

American Revolutionary War and Kamehameha's Conquest

"... at 5 o'clock we arrived there and saw a number of People, I believe between 2 and 300 ... we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack tho' without intending to attack them ..."

"... they fired one or two shots, upon which our Men without any orders rushed in upon them, fired and put 'em to flight; several of them were killed". (Diary of Lt. John Barker, Library of Congress)



Thousands of militiamen arrived in time to fight; 89 men from 23 towns in Massachusetts were killed or wounded on that first day of war, April 19, 1775. By the next morning, Massachusetts had 12 regiments in the field. Connecticut soon mobilized a force of 6,000, one-quarter of its military-age men. (Smithsonian, Ferling)

On April 19, 1775, the Battles of Lexington and Concord were the first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War. The battles marked the outbreak of open armed conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and its thirteen colonies of British North America.

The first shot ("the shot heard round the world") was fired just as the sun was rising at Lexington. The American militia were outnumbered and fell back; and the British regulars proceeded on to Concord.

Within a week, 16,000 men from the four New England colonies formed a siege army outside British-occupied Boston. In June, the Continental Congress took over the New England army, creating a national

force, the Continental Army. Thereafter, men throughout America took up arms. It seemed to the British regulars that every able-bodied American male had become a soldier. (Smithsonian, Ferling)

Following this, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence and it was signed by 56-members of the Congress (1776.)

The next eight years (1775-1783) war was waging on the eastern side of the continent. The main result was an American victory and European recognition of the independence of the United States.

Some 100,000 men served in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Probably twice that number soldiered as militiamen, for the most part defending the home front, functioning as a police force and occasionally engaging in enemy surveillance. (Smithsonian, Ferling)

Fighting on the patriot side were allied Indian tribes as well as French military forces, who supported the rebel cause both in the United States and in Europe by engaging the British in a colonial fight for independence that ultimately became worldwide in scope. (Veterans Museum)

The formal end of the war did not occur until the Treaty of Paris and the Treaties of Versailles were signed on September 3, 1783 and recognized the sovereignty of the United States over the territory bounded roughly by what is now Canada to the north, Florida to the south, and the Mississippi River to the west.

The last British troops left New York City on November 25, 1783, and the US Congress of the Confederation ratified the Paris treaty on January 14, 1784.

According to the American Battlefield Trust, around 230,000 proto-Americans fought in the Continental Army, though never more than 48,000 at a time. (Military-com, Stilwell) Between 25,000 and 70,000 American Patriots died during active military service. Of these, approximately 6,800 were killed in battle, while at least 17,000 died from disease. The majority of the latter died while prisoners of war of the British, mostly in the prison ships in New York Harbor. (Veterans Museum)

It was the turning point in the future of the continent and an everlasting change in the United States.

At this same time, there was a turning point in the future of the Hawaiian Islands.

'Contact'

In the dawn hours of January 18, 1778, on his third expedition, British explorer Captain James Cook on the HMS Resolution and Captain Charles Clerke of the HMS Discovery first sighted what Cook named the Sandwich Islands (that were later named the Hawaiian Islands.)

Hawaiian lives changed with sudden and lasting impact, when western contact changed the course of history for Hawai'i.

Cook continued to sail along the coast searching for a suitable anchorage. His two ships remained offshore, but a few Hawaiians were allowed to come on board on the morning of January 20, before Cook continued on in search of a safe harbor.



On the afternoon of January 20, 1778, Cook anchored his ships near the mouth of the Waimea River on Kauai's southwestern shore. After a couple of weeks, there, they headed to the west coast of North America.

After the West Coast, Alaska and Bering Strait exploration, on October 24, 1778 the two ships headed back to the islands; they sighted Maui on November 26, circled the Island of Hawai'i and eventually anchored at Kealahou Bay on January 17, 1779.

After a month's stay, Cook got under sail to resume his exploration of the Northern Pacific. Shortly after leaving Hawai'i Island, the foremast of the Resolution broke and the ships returned to Kealahou Bay for repairs. On February 14, 1779, at Kealahou Bay, some Hawaiians took one of Cook's small boats.

