a great deal of academic appraisal of the subject in the decades leading up to statehood in 1959, much of which has been reprinted for current reading. And James Michener’s famous novel *Hawaii*, which rocketed him to literary stardom, came out in the very year of statehood. Modern academic studies have been rooted in the reigning “politically correct” paradigm of race, gender, and exploitation—which as it turns out are highly appropriate lenses through which to view the islands’ history. But the Hawai‘i I found is far more complex. Early in the process I had coffee with a distinguished history professor friend of mine, to discuss my possible return to graduate study, looking toward completing a long-abandoned Ph.D. He asked how my Hawai‘i work was coming, and I said that while I was finding little to change my opinion that the 1893 overthrow was indefensible, I was also increasingly surprised and troubled by the pervasive oppression of the common people by their own chiefs and kings before Americans ever showed up. I cited several examples; the professor nodded and allowed that this was indeed the case, but he warned me that if I wrote the book that way and did not “position” the Hawaiians as victims of *American* racism and exploitation, as he said, it “won’t help you get accepted back into grad school.”

I marinated in this irony for a few moments and said, “This must be what they mean by academic freedom.” Noting my shock, the professor went on to say that race, gender, and exploitation have ruled the scholarly paradigm for thirty years, and are entrenched for probably thirty more. He has made his peace with it, and he has disciplined himself to teach and write in that vocabulary. But it also seemed clear that when the actual facts of the history conflict with the reigning theoretical model, it may fall to nonacademic writers to disseminate a more nuanced narrative. The danger with this, of course, is that many “trade” writers who frolic in the vineyard of history are not trained historians, and are liable to seize upon the ill-conceived or the sensational—a trap that has admittedly also snared a history professor or two.

All this is meant only to express my sense of responsibility in handling a subject as

multifaceted as Hawai‘i. I knew going in that discussion and reexamination of how to interpret the islands’ history is in active ferment, but what I found was an intellectual community in near riot over control of the narrative. “Revisionism,” very often appropriate but sometimes excessive, provocative, and overreaching, is a given feature now of American history as presented in the academy. Hawai‘i, however, has placed the phenomenon in a pressure cooker, by its isolation from other fields of history, by the long suppression of the native culture and the suddenness of a rich profusion of studies that incorporate it. Consequently, it is not unusual to find summaries of the American missionaries in Hawai‘i that treat their presence as a foreign invasion, but it is incomplete and misleading to exclude mention of Opukaha‘ia, or Hopu, or other refugees from the Kamehameha conquest, with their insistent challenges to the American Christian community to evangelize the islands and end the horrors of endless warfare and *kapu*—the ancient regimen of taboos. One history of the Chiefs’ Children’s School, apart from acknowledging that the enterprise was undertaken at the request of the *ali‘i*—the noble class—treats it as a purely American ethnocentric gutting of the native culture, and omits any mention of the scholarly John Papa ‘Ii, *kahu* of the king’s niece and nephews, who functioned as a vice principal of the school, who appreciated the good that both cultures had to offer, and who was an important bridge from the old culture to the modern world.²

This debate over historical candor is hardly new. No sooner had Hawai‘i’s first printed chronicler, Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, begun relating “Ka Mo‘olelo Hawai‘i” (The History of Hawai‘i) in the Hawaiian-language journal *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* in June 1865 than he suffered robust criticism from readers who were offended that the knowledge was being imparted to those who had no permission to hear it. “This subject is not acquired by the common people,” huffed Unauna in an opinion editorial, “nor by the country people; only through the chiefs was it gained.... In ancient times this was a very sacred subject, never to be given to another.”³

