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Most of the graphics incorporated in this Information Sheet are paintings completed by Native Hawaiian artist and historian Herb Kāne (1928–2011). He completed 400 paintings of life in Hawai'i and the South Pacific and was recognized as a living treasure of Hawai'i in 1984. Kāne was instrumental in reviving Native Hawaiian voyaging traditions, and was one of the founders of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. In 2013, the voyaging canoes Hōkūle'a and Hikianalia embarked on a Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage: one of their destinations is Waitangi, Aotearoa.

For more information on Kāne or to view some of his work, please visit: <http://herbkanehawaii.com/>

For more information on the Mālama Honua Worldwide Voyage, please visit: <http://www.hokulea.com/>

## Timeline of Events

ca. 1729 CE	Birth of Kalani'ōpu'u
1754 CE	Death of Alapa'i, Kalani'ōpu'u becomes ruler of Hawai'i Island
ca. 1758 CE	Birth of Kalani'ōpu'u's nephew, Kamehameha
1759–1781 CE	Kalani'ōpu'u captures Ka'uiki Fortress and gains control of the Hāna district in Maui.
1760 CE	Birth of Kalani'ōpu'u's son, Kīwala'ō
1775 CE	Kalani'ōpu'u raids Kaupō, Maui Battle of Kalaeoka'ilio
1775–1779 CE	Kalani'ōpu'u wages constant war on Kahekili
1776 CE	Slaughter of Kalani'ōpu'u's elite 'Ālapa force at the Battle of Ahulau ka Pi'ipi'i 'o Kakanilua
1779 CE	Death of Captain James Cook
1782 CE	Death of Kalani'ōpu'u Battle of Moku'ōhai
1810 CE	Unification of the Hawaiian Islands by Kamehameha

# Ke Ali'i Nui 'o Kalani'ōpu'u



Ali'i (chiefs) of Hawai'i Island wearing mahiole (helmets) and ahu'ula (feathered capes) as insignia of their high status and lineage. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.

## The High Chief Kalani'ōpu'u

By Holly K. Coleman

Honored in oral histories as a fierce warrior, Kalani'ōpu'uāka'īamamao was an *ali'i nui* (high chief) from the district of Ka'ū on the island of Hawai'i. Kalani'ōpu'u (ca. 1729–1782 CE) was of the illustrious lineage of generations of Hawai'i Island rulers, including the 'Ī family of Hilo, and the great chiefs Keawe and Līloa.

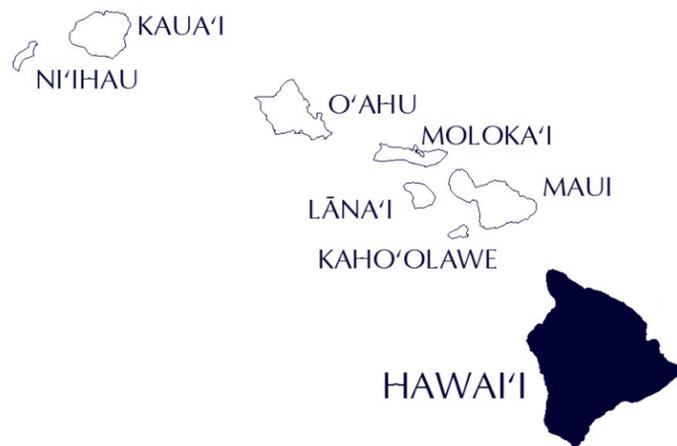
Kalani'ōpu'u was tested as a young commander in the military campaigns of the *ali'i* Alapa'inui, and

distinguished himself as a brilliant fighter and military strategist. Throughout his life, he conducted brutal military campaigns on the islands of Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and O'ahu. Through extensive warfare and diplomacy, Kalani'ōpu'u would become ruler of all of Hawai'i Island.

