

Exploring Hawaiian Sovereignty: Ancient Hawaiian History

By Anthony Castanha

Authors Note: The following series of articles attempts to explain and provide insight into the question of Hawaiian Sovereignty. With 1993 marking the 100th anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, HPP would like to examine and provide its readers with some background into this issue.

Hawaii's melting pot of peoples make it truly a unique place in the world. It should be of importance to all involved and living here to become a little more aware of our past, which is the foundation of our present, and shapes our future. In this series, we will explore pieces of ancient Hawaiian history, the arrival of Captain Cook, the Great Mahele of 1848, events surrounding the overthrow of the Hawaiian nation, and the contemporary sovereignty issue.



Anthony Castanha

Sovereignty is the right possessed by a people sharing a common culture, religion, language, value system and land base, to exercise control and make all decisions regarding itself and its territory free from outside interference. It is the right, native Hawaiians had enjoyed within their own culture and constitution before United States intervention brought about the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. Long before Captain James Cook had set foot on Hawaiian soil in 1778, Hawaiians had cultivated the land and thrived from it.

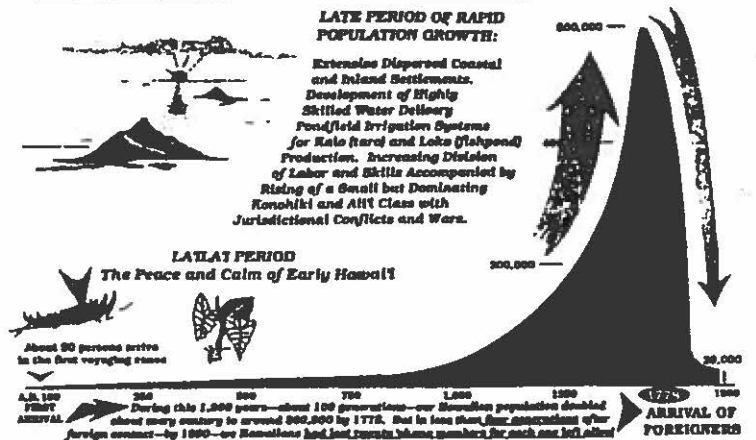
Many researchers believe the first people to have arrived in Hawaii

sometime before 400 A.D. It is not exactly clear where the first settlers came from, but it is certain they were Polynesian in ancestry. In *Hawaii: A History*, Kuykendall and Day write, "The Hawaiians, who lived on these islands for fourteen centuries before the coming of the haoles (foreigners), are part of the great Polynesian family. When Europe's Age of Discovery began, the Polynesians had already discovered and populated the widely scattered islands in the central and southern parts of the Pacific Ocean included in what is called the 'Polynesian Triangle.' At the points of this triangle are Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand. The early Polynesians were the world's most venturesome explorers, and in the course of their migrations, while discovering and occupying what came to be their island homes, they performed feats of navigation that have not been equaled by any other primitive people" (4-5).

From southeastern Asia to the western islands of Indonesia, some hold that ancestors of the Polynesians had migrated here before the beginning of the Christian Era. Their descendants over the course of the next centuries had probably moved east, and by 100 or 200 A.D. had reached the islands centering the Polynesian Triangle and Tahiti (Kuykendall and Day 5). It is still debated whether the first inhabitants of Hawaii came from Tahiti, nevertheless Tahitian influence in old Hawaii is very strong. Irving Goldman, in his book titled *Ancient Polynesian Society*, quotes both Elbert (1953) and Emory (1963), "The origins of the Hawaiian people and of their initial culture are not fully known, but there is no doubt of the close relationship between Hawaii and Tahiti, judging by strong similarities in language and in ancient artifacts" (202).

There is virtually little scholarly histories of Hawaii prior to the arrival of Captain Cook. The Hawaiian people didn't possess a written language in the precontact period, still their language was rich in unwritten literature. It thrived expressively and melodically through complicated poetry, music and dance. Of the history that has been recorded, much

HAWAIIAN CIVILIZATION — ITS LONG PERIOD OF PRODUCTIVE GROWTH . . . AND CATASTROPHIC LOSSES UPON FOREIGN CONTACTS



Data sources: Dynamics of Production Intensification in Pre-Contact Hawaii by Marlon Kelly. World Congress of Archaeology, 1986. Graphic by Maka'ainana Media. Printed in Ka Lahul Hawaii.

of it has been written "outside of Hawaiian minds" by Western writers, many insensitive to native Hawaiian needs, history and culture. Ancient Hawaiian history from a native Hawaiian perspective is also limited but argues considerably different views. Theirs is a history where life in early Hawaii, according to University of Hawaii anthropologist Marian Kelly, was a time of "La'ila'a - of peace and calm" when "people all worked together. No one was above or below."

According to the *Native Hawaiians Study Commission* (Volume 1.), which was created by the congress of the United States to study and report on the needs and concerns of native Hawaiian people, ancient Hawaiians were generally healthy having adapted well to island ecosystems surrounding them, and they had lived in isolation from the rest of the world for hundreds of years. At the time of Cook, the population was flourishing at an estimated 300,000. These people were believed to be descendants of the first hundred settlers or so who had braved over 2000 miles of open sea, in doubled hulled canoes, from the South Pacific more than 1000 years ago (99).

Some cultural traditions of early Hawaiian society are described by Goldman, "as an early period (124-1100 A.D.) when Hawaiian society was most traditional. Seniority ruled succession to title, authority and land holdings; chiefs were sacred and held religious prerogatives; the male line was preeminent; the power of chiefs was largely formal and ritual; and social distinctions between chiefs and commoners had not yet reached their full prominence" (212).