Three years of research have chastened me with the sense that virtually nothing in Hawaiian history has a single cause, and virtually no one acted out of a single motivation. It is not a simple history, and it cannot be explained simply, certainly not with recourse to the easy remedies of a previous academic era—native savagery and simplicity—or of the current one—the Anglo sense of hegemony and entitlement. It is undeniable, for instance, that the arrival of Western venereal diseases decreased the natural fecundity of the islanders, but that does not, contrary to the impression one gets from museum displays, explain the expiration of the Kamehameha dynasty. Like Egyptian pharaohs, the *ali‘i* had been preserving their *mana*—their spiritual force—by inbreeding for centuries. That probably was partly responsible for the fact that no Kamehameha after the Conqueror sired any (legitimate) children who lived to

adulthood. Similarly, that Queen Ka‘ahumanu witnessed the failure of *kapu* to prevent the decline of her people does explain in part her motivation to overthrow this ancient system of social control; it is also true that she adored power and had no intention of taking a backseat after the death of her husband, the Conqueror. It is true, for another example, that the prudishness and Anglocentrism of the missionaries wrecked a complex and in many ways lovely indigenous culture; it is also true that some facets of that culture were savage. As constrained as one is today to treat the values of differing cultures with respect, some of the traditional Hawaiian practices, such as human sacrifice and infanticide, were savage: No other word serves. It is true that the missionaries did not have the foresight to let the benefits of education and incipient democracy leaven the native culture in their own way. It is also true that neither did any other colonizing culture of that or any preceding era, and even if they had, it is doubtful that an enlightened native culture would have survived late-nineteenth-century imperialism, whether American, British, Japanese, or anyone else’s. But as one native minister was heard to complain, “America gave us the light, but now that we have the light, we should be left to use it for ourselves.”⁴ If only *that* idea had caught on, the history and the lessons to draw from it might be radically different. But as it is, one Web site promoting Hawaiian tourism writes on its history page that “it is difficult to find an objective Hawaiian history that is accurate and unemotional.”⁵ My goal with this book is to make that a little less difficult.

I should close with a word about native language sources. Hawaiian is a highly complex tongue that is not merely capable of great subtlety; it is a language in which subtlety is its daily stock-in-trade, with nuances of expression that escaped the American voyagers and still lead Anglo scholars astray. Most words have multiple meanings: first the literal meaning of the thing or action spoken, and then the *kaona*, the hidden meanings, either a spiritual overtone and/or, often, a highly irreverent sexual raspberry or double entendre. Among the historical sources one can consult, for instance, the reminiscences of John Papa ‘I‘i, who was raised in the Conqueror’s court as a companion to his son and successor, Liholiho. Papa ‘I‘i provided a highly illuminating look at royal circles until his death midway through the reign of Kamehameha V. However, one recent skillful study⁶ details the pitfalls of using the English translation of Papa ‘I‘i’s memoirs, which first became available in 1959. My general examination of the Americanization of Hawai‘i for a mainland audience that, mostly, does not know the story at all, may not be crucially dependent upon such sources, but I am wistful about how much better it would be had I a lifetime’s facility in this language, whose gradations of meaning were honed by centuries of chant and high oratory.

Written Hawaiian utilizes twelve letters plus the ‘*okina*, the reversed apostrophe

that indicates a glottal stop to break two syllables, or to begin a syllable with a closed throat (with a tiny cough, if you will). At the risk of provoking the impatience of a mainland audience, in this text I have opted to use the *‘okina*, not to be pedantic but because it simplifies pronunciation for the mainland eye. The name, for instance, of the sister of King Kamehameha III, whom he desperately desired to marry, Nahienaena, is a confusing mouthful unless broken down as Nahi‘ena‘ena. Similarly, without the *‘okina*, virtually all mainlanders would misread the name of the crater Halemaumau; it is pronounced Halema‘uma‘u. Absent the *‘okina*, however, paired vowels are indeed pronounced as a diphthong, but with more attention to the vowels’ individual sounds than in English, as in Honaunau. The Western eye is also accustomed to reading double vowels in a standard way that would be incorrect in Hawaiian, hence the utility of the *‘okina* in references to the Ko‘olau mountain range, or the island of Kaho‘olawe, or names such as Princess Ruth Ke‘elikolani.⁷