Although he was well known for his ruthlessness during war, historical accounts also describe Kalani'ōpu'u as a knowledgeable and capable ruler. As an acknowledgement of his military nature and success in war, Kalani'ōpu'u became known to Hawaiians as "Kalanikūmai'eiwakamoku" ("The Heavenly Ruler of the Nine Islands").



Research Division  
Land, Culture, and History Section  
Information Sheet, November 2014



Left: *Ka Pae 'Āina o Hawai'i* The Hawaiian Islands. Right: Hawai'i Island, with the six *moku* (districts) outlined and shaded. Source: OHA, 2014.



## He Mo'okū'auhau: A Genealogy

The following genealogy shows Kalani'ōpu'u's lineage directly connected to Līloa (ca. 1490 CE), who was considered one of the foremost *ali'i nui* of the island of Hawai'i. The format of this chant starts with the naming of the father ("O \_\_ ke kāne"), the naming of the mother ("O \_\_ ka wahine") and ends with the birth of the child ("Hānau 'ia 'o \_\_")(Fornander, 1878; Dibble, 1843).

- 'O Līloa ke kāne, 'o 'Akahiākuleana ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Umiālīloa.
- 'O Umiālīloa ke kāne, 'o Kapukiniālīloa ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Keali'iokaloa.
- 'O Keali'iokaloa ke kāne, 'o Makuahineapalaka ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Kūkailani.
- 'O Kūkailani ke kāne, 'o Ka'ohukiokalani ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Kaikilani.
- 'O Lonoikamakahiki ke kāne, 'o Kaikilani ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Keakealanikāne.
- 'O Keakealanikāne ke kāne, 'o Keali'iokalani ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Keakamahana.
- 'O Iwikauikaua ke kāne, 'o Keakamahana ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Keakealaniwahine.
- 'O Kanaloaikaiwilewa ke kāne, 'o Keakealaniwahine ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Keawe.
- 'O Keawe ke kāne, 'o Lonoma'aikanaka ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Kalaninui'iamamao.
- 'O Kalaninui'iamamao ke kāne, 'o Kamaka'iokamoku ka wahine.  
Hānau 'ia 'o Kalani'ōpu'u.

## Family and Ancestry

Kalani'ōpu'u was born around 1729 CE, during a time when many significant wars for political control were occurring in the Hawaiian Islands. Battles were especially fierce on Hawai'i Island, which at the time was divided into six *moku* (districts) that were ruled by several *ali'i nui*. These districts included Hāmākua, Hilo, Puna, Ka'ū, Kona, and Kohala.

Kalani'ōpu'u was the firstborn son of Kalaninui'iamamao, a chief of Ka'ū, and Kamaka'imoku, a Hawai'i Island chiefess who was living on the island of O'ahu. Kalani'ōpu'u was the grandson of the great chief Keawe. His half-brother was Kalanikupukeōua, who was the father of Kamehameha the Great (Kamakau, 1996).

## A Shark Chant for Kalani'ōpu'u

The following chant celebrates the ancestry and military skill of Kalani'ōpu'u, who had acquired authority over shark-gods and over other chiefs who served those gods (Pukui & Korn, 1979). Sharks as *'aumākua* (ancestral spirits/familial or personal gods) provided assistance and guidance to Native Hawaiians. This chant hails Kalani'ōpu'u for his power over creatures which are praised for their strength and beauty. Through the authority of his *kapu*, Kalani'ōpu'u held the right to wear a chiefly feather cloak.



Feeding the *'aumakua* (familial shark guardian). Oil on canvas by Herb Kane, 2013.