He attempted to take hostage the King of Hawai'i, Kalani'ōpu'u. The Hawaiians prevented this and Cook and some of his men were killed. Clerke took over the expedition and they left.

Kamehameha's Conquest

In the Islands, over the centuries, the islands weren't unified under single rule. Leadership sometimes covered portions of an island, sometimes covered a whole island or groups of islands.

Island rulers, Ali'i or Mō'i, typically ascended to power through familial succession and warfare. In those wars, Hawaiians were killing Hawaiians; sometimes the rivalries pitted members of the same family against each other.

At the period of Captain Cook's arrival (1778-1779), the Hawaiian Islands were divided into four kingdoms: (1) the island of Hawai'i under the rule of Kalani'ōpu'u, who also had possession of the Hāna district of east Maui; (2) Maui (except the Hāna district,) Molokai, Lānai and Kaho'olawe, ruled by Kahekili; (3) O'ahu, under the rule of Kahahana; and (4) Kauai and Ni'ihau, Kamakahelei was ruler.



“At that time Kahekili was plotting for the downfall of Kahahana and the seizure of Oahu and Molokai, and the queen of Kauai was disposed to assist him in these enterprises.”

“The occupation of the Hana district of Maui by the kings of Hawaii had been the cause of many stubborn conflicts between the chivalry of the two islands, and when Captain Cook first landed on Hawaii he found the king of that island absent on another warlike expedition to Maui, intent upon avenging his defeat of two years before, when his famous brigade of eight hundred nobles was hewn in pieces.” (Kalākaua)

Kamakahelei was the “queen of Kauai and Ni'ihau, and her husband was a younger brother to Kahekili, while she was related to the royal family of Hawaii. Thus, it will be seen, the reigning families of the several islands of the group were all related to each other, as well by marriage as by blood.”

“So had it been for many generations. But their wars with each other were none the less vindictive because of their kinship, or attended with less of barbarity in their hours of triumph.” (Kalākaua)

Fornander states that “It had been the custom since the days of Keawenui-a-Umi on the death of a Moi (King) and the accession of a new one, to redivide and distribute the land of the island between the chiefs and favorites of the new monarch.” This custom was repeatedly the occasion of a civil war. (Thrum)

Human and organic nature were, however, probably the same then as now, and wars and contentions may occasionally have disturbed the peace of the people, as eruptions and earthquakes may have destroyed and altered the face of the country. (Fornander)

“Before the conquest of Kamehameha, the several islands were ruled by independent kings, who were frequently at war with each other, but more often with their own subjects. As one chief acquired sufficient strength, he disputed the title of the reigning prince.”

“If successful, his chance of permanent power was quite as precarious as that of his predecessor. In some instances the title established by force of arms remained in the same family for several generations, disturbed, however, by frequent rebellions ... war being a chief occupation ...” (Jarves)

Following Kalani’ōpu’u’s death in 1782, the kingship was inherited by his son Kīwala’ō; Kamehameha (Kīwala’ō’s cousin) was given guardianship of the Hawaiian god of war, Kūka’ilimoku.

Dissatisfied with subsequent redistricting of the lands by district chiefs, civil war ensued between Kīwala’ō’s forces and the various chiefs under the leadership of Kamehameha. At the Battle of Moku’ōhai (just south of Kealakekua) Kīwala’ō was killed and Kamehameha attained control of half the Island of Hawai’i.



Early Battles Leading to Hawaiian Island Unification

I came across a summary (that also had some expanded explanatory notes) on early battles that Kamehameha was involved with – effectively from about 1760 to the mid-1780s. (You can put some time context to these - these were about the time of the American Revolutionary War.)

I liked the formatting and summary nature of the descriptions, including the: who, what, where, when and why. These are included here as presented by Harrington (with some editing for formatting purposes.)

Battle #1—Hilo Warriors of Alapa’inui Defeat Ka’ū Warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u Near Hilo

Who: The Ka’ū warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u, including his kahu Puna, Kekūhaupī’o, and Keawemauhili vs. the Hilo warriors of Alapa’inui and chiefs loyal to Alapa’inui, including Keawe’ōpala, Keaweāheulu, and the three sons of Keawepoepoe (Kame’eiamoku, Kamanawa and Ke’eaumoku.)