For perhaps the next two hundred years following the early period, somewhere between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, was one of intense migration throughout Polynesia. During this time, many voyaged from Central Polynesia to explore Hawaii, and some Hawaiians ventured off to southern lands. Many who came to Hawaii remained as permanent settlers bringing with them many cultivated Polynesian food

a highly developed culture and soon became a powerful element in society with their chiefs (ali'i) becoming the ruling class, and their priests (kahuna) exerting mighty influence over affairs (Kuykendall and Day 6).

According to Hawaiian tradition, after the migration period, there was "no contact with other areas of Polynesia for some twenty generations prior to European contact. During this time, Hawaiians were believed to have been developing complex social, cultural and political systems (Commission 147).

The native Hawaiians diet consisted primarily of taro, fish, sweet potato, yam, bread-fruit and banana, and for the maka'ainana (commoners), occasionally pig and dog (Commission 100). "This high-fibre, low-fat, unrefined and limited sugar diet ample in vitamins and abundant in minerals, is now considered superior to the usual fare of modern western societies, with one important fault—excessive sodium" (Commission 100).

Religious beliefs and practices played prominent role in all aspects of Hawaiian life. The Gods were invoked for every significant event and purpose in daily living (Commission 147). "All forms of nature were thought of as bodily manifestations of spirit forces. Some Hawaiians worshipped their gods in the form of images, while others worshipped without any concrete form" (Commission 147).

There was a kapu system, meaning prohibition or restriction, that was closely interrelated with religion, government and social organization. This system was used to manage every aspect of ancient Hawaiian life and society (Commission 147-148). "Everything associated with the Gods was sacred and there were many kapu surrounding priests and anything else related to the gods. Chiefs were believed to be descended from the gods and were surrounded by a great number of kapu, depending on their rank and, hence, degree of sacredness" (Commission 148).

In regard to the political system during this period, Hawaii was com-



The kapu (prohibition) system restricted men and women from eating together. Besides eating in separate houses, their food was prepared separately. Women were

Wedding Bells in Hawaii

by Carlton T. Saito

June is the season for weddings in Hawaii for visitors from Japan and the Mainland, as well as for local residents. Hawaii ranks third in favorite destination spots for Japanese honeymooners.

Local brides and grooms favor wedding photos at Byodo-In Temple and the Japanese garden behind East-West Center's Jefferson Hall. Visitors tend to prefer Byodo-In Temple, Diamond Head Beach Park and Moanaua Gardens, according to Sheryl Hee of Aloha Wedding Planners Inc.

Aloha Wedding Planners handles 400 weddings per year, from small, intimate parties to events for 300 guests.

The favorite churches for visitors include Central Union Church and Kawaiahao Church, Hee said. Other popular wedding sites include Haiku Gardens, Waioli Tea Room, Waimea

Falls Park and anywhere by the ocean. One couple landed by helicopter and got married on the side of an active volcano.

Japanese couples usually prefer to get married at Calvary-By-The-Sea Lutheran Church, Kawaiahao Church, Nuuanu Congregational Church, Unity Church of Hawaii and Waioli chapel, according to Chieko Kudaishi and Donald Amemiya of Saison des Brides for Watabe.

Saison des Brides for Watabe, located on the ninth floor of the Waikiki Business Plaza, handles or outfits 6,000 weddings per year, mostly visitors from Japan and local residents.

Most Japanese take their wedding photographs in photo studios or on hotel grounds. The most popular hotel sites for weddings among the Japanese are the Halekulani, Kahala Hilton Hotel, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, the Sheraton Moana Surfrider



Sheryl Hee (left) and Susan O'Donnell of Aloha Wedding Planners.

Hotel and the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel.

In the past, Japanese couples came to Hawaii by themselves to wed. Now family members often accompany the bride and groom to Hawaii for the

wedding.

All of this means more business for caterers, florists, hotels, limousine drivers, photographers and, of course, ministers. And that spells good news for Hawaii's economy.



The "hukilau" was a traditional method of community fishing in old Hawaii. Huk nets were spread out near the shore then, through the efforts of many persons, pulled ashore. The fish was then divided among all who helped. Source: Joseph Feher's, *Hawaii: A Pictorial History*. Bishop Museum Press

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the four main groups were Hawaii, Maui, Oahu and Kauai. The government of this time has been likened by me as feudal in nature, often compared to the European feudal systems. Yet, many have a very different view of the ancient system including Queen Liliuokalani, Hawaii's first monarch (Commission 149).

This sentiment is echoed by Dr. Lunani-Kay Trask, director for the Center of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii, who states in

criticizing a piece of the commission's report, "In ancient Hawaii, the king did not own the land nor did the chiefs. If the historians who wrote the report understood Hawaiian religion, they would know that only the gods 'own' land, the king and chiefs are merely trustees and supervisors. The people are the beneficiaries. By arguing that Hawaiian land tenure was feudal, the report can then make the arrival of private property during the Great Mahele appear to be the democratic effects of Westernization.

In fact, private property brought by Americans actually alienated the people from the land" (Commission 711).

The land is the key issue to the Hawaiian people's struggle today. As we leave the pre-contact era and probe further till the end of the eighteenth century, we will look closer at Hawaii's unique land system, and the arrival of Captain Cook.

To be continued...

Izumo Taisha Second Invitational Golf Tournament July 7th

The Izumo Taisha Mission of

Hawaii is sponsoring its second invitational golf tournament at HCC on July 7, 1992 with a shotgun start at 12 noon.

Forty-six tourist golfers from Japan are expected to participate in this fund-raiser. Entry fee is \$85.00 and this includes lunch, awards, dinner, drinks during and after play. Among the prizes are: hole-in-one prizes, such as, Nissan car, round-trip to Japan, and others. Deadline is June 23rd. For further information, please contact Izumo Taisha at 538-7778.

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