## He Mele Manō no Kalani'ōpu'u

'O Kalani'ōpu'u, ke kū o ke kapu o ka moku iāia,  
I pi'i ke kākala, i kekē ka niho o ka manō,  
Ka pūko'a noho a ka i'a nui o ka hīhīmanu,  
Ke koa'e lele i uka, ke aku lele i kai,  
'O ka manu kīna'u nana i popo'i ka 'ale iki, ka 'ale nui,  
Nāna i pani ka i'a kapu 'o Kepanilā,  
Ka manō kākau 'ōni'oni'o i luna o ka moku o Ka'ula e.  
E ō e Kalani'ōpu'u o hou o ka moku,  
'O kou inoa ia, e ō mai e.  
Ka lālākea, ka manō ke'ehi 'ale,  
Ka niuhi moe lawa 'o Kalani'ōpu'u,  
'O ka hō'elo'elo wela 'ole ia o ka maka,  
'O ka umu ia nana e hahao i ka 'ena'ena.  
'O Kawelo loloa nana e ho'āliali,  
A 'a'a 'o Kalanikaulelekauiwa.  
O lalapa nō ka lāua keiki  
'O Kapūlikolikoikalani,  
A kau maka manō, o ka maka'anapa,  
'O ka nanana i 'ō a i 'ane'i.  
'O ka i'a nui hīhīmau,  
'O ka 'iwa kīlou kapu o ke ali'i,  
'O ka 'iwa nui nana au moku  
'O ka lau o Keakamahana,  
I puka ke aka o ka 'ahu'ula,  
Lohia a maika'i.

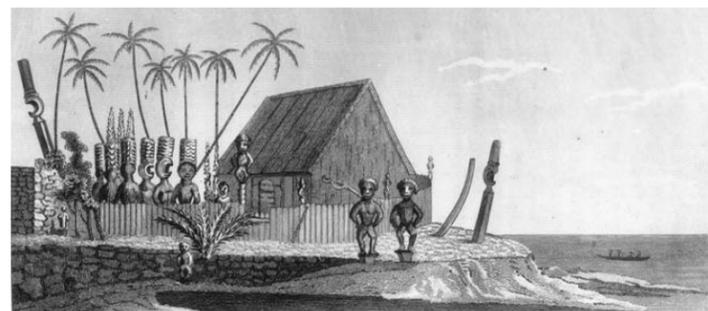
Kalani'ōpu'u, the right to impose kapu on the land is yours:  
The right of a shark with arched dorsal fin to bare teeth  
Of a coral reef to house a great stingray  
Of a koa'e-bird to take wing for the upland  
Of an aku-fish to leap and plunge in the sea  
Of a certain mottled bird, a swift snatcher,  
To pounce alike on the small billow and the huge  
And the right to bar and baffle the pathway of Kepanilā,  
Streaked like a tattoo, sacred marked shark of Ka'ula Island  
Now answer us, Kalani'ōpu'u, fierce Island-piercer!  
This is your name chant:  
You are a white-finned shark riding the crest of the wave,  
O Kalani'ōpu'u:  
A tiger shark resting without fear  
A rain quenching the sun's eye-searing glare  
A grim oven glowing underground:  
Towering Kawelo lighted it  
Who caused Kalanikaulele, the Chosen, to blaze.  
Their child was flaming Kapūlikolikookalani  
She with the shark's face and flashing eyes  
She of the restless questing gaze.  
O Kalani'ōpu'u, stingray as fish,  
Man-of-war as bird, in stillness lurking poised aloft in flight  
O 'iwa, you do unite with hooked claw the royal kapu.  
Your sovereign sway surveys this island and beyond  
Over the multitudinous children of Keakamahana  
By whose name you do inherit and wear by right  
The shining feather cloak.

### Death and Legacy

Kalani'ōpu'u died in 1782 CE at Kā'iliki'i at Waio'ahukini in Pākini (Timoteo, 1861). His body was prepared and carried to Hale o Keawe in Hōnaunau, where the sacred bones of the rulers of Hawai'i Island were kept.

