

From childhood, Kamehameha seemed destined for greatness. With the appearance of a bright, white-tailed star (possibly Halley's Comet) in the year 1758, Hawaiian seers predicted the emergence of a great leader. Kamehameha, "The Lonely One," was born around that time in the Kohala district on the northwestern tip of the island of Hawai'i.

Son of a high chief and a princess, Kamehameha began training as a young child to join the ranks of *nā ali'i koa*, the chiefly warriors. By young adulthood he was tall and muscular—every bit the powerful warrior his family had expected. In 1782, at the death of his uncle, Kalani'opu'u, who ruled the island of Hawai'i, Kamehameha inherited land on the northern part of the island and was given custody of his family's war god, Kūkā'ilimoku. As he gained power, he intended to one day rule all of the Hawaiian Islands. Unification, in his view, would bring peace to the continually warring chiefdoms throughout the islands. His rival for control of his home island was his cousin Keōua Kūahu'ula, with whom he battled indecisively in the 1780s. In 1790, Kamehameha successfully invaded Maui, Lāna'i and Moloka'i with the aid of John Young and Isaac Davis, stranded British sailors who became his close advisors. The next year he returned to Hawai'i and defended his lands against the chiefs of O'ahu and Kaua'i in a naval battle off the coast near the Waipi'o Valley. The island of Hawai'i finally came under his full control when his cousin Keōua was slain on the beach below Pu'ukoholā Heiau.

In 1794, Kamehameha reconquered Maui, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i. Victory in a bloody battle on O'ahu ended opposition there in 1795. Fifteen years later, peaceful negotiations finally brought him Kaua'i. By 1810, Kamehameha had established his island kingdom.

Kamehameha appointed governors to administer each island. He ruled according to Hawaiian tradition but outlawed some of the more severe practices such as human sacrifices. With John Young as his trading agent, he parlayed the sandalwood trade into great wealth for himself and his people. Kamehameha remained king of the islands until his death in 1819. The Hawaiian monarchy he founded lasted until 1893.

(Classroom Readings cont.)

I. The Temple on the Hill of the Whale

The stone *heiau* at Pu'ukoholā is one of the last major sacred structures built in Hawaii before outside influences altered traditional life permanently. Constructed in 1790-91 by Kamehameha I, this *heiau*, or temple, played a crucial role in the ruler's ascendancy. By 1790, Kamehameha, whom many believed destined to rule all of the Hawaiian islands, had invaded and conquered Maui, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i. Yet he was not able to lay full claim to his home island of Hawai'i because of opposition from his chief rival and cousin, Keōua Kūahu'ula. While on Moloka'i, Kamehameha learned that Keōua was

invading his territory. Kamehameha sent his aunt to seek direction from the prophet Kāpoūkahi, who told her that Kamehameha would conquer all the islands if he built a large *heiau* dedicated to his family war god Kūkā'ilimoku (Kū) atop Pu'ukoholā—"Whale Hill"—at Kawaihae.

Kamehameha set to work immediately. According to the prophecy, the builders had to follow rigid guidelines in order to please Kū the war god. To ensure perfection, the prophet Kāpoūkahi served as the royal architect. Thousands of men camped out on the hills for nearly a year to work on the massive structure. Since the *heiau* had to be constructed of water-worn lava rocks, it is believed that rocks came from the seaside valley of Pololū. Workers formed a human chain at least 20 miles long and transported the rocks hand to hand to the top of Pu'ukoholā. Kamehameha himself labored with the others.

When news of the war temple reached the rival chiefs, they decided they must attack while Kamehameha and his warriors were occupied. At the least, the rivals would interfere with the ritually specified construction process, and Kū would be displeased. At best, the invasion would eliminate Kamehameha and the threat he posed to his rivals. The chiefs of Maui, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i reconquered their islands and, joined by the chiefs of Kaua'i and O'ahu, sailed to attack Kamehameha. Kamehameha counterattacked, routed the invaders, and resumed work.

In the summer of 1791, the *heiau* was finished. Kamehameha invited his cousin Keōua Kūahu'ula to the dedication ceremonies. Perhaps awed by the power of the *heiau* and its god, perhaps resigned to his cousin's ascendancy, Keōua Kūahu'ula came willingly to what would be his doom. When he arrived there was a scuffle and, whether Kamehameha intended it or not, Keōua and almost all of his companions were slain. The body of Keōua was carried up to the *heiau* and offered as the principal sacrifice to Kū.

The death of Keōua Kūahu'ula ended all opposition on the island of Hawai'i, and the prophecy began to come true. By 1810, through conquest and treaties, Kamehameha the Great, builder of Pu'ukoholā Heiau, was the revered king of all the Hawaiian Islands.