Finally, standard current usage has developed no fixed rules on which form of a word or name to use when it changed with the adoption of an alphabet. Before the language was standardized, the unifying conqueror-king of the islands, Kamehameha, was almost always referred to, and his documents were subscribed, Tamehameha. This form was used by his son Liholiho (or Rihoriho in the old style) as Tamehameha II, and then by Liholiho’s younger brother as Tamehameha III.⁸ The *K* that replaced *T* with the adoption of the alphabet is now universally backdated to the beginning, and one reads of Kamehameha from the arrival of Captain Cook. The same is true of Kamehameha’s rival Kaumuali‘i, the king of Kaua‘i. Before the substitution of *K* and *L*, he is referred to most often as Tamoree. And there was a small fishing village on the south shore of O‘ahu that was called Honoruru until *L* took the place of *R*, but is now referred to as Honolulu from the beginning.

Contrary to this, *taro*, the starchy food staple brought from lower Polynesia by the first settlers, became *kalo* after the language was standardized, but modern usage has continued to use the archaic form. Similarly, Princess Ruth Ke‘elikolani saw her name modify from Ruth to Luka after the alphabet was adopted, and she is so referred to in correspondence among the royal family, but the newer iteration is never seen in modern print—a fate opposite to that of Kamehameha the Conqueror, her great-grandfather.

My goal has been to confuse people as little as possible, and I have followed these established practices. In cases where a person’s name changed significantly—Lydia Kamaka‘eha Pahi did not become Princess Lili‘uokalani until her brother became king (although Elizabeth Kina‘u gave her elements of the name at her birth)—a brief phrase in the text suffices to tip off the reader that this person has a significant future role to play.

The Kings and Queens of Hawai‘i

KAMEHAMEHA DYNASTY

Kamehameha I, r. 1810–19; Queen Keopuolani (d. 1823), Queen Ka‘ahumanu (d. 1832).

Paramount chief of Hawai‘i Island from 1782; king of Hawai‘i, Maui, Lana‘i, and Moloka‘i from 1794, O‘ahu from 1795, Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau from 1810.

Liholiho (Kamehameha II), r. 1819–24; Queen Kamamalu (d. 1824).

Son of Kamehameha I; under premiership of Ka‘ahumanu.

Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III), r. 1824–54; Queen Kalama (d. 1870).

Younger son of Kamehameha I; under regency of Ka‘ahumanu to 1832; under premiership of Kina‘u to 1839.

Alexander Liholiho (Kamehameha IV), r. 1854–63; Queen Emma (d. 1884).

Grandson of Kamehameha I; nephew of Kamehameha III.

Lot Kapuaiwa (Kamehameha V), r. 1863–72; unmarried.

Brother of Kamehameha IV.

William Lunalilo, r. 1873–74; unmarried.

First cousin of Kamehameha IV and V.

KALAKAUA DYNASTY

David Kalakaua, r. 1874–91; Queen Kapi‘olani (d. 1899).

Great-grandson of Kamehameha I’s first cousin Kepo‘okalani.

Lili‘uokalani (r. 1891–93; d. 1917); consort HRH John Owen Dominis (d. 1891).

Sister of Kalakaua.

HRH Victoria Ka‘iulani (heiress presumptive 1893–99, d. 1899).

Niece of Kalakaua and Lili‘uokalani.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Missionaries to the Sandwich Islands (Owhyhee)

First Mission to Hawai'i, March 30, 1820

Rev. Hiram and Sybil (Moseley) Bingham
Daniel and Jerusha Chamberlain, five children
Rev. Asa and Lucy (Goodale) Thurston
Rev. Samuel and Nancy (Wells) Ruggles
Dr. Thomas and Lucia (Ruggles) Holman
Elisha and Maria (Sartwell) Loomis
Samuel and Mercy (Partridge) Whitney
Rev. William Ellis (from April 15, 1822)
Hawaiians Thomas Hopu, John Honolii, William Kanui, Prince George Kaumuali'i