The relationship between Kalani'ōpu'u and his nephew Kamehameha had been strong. When Kalani'ōpu'u believed Alapa'i to be responsible for his brother Keōua's death, he sought to steal his newborn nephew Kamehameha, who was prophesized to be a great warrior. Kalani'ōpu'u failed in his attempt, and was almost killed. Kamehameha was eventually raised in Kalani'ōpu'u's court.

In later years, Kamehameha became a distinguished general in Kalani'ōpu'u's army and was described as a *punahele* (favorite) and an *aikāne koa* (favored warrior) of Kalani'ōpu'u (Kamakau, 1996). When Kalani'ōpu'u was dying, he bequeathed his lands to his son Kiwala'ō, but gave Kamehameha the care of his war god Kūkā'ilimoku (Kamakau, 1996).



### The Unification of Hawai'i

After Kalani'ōpu'u's death, Kamehameha gained the support of many chiefs who were dissatisfied with the division of lands by Kīwala'ō, including the five warrior chiefs of Kona (Kalākau, 1888). With these chiefs, Kamehameha fought to depose his cousin. During the Battle of Moku'ōhai, Kīwala'ō was killed, and Kamehameha gained control of Kohala, Kona, and Hāmākua; he was able to consolidate his rule over the island of Hawai'i in 1791 CE. From there, he waged military campaigns and conquered the Maui group (including Kaho'olawe and Lāna'i) and Moloka'i before gaining O'ahu in 1795 CE. After failing to invade Kaua'i, Kamehameha established a treaty with the *ali'i nui* of Kaua'i Kaumuali'i in 1810. Kamehameha became the *mō'i* (supreme ruler), and the Hawaiian Islands were unified under his authority (Kamakau, 1996).

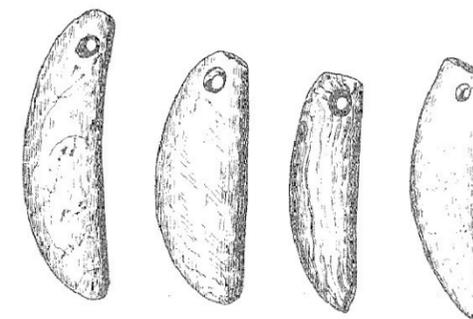


Top: Engraving of Hale o Keawe, ca. 1822–1823. Source: J. Archer and W. Ellis.

Bottom Left: Kamehameha. Bottom Right: Battle of Moku'ōhai. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.

