

Kahekili's Revenge

Stephen Shender

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No sooner had Kalani'ōpu'u retreated to Hawai'i following his defeat at Kaupō than he began preparing for a renewed offensive against Kahekili and the people of Maui.

He ordered his lieutenants, the district chiefs, to build a new invasion fleet. They in turn ordered their *kahuna kālai wa'a* – master canoe builders – to take men into the upland forests to cut down many koa trees and drag them back to the coast where these skilled craftsmen labored to turn them into war canoes. All day long, the dull thud of their adzes' stone blades striking wood sounded along the beaches from Hilo to Kohala.

Kalani'ōpu'u commanded his chiefs to assemble a great army, and in every district commoners were called to arms. Kalani'ōpu'u formed them into a half dozen battle regiments numbering some two thousand men. He also ordered the formation of two elite regiments, the 'Ālapa and the Pi'ipi'i, which were composed entirely of young, chiefly ali'i. The 'Ālapa and the Pi'ipi'i numbered eight hundred warriors – the Big Island's most fearsome and feared. Kamehameha was among them. The combined forces of the newly assembled army of Hawai'i were many times more numerous than the band of warriors Kalani'ōpu'u had taken to Kaupō.

To sanctify his new military venture, and to guard against rebellion in his own ranks, Kalani'ōpu'u ordered the cleansing and purification of two heiaus at Kahalu'u and Kailua. And he commanded Holo'ae, who was now his kahuna nui – his principal spiritual adviser and seer – to prepare a ceremonial offering of 'awa to secure the aid of his war god, Kūkā'ilimoku.

No one questioned Kalani'ōpu'u's decision to resume his war against Kahekili. "It was never our way to challenge our mō'i," my father said. "If your uncle Kameha had doubts, as he did at Kaupō, he kept them to himself."

There was, of course, no way for Kalani'ōpu'u to conceal his war preparations and Kahekili soon learned of them.

"When Kahekili learned that his brother-in-law Kalani'ōpu'u was amassing a fresh army and purifying temples for his own defeat, he sent for Kaleopu'upu'u, the kahuna nui to the late King Peleioholani of Oahu, to come to his court on Maui," my father recounted. At the direction of this illustrious kahuna, Kahekili constructed a new heiau for his war god on the northern edge of Wailuku. Kaleopu'upu'u consecrated this new temple with a ceremony that lasted many days and began with the sacrificial offering of roasted fish, then of many pigs and dogs and finally a human sacrifice: one of Kalani'ōpu'u's own men who had been captured during the battle at Kaupō. This unfortunate one, a young ali'i from Kailua whose name my father could not later recall, was brought to the new heiau and made to crawl on his knees to the altar. Then, as Kaleopu'upu'u chanted – so my father told me – Kahekili planted the heel of one foot on the young warrior's neck, forced his head to the heiau's stone floor and smashed in his skull with one blow of his war club. The Hawai'i warrior's bleeding body was thrown on the altar atop the roasted animal flesh.

As a sign of the seriousness of these sacrifices, Kahekili declared the roasted animal offerings kapu. No one was allowed to eat them and they were left to spoil on the altar with the decomposing body of the executed warrior. "When the ceremonies were completed," my father told me, "Kaleopu'upu'u said to Kahekili, 'This is the house of your god; now open the sluice gates that the fish may enter.' "

The kahuna's instruction to Kahekili was reported to Kalani'ōpu'u by his spies on Maui.

“But no one understood its meaning at the time,” my father said.

Wailuku, 1776

Kalani'ōpu'u had no human sacrifice to offer his war god. Kūkā'ilimoku required noble blood – ali'i blood. But Kalani'ōpu'u had taken no prisoners on Maui, noble or otherwise. And as mō'i of Hawai'i during a time of intra-island tranquility, he had no noble domestic enemies left to put under the war club for the god's sake. "No matter," he said to Holo'ae when he brought him the news of Kahekili's own blood-offering. "Kūkā'ilimoku loves me as he loves our island. He will protect my people."

Thus brimming with confidence in his new venture, Kalani'ōpu'u set sail for Maui. Kamehameha and my father went with him. "As old Alapa'i had before him, Kalani'ōpu'u gathered all his forces in North Kohala, near Upolu Point, so as to reduce the distance his fleet must travel to Maui," my father said. "Of course, gathering so many warriors and canoes from throughout the whole of the Big Island took time and could not escape the notice of Kahekili's own spies. Thus, Kahekili was expecting Kalani'ōpu'u's new attack, and all knew it," my father told me. "But this was of no concern to our uncle."

Kalani'ōpu'u's invasion armada was a magnificent sight as it began its crossing of the Alenuihāhā Channel between the Big Island and Maui. "There were more than one hundred and fifty war canoes," my father said. "They were double canoes, with about twenty paddlers in each one and each paddler a warrior."