Second Mission to Hawai'i, April 23, 1823

Rev. Charles S. Stewart
Rev. William and Clarissa (Lyman) Richards
Rev. Artemas and Elizabeth (Edwards) Bishop
Rev. Joseph and Martha (Barnes) Goodrich
James Ely
Louisa Everst
Betsey Stockton
Hawaiians William Kamoolua, Richard Kalaioulu, Kupelii

Third Mission to Hawai'i, March 30, 1828

Rev. Lorrin Andrews
Dr. Gerrit P. Judd
Rev. Jonathan Smith Green and Theodosia Arnold
Rev. Peter and Fanny (Thomas) Gulick
Mary Ward
Hawaiians George Tyler Kielaa, Samuel J. Mills Paloo, John E. Phelps Kalaaaauluna

Fourth Mission to Hawai'i, June 7, 1831

Rev. Dwight Baldwin
Rev. Sheldon Dibble

Fifth Mission to Hawai'i, May 17, 1832

Rev. William P. and Mary Ann (McKinney) Alexander
Rev. Richard and Clarissa (Chapman) Armstrong
Dr. Alonzo and Mary Ann (Tenney) Chapin
Rev. John S. and Ursula (Newell) Emerson
Rev. Cochran and Rebecca (Smith) Forbes
Rev. Harvey and Rebecca (Howard) Hitchcock
Rev. David and Sarah (Joiner) Lyman
Rev. Lorenzo and Betsy (Curtis) Lyons
Edmund Horton Rogers
Rev. Ephraim and Julia (Brooks) Spaulding

Sixth Mission to Hawai'i, May 1, 1833

Rev. John and Caroline (Platt) Diell
Lemuel Fuller
Rev. Benjamin Wyman and Mary Elizabeth (Barker) Parker
Rev. Lowell and Abba (Tenney) Smith

Seventh Mission to Hawai'i, June 6, 1835

Miss Lydia Brown
Rev. Titus and Fidelia (Church) Coan
Henry and Ann Maria (Anner) Dimond
Edwin Oscar and Sarah (Williams) Hall
Miss Elizabeth Hitchcock (later married Edmund Rogers)

Eighth Mission to Hawai'i, April 9, 1837

Dr. Seth and Parnelly (Pierce) Andrews
Edward and Caroline (Hubbard) Bailey
Rev. Isaac and Emily (Curtis) Bliss
Samuel Northrup and Angeline (Tenney) Castle
Rev. Daniel Toll and Andelucia (Lee) Conde
Amos Starr and Juliette (Montague) Cooke
Rev. Mark and Mary Ann (Brainerd) Ives
Edward and Lois (Hoyt) Johnson
Horton Owen and Charlotte (Close) Knapp
Rev. Thomas and Sophia (Parker) Lafon
Edwin and Martha (Rowell) Locke
Charles and Harriet (Halstead) MacDonald
Bethuel and Louisa (Clark) Munn
Miss Marcia M. Smith
Miss Lucia Garratt Smith
William Sanford and Oral (Hobart) Van Duzee

Abner and Lucy (Hart) Wilcox

Ninth Mission to Hawai‘i, May 21, 1841

Rev. Elias and Ellen (Howell) Bond
Rev. Daniel and Emily (Ballard) Dole
Rev. John and Mary (Grant) Paris
William Harrison and Mary Sophia (Hyde) Rice
Joseph—Hawaiian translator
Levi—Hawaiian translator

Tenth Mission to Hawai‘i, September 24, 1842, and after

Rev. George and Malvina (Chapin) Rowell
Dr. James William and Millicent (Knapp) Smith
Rev. Samuel and Julia (Mills) Damon
Rev. Asa and Sarah (White) Smith

Eleventh Mission to Hawai‘i, July 15, 1844

Rev. Claudius Buchanan Andrews
Rev. Timothy Dwight and Mary (Hedges) Hunt
Rev. John Fawcett Pogue
Rev. Eliphalet and Elizabeth (Baldwin) Whittlesey