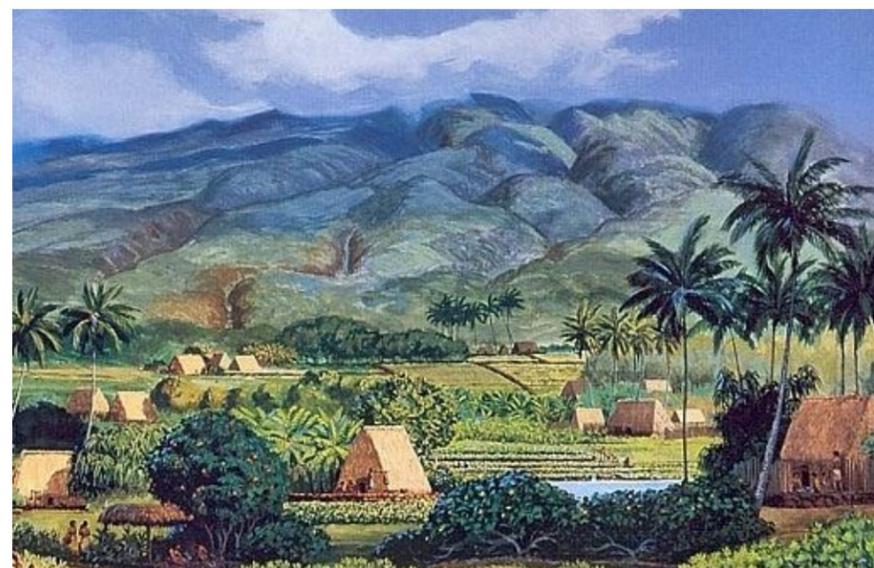
### Peleiōhōlani

Kalani'ōpu'u was considered to be a *po'olua* ("two heads"), a child with two fathers (Pukui & Elbert, 1986). Such a child was believed to be especially sacred, as he or she could claim three genealogies as sources of *mana* (Kame'eiehiwa, 1997). Kalani'ōpu'u's mother, Kamaka'imoku, lived in close succession with Peleiōhōlani, an *ali'i* of O'ahu, and Kalani-nui'iamamao, an *ali'i* of Hawai'i Island. Kalani'ōpu'u was conceived by Kamaka'imoku and Peleiōhōlani in the waters of 'Ālele, in the uplands of Waipahu in Waikele on the island of O'ahu (Kamakau, 1996).



'Ōpu'u (carved flower-shaped whale ivory ornaments) were royal insignia of the chiefs of O'ahu. Source: Te Rangī Hiroa, 2003.

In recognition of Kalani'ōpu'u's parentage, he was named Kalei'ōpu'u, which refers to the necklace that was a royal symbol of O'ahu chiefly families. Known as an 'ōpu'u, the necklace was made using a central piece of whale's tooth that was carved in a flower bud, as opposed to the tongue or hook-shaped ornament of the chiefs of Hawai'i Island (Kamakau, 1996; Te Rangī Hiroa, 2003). Though his given name was Kalei'ōpu'u, Kalani'ōpu'u became the name used by most people.



Kā'anapali, Maui. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.

### Adoption

In the early 1700s, the high chief Keawe ruled over Kohala, Kona, and Ka'ū. Before his death, Keawe passed the lands of Ka'ū and the chiefly *kapu* (sacred restrictions) to his son Kalani-nui'iamamao. When Keawe died, the chief Alapa'inuiākauaua returned to Hawai'i from the island of Maui and started warring in Kohala and Kona. Kalani-nui'iamamao was killed and Alapa'i adopted the slain chief's sons, Kalani'ōpu'u and Kalani-kupuapāikalaninuikeōua (Keōua).

Both Kalani'ōpu'u and Keōua were raised in Alapa'i's court and were trained as warriors. They became commanders of Alapa'i's armies and accompanied him on many military campaigns on Maui, Moloka'i, and O'ahu.

When Alapa'i and his armies sailed to O'ahu, the chiefs of O'ahu sent for the *ali'i nui* Peleiōhōlani on Kaua'i to try and avoid war. A chief of Wai'anae named Nā'ili asked if he could meet with Alapa'i's commanders Kalani'ōpu'u and Keōua. Because Nā'ili was the brother of Kamaka'imoku, (Kalani'ōpu'u and Keōua's mother) and Peleiōhōlani was said to be their father, the warrior brothers ceased their fighting. At Nāoneala'a in Kāne'ohe, Peleiōhōlani and Alapa'i were able to meet while their armies waited. The *ali'i* established peace and would become allies (Kamakau, 1996).

## Kalani'ōpu'u's Wars

Kalani'ōpu'u had care of the war god Kūkā'ilimoku: part of his *mana* (sacred power) as a chief derived from his ability to be victorious in war. During the mid and late 1700s, Kalani'ōpu'u engaged in countless battles, particularly with Kahekili, an *ali'i nui* of Maui (Kealoha, 1862). In the 1750s, Kalani'ōpu'u was able to take control of the Hāna district of Maui by raiding Ka'uiki, the site of a massive fortress. Kalani'ōpu'u then mercilessly raided Kaupō, and a battle known as Kalaeoka'ilio (1775 CE) was fought. Though Kalani'ōpu'u's armies were routed, it was at this battle that the warrior Kamehameha distinguished himself as a favorite of Kalani'ōpu'u, earning the nickname "Pai'ea" ("hard-shelled crab") for his deft avoidance of spears. In another battle, Kalani'ōpu'u sent a heavily trained force of warrior chiefs known as the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i, which consisted of 800 men who were expert spear point breakers. All but two of these men were killed by Kahekili's forces, and the battle was known as "Ahulau ka Pi'ipi'i i Kakanilua" ("the slaughter of the Pi'ipi'i at Kakanilua"; 1776 CE). Losing battles at Waikapū and Wailuku, Kalani'ōpu'u's forces were decimated. He sent his sacred son Kīwala'ō through the battlefield to appeal to Kahekili for peace; Kīwala'ō's *kapu* was such that warriors of both sides of the conflict had to cease fighting and prostrate themselves; Kalani'ōpu'u was spared when Kahekili agreed to peace (Kamakau, 1996).



