
How We Got To Be Where We Are (lately)

Contributed by Admin
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In the spring of 1819 King Ka-me-ha-me-ha I died after reigning for a peaceful decade over the first unified Kingdom of Hawai'i. His young son, Li-ho-li-ho, became Ka-me-ha-me-ha II, but effective control of the government was inherited by the old king's favorite wife, Ku-hina Nui [Queen Regent], Ka'a-hu-ma-nu.

That fall, under the queen's influence and that of Ke-opu-o-lani, his high chiefess mother, Li-ho-li-ho was forced to agree to the abandonment of the native Ha-wa-ii-an religion.

Five months later, amid the ensuing confusion, the first contingent of Calvinist missionaries arrived . It was a death sentence to the 1600 year old Ka-na-ka Ma-oli culture; the culmination of an attack which had begun shortly after Capt. James Cook's discovery of the Islands 42 years earlier.

In the process of undermining the culture, the missionaries created a written Hawaiian language, printed bibles and primers and started teaching. The queen ordered all Kanaka, men, women and children to attend the mission schools.

One reason she may have been so adamant was because the white man's diseases were killing the natives by the thousands. Among those dying were the members of the chiefly families whose responsibility it was to memorize the long genealogies that placed rulers in their proper pecking order. It is thought that the ability to write down this definitive family history-in addition to the convenience in doing business -may have influenced the queen's decision to allow the missionaries to stay, teach and to convert her followers.

Near the end of the century, the Republic of Hawaii, operating under its third constitution, had the highest percentage of literate citizens of any country in the world.

In 1898 American businessmen overthrew the Republic of Hawai'i and gave the islands to the United States. It was a Territory until annexation as the 50th State in 1959.

Some of these historical events against which my novel, LEHUA ([link](#)), unfolds are only slightly telescoped in time.