Twelfth Mission to Hawai‘i, February 26, 1848

Rev. Samuel Gelston Dwight
Rev. Henry and Maria Louisa (Walsworth) Kinney

Antecedent: Captain Cook

On January 18, 1778, Capt. James Cook, RN, strode the quarterdeck of his vessel of exploration, the converted collier HMS *Resolution*. She was stocky and slow, 460 tons. With a thirty-foot beam across a ninety-three-foot keel, she was a third wide as she was long, like sailing a great rectangular box. But she was overengineered, built to weather an epic voyage and withstand almost any challenge to her construction. Cook had pronounced her the fittest ship for service that he had seen, and if there was one kind of vessel on earth that James Cook knew how to handle, it was a collier—a coal carrier. The legendary Captain Cook had just turned fifty, with penetrating blue eyes set in a taut, angular face. On his last visit home he found himself such a celebrity that his likeness was painted by the great Nathaniel Dance. Unlike most of the serene portraiture of this era, dominated by the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds, with their subjects often recumbent in gardens of classical statuary, Cook was shown seated at a table, leaning forward, pointing to a speck on a map, his head cocked to one side and with the glint in his eye of a man possessed.

Indeed, his life's story had been one of dissatisfaction and hurry.⁹ Unhappy on his parents' farm and unhappy as a grocery clerk when he was apprenticed out at sixteen, he was apprenticed again to coal merchants in Whitby and first went to sea on one of their colliers. While still a teenager, he devoured in his off-duty hours the study of astronomy, navigation, and mathematics, and by twenty-four he attained the rating of mate. He gained his own merchant command at twenty-seven, of another collier working the Baltic Sea, but joined the Royal Navy in June of 1755 once it was apparent that England and France were headed for a fight. As a junior officer in the Seven Years' War (known in America as the French and Indian War) he took part in numerous sea battles, sat successfully for his master's examination in 1757, and then in 1759 proved instrumental in winning Canada for Britain: Showing early his skill at cartography, as master of HMS *Pembroke* he charted the shore of the St. Lawrence River, piloting Gen. James Wolfe and his army to a landing from which they scaled the

heights and surprised the French on the Plains of Abraham, leading to the capture of Quebec. This, and then his three years mapping the entire coast of Newfoundland with punctilious accuracy, marked him as an officer of singular determination and ability.

After the war the Royal Society—in full, the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, with its century of exploration and scientific quest already accomplished—desired to mount an expedition to Tahiti to observe the expected transit of Venus across the sun. After a canvass of the Royal Navy for its best navigator and mapmaker, it was Cook who was promoted to lieutenant and seconded to the Royal Society. In a momentous three-year voyage he delivered his onboard astronomer to Tahiti to have his gaze at Venus, and then sailed west, circumnavigated and mapped the coast of New Zealand and explored the eastern coast of Australia. He returned home in July 1771 with thousands of botanical specimens, journals that were published to wide fascination, and claim to a vast South Seas addition to the British Empire.

Although the Royal Society did not know much more about Venus than it had before, Cook was lionized for his exploration, promoted to commander, and offered another mighty journey. The ignorance of the West concerning the undiscovered regions was as massive as it was opaque. The most knowledgeable geographers for years had postulated the existence of a great southern continent, a *Terra Australis*, a mighty landmass that must fill the far-southern Pacific to counterbalance the weight of Asia—otherwise the planet must wobble out of its orbit. In his second voyage Cook's commission was to discover *Terra Australis*, and claim it for the empire. From 1772 to 1775 Cook pursued the goal, running a vast search pattern in the open waters of the southern ocean, becoming the first mariner to cross the Antarctic Circle. But in the six thousand miles west-to-east of the southern Pacific, traversed not once but twice, he proved that there was no *Terra Australis*. When he was back home again, the geographers would not have it, but Cook left them to grapple with the earth's rotation as best they could: He had been there, and he knew better. Cook was brusquely thanked with the Copley Gold Medal and made a fellow of the Royal Society; then he was retired from active service and given a post at Greenwich Hospital.