Where: Near Hilo, Hawai’i Island.

Why: Kalani’ōpu’u seeks to avenge Alapa’inui’s poisoning of Keōuanui, the father of Kamehameha, and take Kamehameha from Alapa’inui’s court in Hilo and bring him to his own court in Ka’ū.

When: Kamehameha is about ten years old.

Result: Kalani’ōpu’u’s forces suffer many deaths and are put to flight by the warriors of Alapa’inui.

Battle #2—Ka’ū Warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u Defeat Hilo Warriors of Keawe’ōpala and Ke’eaumoku Inland of Kawaihae.

Who: The Ka’ū warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u vs. the Hilo warriors of Keawe’ōpala, allied with Ke’eaumoku.

Where: Inland of Kawaihae on Hawai’i Island, between Ke’ei and Hōnaunau.

Why: Kalani’ōpu’u seeks revenge for his earlier military defeat by the warrior forces of Alapa’inui.

When: c.1760. Some years after previous battle; after death of Alapa’inui.

Result: After a battle lasting several days, Kalani’ōpu’u’s forces are victorious. A turning point in this battle is the death of Keawe’ōpala’s kahuna nui Ka’akau. Keawe’ōpala is also killed. Ke’eaumoku flees to Maui, and Kalani’ōpu’u rules over all of Hawai’i Island. Kamehameha returns to Ka’ū to live in the court of his makua kāne mō’ī Kalani’ōpu’u.

Battle #3—Kamehameha and Hawai’i Island Warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u Defeat Maui Warriors of Kahekili at Fortification of Ka’uiki at Hāna and Nearby Village of Kaupō: The Plunder of Kaupō.

Who: The Hawai’i Island warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u (with Kamehameha) vs. the Maui warriors of Kahekili.

Where: Fortification of Ka’uiki at Hāna, Maui; nearby village of Kaupō.

Why: To regain control of the Hāna fort.

When: c.1775.

Result: Kalani’ōpu’u’s forces are victorious over the Maui warriors and retake the Hāna fort. Kalani’ōpu’u orders his warriors to plunder the people of Kaupō and many innocent people are killed.

Battle #4—Battle of Kalaeoka’ilio—The Cape of the Dog: Maui Warriors of Kahekili Defeat Hawai’i Island Warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u at Kaupō.

Who: The Hawai’i Island warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u (including Kamehameha) vs. the Maui warriors of Kahekili.

Where: Kaupō, Maui.

Why: Kahekili is angered by the killing of his people at Kaupō, Maui and seeks revenge against Kalani’ōpu’u.

When: c.1775.

Result: Kalani’ōpu’u’s forces are outnumbered and flee the battlefield, suffering many deaths. This is the first major battle of the rising warrior Kamehameha, and during the fighting he shows fearlessness and bravery by coming to the rescue of his war instructor Kekūhaupi’o

Battle #5—Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi’o Defeat Maui Warriors of Kahekili Near Papawai Point

Who: Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi’o vs. the Maui warriors of Kahekili.

Where: Near Papawai Point, Maui.

Why: Maui warriors try to prevent Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi’o from landing their canoe.

When: Same day as #6; time overlaps with Battle #6

Result: Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi’o are vastly outnumbered yet they defeat the Maui warriors and force them to flee.

Battle #6— Battle of the Sand Dunes—Pi’ipi’i and ‘Ālapa Heaped Up at Kakanilua: Maui Warriors of Kahekili and O’ahu Warriors of Kahahana Defeat Hawai’i Island Warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u’s Chiefly Army of Keawe at Wailuku.

Who: The Hawai’i Island warriors of Kalani’ōpu’u’s Chiefly Army of Keawe (‘Ālapa and Pi’ipi’i armies) including Kekūhaupi’o, Kalanimanoiookaho’owa, Nae’ole, ʻImakakoloa, Kānekoa, Nu’uanupā’ahu, Nanuekaleiōpū, Keaweaheulu, and Keawemauhili as well as Kame’eiamoku, and Kamanawa. vs. the Maui warriors of Kahekili supported by the O’ahu warriors of Kahahana.

Where: Inland at Wailuku, Maui.