Kāne's sun was rising out of Kanaloa's sea into a clear sky and several thousand flashing paddle blades glinted in its golden light as the men of Hawai'i stroked in rhythmic unison. A steady breeze from the direction Upolu Point filled the canoes' sails. Propelled by the warriors' paddle strokes and Lono's favorable wind, their prows sliced through a light chop, sending up luminous sprays of water in all directions.

Kamehameha and my father were with Kalani'ōpu'u in his own war canoe, which was larger than all the rest, accommodating thirty-six paddlers and as many as twenty or more people along the length of the platform between its twin hulls. "We were in the middle of the fleet," my father said, "and to us it looked like all the sea around us was filled with our boats."

Kalani'ōpu'u was exultant as he surveyed the progress of his war fleet. He clapped his hands and slapped his kahuna nui on his back. "Kūkā'ilimoku is surely smiling upon us today, eh Holo'ae?"

"It is a favorable beginning," Holo'ae replied. He fell silent for the rest of the crossing, fixing his gaze on the receding coastline of the Big Island rather than turn his face toward Maui.

Also traveling with Kalani'ōpu'u were his wives, Kaneikapolei and Kalola, and their sons by his loins, Keōua Red Cloak and Keōuape'e'ale, and Kiwala'ō. Kamehameha kept his distance from Red Cloak and his brother, and they from him – as much distance as the war canoe would allow. Kameha's distaste for Keōua Red Cloak had only grown since the incident at the wedding feast the year before, and the ill-feeling was mutual.

Kalani'ōpu'u did not expect his younger sons to fight, as he deemed them still too inexperienced. But on this occasion, unlike his invasion of Kaupō, Kalani'ōpu'u ordered Kiwala'ō to accompany him into battle.

Kiwala'ō was newly a father. His wife, Keku'iapo'iwa, had borne him a baby girl, whom they named Keopuolani. She was nī'aupi'o, of the highest royal rank because of her parents' closely intertwined lineage. Kalani'ōpu'u had ordained that her status be conferred upon her father as well. When Kalola once more objected to her son going to war against her brother Kahekili, Kalani'ōpu'u would not hear of it. "You may stay here in Ka'awaloa or come to Maui as you choose," he told her. "But Kiwala'ō is a nī'aupi'o chief now. He will have no respect

from the other chiefs if he does not come to Maui and fight with the army this time. He must come, and he will come with me.”

“Then I will come too,” Kalola said.

Kalani‘ōpu‘u was confident that his army of nearly three thousand warriors, including the eight hundred veteran fighters of the elite ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i regiments, would be more than sufficient to overwhelm Kahekili and his people. But unbeknownst to him, other forces were moving toward Maui at the same time.

Kahahana, who was then the king of Oahu, Moloka‘i and Lanai, was at Moloka‘i, on the opposite side of Maui from the Big Island, at this time. He was a relative of Kahekili’s by his own mother and he was raised at Kahekili’s own court. When Kahekili sent for him and his people, they came at once. By the time Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s fleet set sail from Kohala, Kahahana’s forces, numbering some one thousand warriors, had already crossed the narrow straight between Maui and Moloka‘i, landing at Wailuku.

Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s fleet lost its tight formation as it crossed the broad channel and his war canoes came ashore at dusk along a front reaching from Keoneoio – at the place the haoles now call La Perouse Bay – to Makena, below Wailea. The army’s landing was unopposed.

“Our warriors ran their canoes onto the beaches and leapt out with their war clubs and spears at the ready,” my father recalled, “but no one was there to give battle.”

Only a few startled fishermen who were still gathering in their nets were on hand to greet the grand army of Hawai‘i. They dropped their nets and fishing tackle and cowered in fear as Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s people stormed ashore. Their families, who had heard of the Hawai‘i people’s depredations at Kaupō, fled into the interior.

Kalani'ōpu'u's own canoe landed on a sand beach on the north side of Ahihi Bay, near a small fishing village. The mō'ī of the Big Island stepped ashore in full battle regalia, brandishing a basalt-tipped club. The yellow and red feathers of his helmet and cape glowed in the fading light. He spied a fisherman who, at the sight of the kapu chief debarking from his canoe in all his fierce glory, had prostrated himself at the water's edge and pressed his own face into the wet sand. "Your mō'ī, Kahekili," Kalani'ōpu'u thundered, as he stood over the quaking man and planted one foot on his neck, "where is he?"

"Oh Lord, he is at Wailuku," the man replied, not daring to look up.

"And are none of his warriors here then?" Kalani'ōpu'u demanded.

"No, Lord. There are no warriors here."

Kalani'ōpu'u stepped away from the terrified commoner and looked upon him intensely for a moment, studying the back of his head. Then, he suddenly raised his club and brought it down with as much force as he could muster on the man's skull. "And now you will surely not tell them that we have come," he said, turning away from the dying man's quivering body. "Puna," he called to his military kahu, "take some men and search that village. Bring back any people and food that you find, and then burn the place down."