It was a retirement that he did not want, and Cook found a way to fight it. Over the years he had acquired the friendship, and the patronage, of the formidable John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, a man of sobering means and weighty influence, who since the end of Cook's first voyage had acted as First Lord of the Admiralty. Cook knew him also as a man of vision (his later reputation for incompetence was overwritten by historians), and Sandwich offered him a third commission that would dwarf the others in importance. Almost from the time that Columbus had proved that the world was round, the Holy Grail of navigation had been

to discover the Northwest Passage, a sea route that must lie to the north of the New World. It would link Europe and the Orient by a voyage a fraction of the distance required by rounding the tip of Africa and crossing the Indian Ocean. All who had attempted to descry it failed, crossing the Atlantic only to be frustrated by the maze of icy islands in the Canadian arctic. But, no one had tried to find it from the west. The Bering Strait was known, separating Siberia from Alaska, but what lay north and east of there? That breathtaking task was handed to Cook, but no one must know. None of the competitors in the scramble for imperial expansion—the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, and now above all the Russians, for the Bering Strait was their back door—must have any inkling of the reason for Cook’s heading to sea once more.

It was put out for public consumption that the purpose of this third voyage was to return a native Tahitian named Omai to his home. This first South Sea islander to visit the West had accompanied Cook to England, had been the toast of London, and now gave convenient cover for the third voyage. Cook was promoted again, to captain, commanding the stout *Resolution* and accompanied by a second ex-collier, half the size of the *Resolution*, HMS *Discovery*, Capt. Charles Clerke commanding. Leaving Omai once more with his people on Tahiti, Cook turned north toward Alaska, the Bering Strait, and glory in finally finding the Northwest Passage. Some 2,700 miles later, in the very heart of the vast central Pacific in what was assumed to be open ocean, he raised an island. It was the morning of January 18, 1778. Its tall mountains were obvious, although rendered dark blue by the distance over the water. The winds had been weak, and occasionally Cook found himself becalmed altogether. Throughout the day the island slowly slipped by them to the east, then another island appeared before them. When a lazy wind finally filled their sails it was from the east, making it easier to steer for this second island ahead of them.

Becalmed again during the night of the nineteenth, the ships drifted a bit to the west, and on the morning of the twentieth they finally approached the south coast of the second island. Cook found no anchorage here, but he could see that it was well populated, the landscape heavily dotted with grass houses and agricultural plots. A few canoes knifed their way out to them, paddled by a handsome swarthy people who closely resembled the Polynesians that Cook had left far behind. They were friendly, but apprehensive. Cook and his officers recognized the language as a variant of what was spoken in Tahiti and the other Society Islands—a different dialect, but communication was possible.

The natives were too cautious to come aboard, but Cook lowered gifts to them, brass medals and bits of iron. Once the islanders understood the visitors’ friendly intentions, they pitched overboard the stones they had brought to hurl at them had they proven otherwise. Cook had no idea of the impact that the gift of metal would have on

these people. In trade, the islanders sent up quantities of fish and sweet potatoes, and then paddled heartily away to spread the news: This alien race of men brought *iron* to trade.

To find an anchorage Cook turned west, toward the lee side of the island, and soon a third mass of land appeared on the horizon to the west. As the discoverer, Cook named the archipelago the Sandwich Islands, in honor of his patron, the earl. As the two ships proceeded, more canoes approached them with produce to trade, all for iron. “Such is these People’s avidity for iron,” wrote Captain Clerke of the *Discovery*, “a moderate sized Nail will supply my Ship’s Company very plentifully with excellent Pork for the Day, and as to the Potatoes and Tarrow, they are attained on still easier Terms.” The natives appeared to have an advanced culture, but no source of metal.

On the west side of the island Cook put in at a shallow bay from which they could see a village on the shore, perhaps sixty grass houses, and farther inland, a number of curious, flimsy white towers. As more canoes paddled their way out, Cook learned that the island was called Kaua‘i, with a glottal stop separating the final two vowels. The village was called Waimea.