Why: Kalani'ōpu'u seeks to avenge his earlier defeat to Kahekili's forces at Kaupō, Maui.

Result: All of Kalani'ōpu'u's Chiefly Army of Keawe is slain by the Maui and O'ahu warriors, except for two messengers who bring the news to Kalani'ōpu'u.

Battle #7—Maui Warriors of Kahekili and O'ahu Warriors of Kahahana Defeat Hawai'i Island Warriors of Kalani'ōpu'u Near Wailuku.

Who: The Hawai'i Island warriors of Kalani'ōpu'u vs. the Maui warriors of Kahekili and the O'ahu warriors of Kahahana.

Where: Near Wailuku, Maui.

Why: Kalani'ōpu'u seeks to avenge the slaughter of his Pi'ipi'i and 'Ālapa warriors at Wailuku.

Result: The Hawai'i Island warriors are overpowered and flee the battlefield. They are not pursued by the Maui and O'ahu warriors, who also suffer many losses.

Battle #8—Warriors of Maui Ruler Kahekili Defeat Hawai'i Island Warriors on Molokai.

Who: Hawai'i Island warriors of Kalani'ōpu'u vs. warriors of the Maui ruler Kahekili.

Where: Kalae, Molokai.

Why: Kalani'ōpu'u seeks to avenge the death of his 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i armies at Wailuku, Maui.

When: One year after peace accord between Kahekili and Kalani'ōpu'u.

Result: Kalani'ōpu'u's warriors are again defeated.

Battle #9—Hawai'i Island Warriors of Kalani'ōpu'u and Kamehameha's Hunalele and Huelokū Warriors Defeat the Maui and O'ahu Warriors of Kahekili and Kahahana in Hakalau.

Who: The Hawai'i Island warriors of Kalani'ōpu'u, including Kamehameha's Hunalele and Huelokū warriors mostly from Kohala and Waimea vs. the Maui and O'ahu warriors of Kahekili and Kahahana.

Where: Hakalau in the Hilo district of Hawai'i Island.

Why: Kalani'ōpu'u seeks to avenge the slaughter of his Pi'ipi'i and 'Ālapa warriors at Wailuku.

Result: Kalani'ōpu'u's Hawai'i Island warriors are victorious. Kaihe is killed by Kekūhaupi'o, and the Maui and O'ahu warriors flee the battlefield.

Battle #10—Battle of Moku'ōhai—Kamehameha's Warriors of Kohala, Kona, and Waimea Defeat Hilo, Puna, Ka'ū, and Hāmākua Warriors of Kīwala'ō and Keawemauhili on Plain of Moku'ōhai.

Who: Kīwala'ō's army led by the twins Keōuakū'ahu'ula and Keōuape'e'ale and supported by the Hilo warriors of Keawemauhili and the Puna warriors of Ahia, along with warriors of Ka'ū and Hāmākua vs. Kamehameha's army of warriors mostly from Kohala, Kona, and Waimea. Chiefs allied with Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi'o are Ke'eaumoku Pāpa'iahehe, Keaweheulu, Keaweokahikona, Kawelookalani, Kala'imamahū, and Kamehameha's younger brother Keli'imaika'i, as well as Kame'eiamoku and Kamanawa, the sacred twins of Kekaulike.

Where: Plain of Moku'ōhai between Hōnaunau and Ke'ei.

Why: Aggressive acts by Keōuakū'ahu'ula against Kīwala'ō for denying him land lead to an alliance between Kīwala'ō and Keōuakū'ahu'ula against Kamehameha.

When: 1782

Result: Kīwala'ō is killed by Ke'eaumoku and Kamehameha's warriors are victorious. Kamehameha gains control of Kona, Kohala, and part of Hāmākua while Keōuakū'ahu'ula rules over Ka'ū and part of Puna, and Keawemauhili rules over Hilo and parts of Hāmākua and Puna.

Battle #11—Battle of the Bitter Rain—Kaua Kaua’awa: Kamehameha’s Palena, Mahi, Huelokū, and Hunalele Warriors Defeat Hilo, Ka’ū, and Puna Warriors of Keawemauhili and Keōuakū’ahu’ula and Maui Warriors of Kahekili from Pū’āinakō to Pua’aloa.

