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Hawaiian Royalty

The All: Hawaiian Chiefs

The all of ancient Hawaii were not despots, but rather respected rulers who guided the maka ainala (common people) to live pono, or with respect and righteousness. The chiefs were known for great accomplishments and possessed skills and attributes that the people revered and admired. They were brave warriors, wise leaders, and their strong personalities and love for their people along with the mana (power) from their ancestors solidified their place in society.

Ruling the Hawaiians was an honor that most took very seriously and an obligation that bound them by blood. The all of Hawaii achieved such envied status primarily through strong genealogical connections. The all were those who had maintained pure and traceable blood lines, genealogies that could be mapped directly back to the gods. But the blood of great ancestors and chiefs coursing through their veins was not enough to secure them chiefly status indefinitely. The all had to earn and keep the respect of those they governed. The job of chief held many responsibilities, and those who did not carry out their duties could face shame, embarrassment and loss of birthright. Chiefs were often isolated and trained from birth in preparation for all that came with their chiefly destinies.

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Hawaiian chiefs were considered the all-important "middle-men" between the akua, or Gods, and the people. The ancient Hawaiians followed the aikapu system of religion, and this religion shaped everyday life. The aikapu system was built on the sacred distinction between male and female elements, and men and women were required to eat in separate quarters among many other rules. It was the duty of the all to communicate with the Gods and institute ceremonial practices to appease them. The chiefs knew that if they ruled with righteousness and the people followed the kapus (religious restrictions) closely, the gods would bless them with health and prosperity through fertile land and sea.

There were many strata of chiefs, ranked in order of authority by genealogy. Often a chief's ranking could be identified by the colors and

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patterns in his ahuula (feathered cloak), kahili (staff of feathers), or mahiole (feathered helmet). The ali'i nui, or high chief, maintained ultimate status and elicited a set of requirements necessary for all below him to follow. And although some rulers were untouchable, others interacted with commoners, assisting in farming, fishing and other laborious tasks. There were also several other types of lesser chiefs to share governance in ancient Hawaii.

Because the ancient Hawaiians had no written language before the arrival of Western missionaries, important historical events were associated with the rulers of the time, and tales were carried down to other generations through the vehicles of oral history, oli (chant) and mele (song). Stories of bravery, compassion and leadership continue to inspire all who will listen. Although you can find some historical information of Hawaii's chiefly heroes in books, you may fare better to find a local kupuna (ancestor) to regale you with tales of old.

The Kamehameha Dynasty ruled for nearly a century from the late 1700s to the late 1800s, while the Kalakaua Dynasty ruled from 1874 to 1894. The ali'i continued to rule Hawaii until Queen Liliuokalani was forced out of rule and the Hawaiian Monarchy was overthrown.

Kamehameha Dynasty

- Kamehameha I, referred to as Kamehameha the Great, is remembered most for unifying the islands during his rule from 1795 – 1819.
- Kamehameha II co-ruled with Queen Kaahumanu from 1819 - 1824
- King Kamehameha III (1825 -1854) spoke the words which were to become Hawaii's state motto: "Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono", translated to mean: The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.
- Kamehameha IV (1854 – 1863) helped to bring the Episcopalian religion to Hawaii, and his wife Queen Emma helped fund and establish Queen's Hospital to help sick and indigent Hawaiians.
- Kamehameha V (1863 – 1872) played an integral role in encouraging revival of Hawaiian traditions and maintaining a strong heritage.
- King Lunalilo met with an untimely death after only a short reign from 1873 – 1874 as the first king to be elected

Kalakaua Dynasty

- King Kalakaua ruled Hawaii from 1874 – 1891 and was known as a renaissance man. In 1882 he built the Iolani Palace, the only royal palace which exists today in the U.S.
- Queen Liliuokalani succeeded her brother King Kalakaua in 1891, but was forced to abdicate her throne in 1894. She was the last of the royal rulers and the only female to rule Hawaii.

Chiefly Grounds

- Aieahau, home of Princess Victoria Kaiulani (Oahu)
- Aliiolani Hale, was to be a palace for Kamehameha V, but converted into a government building (Oahu)
- Hanalei Kamalama, Queen Emma's Summer Palace (Oahu)
- Hulihee Palace, Palace of Princess Ruth (Hawai'i)
- Keoua Hale, Palace of Princess Ruth
- Iolani Palace, Palace of the Kalakaua Dynasty (Oahu)
- Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew (Oahu)