Here at last the natives came aboard the *Resolution*, and were awestruck at the experience. Some prayed; some threw themselves prostrate on the deck before the officers. As remembered in Hawaiian traditional lore, two men at the fore, a priest and a chief, tied *malo* sashes in their left hands; “they went before *Kapena Kuke* [Captain Cook] bent over, squatted down, and offered prayers ... then took the hand of *Kapena Kuke* and knelt down; then rose up free from any tabu.” Cook presented the priest with a knife, who then named his daughter *Kua-pahoa* (After this Knife.)¹⁰ Once convinced that they were welcome, the islanders inquired into matters of etiquette and proper behavior. In their society men did not swallow their saliva, but spit incessantly, and they asked where they might do so. But again they were almost frenzied at the presence of iron. One man seized a meat cleaver and leapt overboard with the prize, racing for shore with others in his canoe. Lt. John Williamson, who was just lowering the pinnacle to find a landing spot, pursued him; his men were under orders not to fire, but when Williamson shot his pistol after him, his men leveled a musket volley. Terrified natives dived overboard and swam, but the cleaver was not recovered.

As soon as the first English boat slid onto the beach, a native spied the iron boat hook and determined to seize it, and Williamson shot him. The locals carried his body away with no great show of mourning; apparently life was cheap here, and to English eyes the incident was soon forgotten. It occasioned much discussion among the natives, however. The thief may have been a chief named *Kapupu‘u* (Forbidden Hill). In this culture, chiefs were accustomed to taking what they pleased, and this one ignored the priests’ warnings, took the iron, and was killed. There was sentiment to

avenge him, but the fear that this was a visiting god convinced them that hospitality was the safer course.¹¹

Aboard the *Resolution* the natives at first showed a disposition to help themselves to anything the visitors had, but once they understood that this was not acceptable, they settled down to trade, eagerly and amicably. “No people,” wrote Cook after convincing them they could not just take what they wanted, “could trade with more honesty than these people.” Within a short time the ships had taken on nine tons of fresh water and a host of provisions, all acquired in exchange for more bits of iron.

During their days at Waimea, Cook went ashore three times. As a distinguished visitor, he was conducted to the most important sites in the village. The first was one of the white towers that he had seen rising above the forest; Cook estimated its height at fifty feet, but noted others even taller farther away. At its foot was a grass house, with a small altar outside on which food offerings had been left. It was the grave of an *ali'i*, a member of the ruling noble class. The second was a burying ground nearby, marked off by skulls set on the ground; this was the cemetery of the *kanaka kapu*, commoners (*kanaka*, or more formally the *maka'ainana*, people of the land) who had been privileged to be sacrificed to the gods. *Kapu*, among these people, was the same as *tabu* among the Tahitians, meaning set apart, holy, forbidden.

The English assessed an essentially Polynesian culture, with a diet based on taro, bananas, fish, pork and dogs, with clothing of *tapa*, the inner bark of mulberry or selected other trees, thinned by pounding until it became a coarse but flexible cloth. Cook recognized the culture well. Their weapons, though inventive, were edged with stone or sharks' teeth. The English also noticed two distinct classes of people. With some exceptions the *ali'i*, the chiefs, loomed in size over the low-status *kanaka*, and exercised unquestioned power.¹² Commoners fell on their faces before them. Cook did not meet any of the high chiefs, who were withheld by their retainers until they could learn more about this white foreign race and their vast powers.

Anxious to continue with his exploration, Cook took the *Resolution* over to the island visible to the west, called Ni'ihau. Clerke and the *Discovery* lingered at Waimea, where at last he met the island's handsome young king and his wife. The monarch was escorted out to the ship with great ceremony, but his attendants would not allow him to go farther onto the vessel than the gangplank. They “took as much care in getting him in and out of the Canoe,” wrote the amazed Clerke, “as tho' a drop of Salt Water wou'd have destroyed him.” Clerke patted him on the shoulder in greeting, and the retainers looked on agape: To touch the king meant death; only some higher being would dare such familiarity.

After briefly probing the coast of Ni'ihau, Cook desired to top off his stores before venturing into the northern reaches of the Pacific, but wind and sea made it impossible