Who: Kamehameha’s 20,000 warriors, including his Palena, Mahi, Huelokū, and Hunalele army divisions vs. the warriors of Hilo, Ka’ū, and Puna under the Hilo and Ka’ū rulers Keawemauhili and Keōuakū’ahu’ula, later supported by the Maui warriors of Kahekili, who were led by Kahāhāwai.

Where: Begins near Pū’āinakō and ranges as far as Pā’ie’ie and Pua’aloa in Hilo.

Why: Kaha’i [Keahia] asks Kamehameha to attack Keōuakū’ahu’ula to avenge the death of Kaha’i’s brother, Kānekoa.

When: c.1783

Result: After three days of fighting, Kamehameha’s forces are winning the battle against the Hilo, Ka’ū, and Puna warriors of Keawemauhili and Keōuakū’ahu’ula. Then the Maui warriors of Kahāhāwai arrive and join the battle against Kamehameha’s warriors, who are forced to retreat.

Battle #12—Kamehameha’s Mahi Warriors Led by Ka’iana Defeat Pōniu and Pukeawe Armies of Keōuakū’ahu’ula Above Kainaliu.

Who: Kamehameha’s Mahi army of 2,000 warriors led by Ka’iana, with reinforcements of 2,000 warriors arriving from South Kona vs. Keōuakū’ahu’ula’s Pōniu and Pukeawe armies.

Where: Above Kainaliu.

Why: To prevent Keōuakū’ahu’ula from attacking rear of Kamehameha’s forces as Kamehameha’s warriors attack Keawemauhili at Hilo.

Result: The Mahi warriors gain the advantage over Keōuakū’ahu’ula’s Pōniu warriors and then Keōuakū’ahu’ula directly leads his Pukeawe army to assist in the fight, outnumbering the Mahi army and gaining the advantage. Kamehameha sends reinforcements from South Kona, and Keōuakū’ahu’ula warriors are forced to retreat.

Battle #13—Battle of Hāpu’u: Kamehameha’s Waimea Warriors with Ke’eaumoku Pāpa’iahehe Defeat Kahekili’s Maui Warriors Led by Manonoikauakāpekulani from Hālawa Uplands to the Sea.

Who: Kamehameha’s army of 2,000 warriors, mostly from Waimea, and including Ke’eaumoku vs. Kahekili’s Maui warriors led by the ali’i Manonoikauakāpekulani.

Where: Beginning in the Hālawa uplands and moving to the shore.

Why: An invasion of Kohala by Kahekili’s Maui warriors led by Manonoikauakāpekulani causes Kamehameha to attack these invaders of his homeland.

When: c.1785.

Result: The battle lasts for two days and Kamehameha’s side prevails. Manonoikauakāpekulani is offered as a sacrifice at the heiau of Mo’okini.

Battle #14—Battle of Laupāhoehoe Two: Kīpu’upu’u and Malana Warriors of Kamehameha and Kamehameha’s Canoe Fleet Led by Ke’eaumoku Pāpa’iahehe Defeat Hilo and Hāmākua Warriors of Keawemauhili at Hāmākua o Kupapaulau and from Maulua to Kealakekua at Hāmākua

Who: Kamehameha’s Kīpu’upu’u army (led by Nanuekaleiōpū); Kamehameha’s Malana army (led directly by Kamehameha); and Kamehameha’s canoe fleet (led by Ke’eaumoku) vs. Keawemauhili’s Hilo and Hāmākua warriors led by the Honohina chief Kalino, and other warriors of Keawemauhili led by the chief Kainea of Kapehu.

Where: Two major battles occur.

Battle One: The battle of Kamehameha's Kīpu'upu'u army under Nanuekaleiōpū against Keawemauhili's Hilo and Hāmākua warriors led by the Honohina chief Kalino begins at Kaholo, at Hāmākua o Kupapaulau.

Battle Two: The battle of Kamehameha's Malana army begins in Kapehu, where Kekuapāni'o's warriors proficient in the use of slings meet Keawemauhili's warriors led by the Kapehu chief Kainea, and this battle ranges from Maulua to Kealakekua at Hāmākua.