Hāna Maui, from the bluffs, ca. 1891: Ka'uiki is part of the peninsula in the background. Source: Hawai'i State Archives Digital Collection.

### Rise to Power

After a battle at Mahinaakāka, Kalani'ōpu'u became the ruler of Ka'ū and Puna. Alapa'i died in 1754 CE, leaving his lands to his son, Keawe'ōpala. When Keawe'ōpala failed to award lands to some of the chiefs, Kalani'ōpu'u gained many powerful allies. Although they struggled in battle at first, Kalani'ōpu'u's *kahuna* (priest) Holo'ae revealed that if they were able to kill Keawe'ōpala's *kahuna* Ka'akua, they would be victorious. Ka'akua was killed, and so Kalani'ōpu'u's warriors were able to kill Keawe'ōpala in a fierce battle at Kuapehu. Thereafter, Kalani'ōpu'u became the ruler of the island of Hawai'i (Kamakau, 1996).

### Kalani'ōpu'u's Ruthlessness

Kalani'ōpu'u was well-known for his ruthlessness. In addition to plundering the people of Kaupō on Maui, his forces ravaged the island of Lāna'i. The people of Lāna'i were massacred, and their crops and access to water were destroyed. Suffering from starvation, the people of Lāna'i were forced to eat the root of a plant called *kūpala* (*Sicyos pachycarpus*), and the war and subsequent decimation were known as Kamokuhī (land of loose bowels) (Fornander, 1878).



Council of Chiefs. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.



Kalani'ōpu'u greets Cook. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.

## Kalani'ōpu'u and Captain Cook

Kalani'ōpu'u was the *mō'i* (supreme ruler) of Hawai'i Island and was on the island of Maui when Cook first landed on Kaua'i (1778 CE) in (Kalākaua, 1888).

In 1779 CE, Kalani'ōpu'u hosted Cook and his crew when they arrived at Ka'awaloa on Hawai'i Island. In addition to provisioning the ship, Kalani'ōpu'u gave items which demonstrated his wealth and power as a ruling chief, including *'ahu'ula* (feathered capes) *mahi-ole* (feathered helmets), *kāhili* (feathered standards), *kapa* (barkcloth), and finely woven mats (Kamakau, 1996).

Specific details of the events surrounding the death of Cook (February 14, 1779 CE) are the subject of debate. Cook had departed the island but was forced to return because of a storm. Tensions rose after a theft; according to some accounts, a chief Kalimu was killed by some of Cook's men (Kuykendall, 1938; Westervelt, 1923). Although Kalani'ōpu'u had been preparing to board Cook's ship, he turned back after hearing of the murder. Cook is said to have grabbed Kalani'ōpu'u, which led a chief named Kalanimanookaho'owaha to strike Cook. Many Hawaiians and four other members of Cook's company were also killed. However, friendly relations were reestablished after the incident, and the voyage continued without Cook (Dibble, 1843).



Bottom Left: The death of Cook. Oil on canvas by Herb Kāne, 2013.

Bottom Right: A Chief of the Hawaiian Islands 1787, oil on canvas by John Webber. Source: National Library of Australia, Canberra.