

KAMEHAMEHA I Effects After Unification

Hawaii: A Unified Nation Torn apart by war

After fourteen years of war, the Hawaiian islands were in bad shape. Thousands died in battles or from starvation. While the strong young men were fighting for their chiefs, the elderly men, women and children had been left behind to survive on their own. The once filled fields of crops had been stripped of **vegetation** and were empty. People had even begun to steal food from their neighbors to survive. In order to move forward to a better life for all, Kamehameha commanded his people to return to their homes and stop fighting. "Turn your spears into digging sticks and your war canoes into fishing canoes," he proclaimed.

Rebuilding a ravaged nation

But Kamehameha wanted to do more than make **pronouncements**, he guided his people by example. They worked together to repair the land, rebuild fishponds, develop water systems, and tend their crops until the lands were green again and the food plentiful. When his gardens had produced vegetables, Kamehameha invited others to take from them. He taught them not to waste but to take only enough to satisfy their hunger.

Strengthening his government

He also developed a government that gave him control to withstand rebellions and bad **foreign influences**. The way to succeed was, in Kamehameha's eyes, by reinforcing the religious beliefs and the kapu system. He had always believed these were necessary to the well-being of chiefs and commoners for an orderly way of life. Convinced that the gods had guided his way from the day of his birth, Kamehameha never doubted their powers. Because everyone knew what punishments awaited them if they **strayed**, no other laws were needed.

Although the kapu system told the Hawaiians how to behave, Kamehameha wanted additional control, so he changed the existing system of government to suit his needs. Because he could only be on one island at a time, he named his most trusted followers to serve as **governors** on each island. Those he didn't trust were kept near him. As he moved between the islands, he took these men along to keep them from planning an **uprising** against him.

Control over lands

Over the years, Kamehameha was open to new ideas from visiting foreigners, including Captain George Vancouver. Through his own foresight and Vancouver's advice, Kamehameha wisely borrowed only those ideas that would benefit his people and his lands. At Vancouver's suggestion,

Vocabulary

vegetation: the mass of plants growing in a particular place

pronouncements: to declare something official

foreign influences: effects of people from other countries.

strayed: to go away from traditional or acceptable behaviors.

governors: an appointed or elected official who governs a place.

uprising: an act of rebellion or revolt against those in power

Kamehameha kept all land for Hawaiians. No foreigners were allowed to own land. He gave and took back land as he wished.

Controlling trade

As trade increased and the economy of the island improved, Kamehameha insisted that only he or an appointed representative could trade with the foreigners who came to the islands. In this way, he was making sure that the natives would not be taken advantage of and that power and wealth were kept away from those who could use them against him and the kingdom.

Law of Splintered Paddle

He announced a new law to protect innocent people. Twelve years earlier, Kamehameha set out in a war canoe. As he sailed along the Puna coast he saw some fishermen on the beach at Pāpa'i. They had something he wanted. Kamehameha jumped ashore to take it away from them but they ran away. While he was chasing them he slipped. His foot got stuck between the rocks.



One of the fishermen saw what happened and ran back. He lifted his paddle and struck Kamehameha on the head so hard that the paddle was splintered to pieces. The fisherman did not know that the man he hit was Kamehameha. He ran away. Kamehameha later freed his foot and went back to his canoe.

In 1797 the man who struck Kamehameha with a paddle twelve years earlier was brought before the great ruler to be punished. Instead Kamehameha chose to forgive the fisherman. He blamed himself for attacking innocent people. Kamehameha gave the fisherman a gift of lands and set him free.

Kamehameha made a law to protect the weak from the strong. Māmalahoe Kānāwai is the “Law of the Splintered Paddle.” It allowed for safe travel throughout the islands.