Why: Kamehameha is angered at the killing of his ali'i watchman Lononuiākea stationed at Laupāhoehoe. These killings are committed by Pīna'au and Kauwehanehane, two of Keawemauhili's chiefs, and are considered an act of war by Keawemauhili against Kamehameha, who had previously gained control of Laupāhoehoe in a battle against Kahekili's warriors.

Result of Battle One: Kamehameha's Kīpu'upu'u warriors led by Nanuekaleiōpū are victorious over Keawemauhili's warriors of Hilo and Hāmākua after two days and nights of fighting. Keawemauhili's warriors flee the battlefield with Kamehameha's warriors in pursuit.

Result of Battle Two: In a separate battle, Kamehameha's Malana army led by Kamehameha emerges victorious after three days of fierce fighting against Keawemauhili's warriors under Kainea, who flee the battlefield. The three ali'i responsible for the earlier deaths of Kamehameha's men at Laupāhoehoe are killed.

In the late-1780s into 1790, Kamehameha conquered the Island of Hawai'i and was pursuing conquest of Maui and eventually sought to conquer the rest of the archipelago.

At that time, Maui's King Kahekili and his eldest son and heir-apparent, Kalanikūpule, were carrying on war and conquered O'ahu.

In 1790, Kamehameha travelled to Maui. Hearing this, Kahekili sent Kalanikūpule back to Maui with a number of chiefs (Kahekili remaining on O'ahu to maintain order of his newly conquered kingdom.)

After a battle in Hāna, Kamehameha landed at Kahului and then marched on to Wailuku, where Kalanikūpule waited for him.

The ensuing battle was one of the hardest contested on Hawaiian record. The battle started in Wailuku and then headed up Ūao Valley – the Maui defenders being continually driven farther up the valley.

Kamehameha's superiority in the number and use of the newly acquired weapons and canon (called Lopaka) from the 'Fair American' (used for the first time in battle, with the assistance from John Young and Isaac Davis) finally won the decisive battle at Ūao Valley.

Arguably, the cannon and people who knew how to effectively use it were the pivotal factors in the battle. Had the fighting been in the usual style of hand-to-hand combat, the forces would have likely been equally matched.

The Maui troops were completely annihilated, and it is said that the corpses of the slain were so many as to choke up the waters of the stream of Ūao - one of the names of the battle was "Kepaniwai" (the damming of the waters.)

Maui Island was conquered and its fighting force was destroyed - Kalanikūpule and some other chiefs escaped over the mountain at the back of the valley and made their way to O'ahu (to later face Kamehameha, again; the next time at the Battle of Nu'uuanu in 1795.)

After the battle at 'Iao, Kamehameha received Keōpūolani as his wife. Kamehameha left for Moloka'i to secure it under his control, before proceeding to O'ahu.

Then, in 1795, Kamehameha moved on in his conquest of O'ahu.

The battle was the last stand of Kalanikūpule and 9,000-warriors of O'ahu against Kamehameha and his invading army of 12,000-warriors from Hawai'i. (Dukas)

Kamehameha's fleet landed at Waikiki where it covered the beaches from Wai'ālae to Waikiki. Kalanikūpule and his chiefs were stationed at strategic points in Nu'uaniu at Kanoneakapueo, Kahapa'akai, Luakaha, Kawananakoa, Kaukahoku, Kapa'eli, Kaumu'ohena, and Pu'iwa (where the fighting began.) (Kamakau)



Outnumbered and outgunned, the O'ahu defenders were already weakened by the Battle of 'Aiea (Kukii'ahu) and a failed attempt to seize two well-armed foreign merchant vessels. (Dukas)

The landings were unopposed, and Kamehameha's forces had four days to gather food and scout out enemy positions. The army began to move west and first clashed with Kalanikūpule's men near Punchbowl Crater.

Both armies used traditional Hawaiian weapons, augmented with Western firearms. Kamehameha, however, used European-style flanking tactics and sited cannons on the Papakōlea ridgeline, routing similar positions held by Kalanikūpule's cannons. (James)

“Kalanikūpule’s men were also supplied with these foreign weapons, however, not as well because they had lost those foreign weapons on board Captain Brown’s ships which the foreigners had taken at that time Kalanikūpule had first thought of attacking Kamehameha.” ...

“In the beginning of this battle, the female ali’i on Kamehameha’s side used their muskets, firing their bullets amongst the warriors on Kalanikūpule’s side.”

“Those on Kamehameha’s side were better skilled with the muskets, and perhaps these warriors furnished with the foreign weapons were electrified (ho’ouwila ‘ia paha) by seeing the fearlessness of these ali’i wahine.” (Desha)

Just a little above the Queen Emma’s property was a decisive point of the battle. There a well-directed shot from John Young’s cannon brought death to the restless and ambitious Ka’iana; Ka’iana had landed with Kamehameha but defected to the side of Kalanikūpule.

With his death, Kalanikūpule’s forces scattered - some to the hills and valleys beyond, and drove the rest to a swift destruction over the famous pali. (Thrum)

Kamehameha’s cannon’s rained fire down on Kalanikūpule’s forces, which disorganized under the assault from above. From that point on, it was a running fight, a desperate rear-guard action as O’ahu’s defenders were herded up Nu’uanu Valley.

A number of them did escape. Some went up Pacific Heights, but primarily they went up Alewa and over into Kalihi and escaped to Aiea and through there. Others went up over the pali or went up to Kalihi and then went over into Kāne’ohe. A lot of them went down the old trails on the pali. (Pacific Worlds)

But the actions of some gave the battle another name ...

The name of the Battle of Nu’uanu is also referred to as Kaleleake’anae, which means “the leaping of the mullet fish.” With their backs to the sheer cliff of the Nu’uanu Pali, many chose to fall to their deaths than submit to Kamehameha.

In 1897, while improving the Pali road, workers found an estimated 800-skulls along with other bones, at the foot of the precipice. They believed these to be the remains of O’ahu warriors defeated by Kamehameha a hundred years earlier. (Island Call, October 1953; Mitchell)

Kalanikūpule survived the battle, but was later captured and sacrificed by Kamehameha at the Diamond Head heiau of Papa’ena’ena. (Dukas)

Kamehameha, through the assistance of the Kona ‘Uncles’ (Ke’eaumoku, Keawe’ehūlu, Kame’eiamoku & Kamanawa (the latter two ended up on the Islands’ coat of arms;)) succeeded, after a struggle of more than ten years, in securing to himself the supreme authority.

Then, Kamehameha looked to conquer Kauai.

Kaumuali'i was the only son of Kamakahelei and Kā'eo; he was born in 1778 at Holoholokū, a royal birthing heiau specifically designated for the birth of high ranking children. Kaumuali'i became ruling chief of Kauai upon the death of his parents.

By 1795, Kamehameha, with his superior use of modern weapons and western advisors, subdued all other chiefdoms, with the exception of Kauai. King Kamehameha I launched his first invasion attempt on Kauai in April of 1796, having already conquered the other Hawaiian Islands, and having fought his last major battle at Nu'uauu on O'ahu in 1795.

Kauai's opposing factions (Kaumuali'i versus Keawe) were extremely vulnerable as they had been weakened by fighting each other (Keawe died and Kaumuali'i was, ultimately, ruler of Kauai and Ni'ihau.) Kamehameha's two attempts at invading Kauai were foiled (by storm and sickness.)

The island of Kauai was never conquered; in the face of the threat of a further invasion, in 1810, at Pākākā on O'ahu, negotiations between King Kaumuali'i and Kamehameha I took place and Kaumuali'i yielded to Kamehameha. The agreement marked the end of war and thoughts of war across the islands.

"It is supposed that some six thousand of the followers of this chieftain (Kamehameha,) and twice that number of his opposers, fell in battle during his career, and by famine and distress occasioned by his wars and devastations from 1780 to 1796." (Bingham)

"However the greatest loss of life according to early writers was not from the battles, but from the starvation of the vanquished and consequential sickness due to destruction of food sources and supplies - a recognized part of Hawaiian warfare." (Bingham)

Information here is primarily from Smithsonian, Ferling; Military-com, Stilwell; Veterans Museum; Library of Congress; Art is primarily from Herb Kane; Bingham; James; Desha; Library of Congress

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young