This was the only blow Kalani'ōpu'u struck in that campaign. He was no longer the same man who had challenged Alapa'i for primacy of the Big Island and then defeated his son Keawe'ōpala. In the intervening years, even as he planned more ambitious military adventures, nightly feasting and liberal 'awa consumption had taken its toll. Where he was once hard and lean, now he was soft and flabby. Exertion often left him breathless. He was no longer fit for actual combat. Now and in the future, Kalani'ōpu'u would mostly lead his armies from the rear.

This was of no matter to the people of the Big Island. They were accustomed to their kings' dissipation with age. It was their kapu status that mattered, and that remained ever strong.

Puna and his men wasted no time in their work and soon choking smoke from blazing thatched hales mingled with inviting aromas from the still-smoldering imus. "There were no more people in that village, as they had already fled into the bush," my father said. "But they left behind plenty of food."

Kamehameha had looked on impassively as his uncle, the mō'ī, slew the defenseless fisherman. Now he frowned as he watched the plundering and destruction of the village, in which he took no part. "This is not a good beginning," he murmured to his own kahu, Kekūhaupi'o, "and the god will surely be displeased." To Kalani'ōpu'u, Kameha said nothing.

All during the next day, Kalani'ōpu'u's people ransacked and razed coastal villages from Keoneoio to Makena. While nearly all of the Maui people had fled, a few old men and women were still hiding in their hales. When they too tried to run away, the warriors of Hawai'i caught them and beat them senseless. Only on the morning of the third day, when smoking embers were all that was left of the local settlements, did the Hawai'ians at last tire of their pillaging and converge upon their king. The sun was sinking toward the sea when the army of Hawai'i finally regrouped farther up the coast at Kalepolepo, where Kalani'ōpu'u had relocated himself and his retinue.

There, while Kalani'ōpu'u's warriors were busy punishing the local population, Holo'ae had ordered a special platform built, upon which he could pray to the war god Kūkā'ilimoku for divine guidance. At the top of this platform, he had affixed the god's standard, with its macabre, grinning visage. Now, with all of the chiefs of the Big Island gathered before him – and with his

mō‘ī eager to launch his assault on Kahekili’s forces at once – Holo‘ae mounted the platform to pray for Kū’s intercession.

“Holo‘ae said that the god would decide the best time to attack,” my father recalled many years later. “He said that if, in answer to his prayers, the feathers atop Kū’s head stood straight up, it meant that the god looked favorably upon an immediate assault. But he said that if the god’s feathers lay flat, it would mean that Kūkā‘ilimoku was displeased at the prospect of battle, and a delay would be in order.”

Thus, with all the chiefs holding their breath, or so it seemed to my father, Holo‘ae turned his back on the assemblage and bowed and prayed loudly to Kūkā‘ilimoku. “And as he prayed,” my father told me, “a wind rose up suddenly from the ocean and unexpectedly dislodged several feathers from the god’s head. These feathers fell upon my own brother Kamehameha.”

The chiefs began to murmur now, but they fell silent as Holo‘ae turned from the god to face his king.

“*É Kalani ē!*” Holo‘ae proclaimed. “Kū has spoken. He instructs you to put off battle until this time tomorrow, at the day’s height, when dry branches can easily be distinguished from fresh branches. At that time, the god promises, your nephew Kamehameha shall lead your people to victory over Kahekili.”

Kalani‘ōpu‘u was not persuaded. “What is this nonsensical talk of branches?” he scoffed. “We go to fight Kahekili this very day.”

Though the day was already getting on, and there was no possibility of closing with Kahekili’s people before gathering darkness would cloak them, none of the chiefs present raised any objections, save one. Keaweokahikona, the *naha* son of Keawema‘uhili, chief of Hilo, spoke up. “Oh lord, forgive my rashness,” he said, “but perhaps we should pay heed to your

kahuna nui Holo‘ae, through whom the god Kū has spoken.” Keaweokahikona was seated cross-legged on the earth before Kalani‘ōpu‘u as were all the other chiefs. He kept his own eyes fixed on the ground before him as he spoke, so as not to insult his mō‘ī by challenging him with a direct look. “Perhaps it is best to wait until tomorrow, when the sun is directly overhead to do battle, as the god has instructed.”

Kalani‘ōpu‘u fixed Keaweokahikona with a baleful stare. “So you question the wisdom of your mō‘ī, do you?” he asked. Then his face softened. “It is perhaps too late in the day to launch an attack,” he said. “We will go tomorrow – before first light. The ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i will lead the way. They will fall without warning upon Kahekili’s people, and when they are finished with them, they will drink the sweet waters of Wailuku Stream.”

“Yes father,” shouted Kiwala‘ō. “We will all drink the waters of Wailuku tomorrow!”

Now it was Holo‘ae who spoke, pleading with his mō‘ī. “*É Kalani ē!*” he said. “I beg you, do not do this. The prophecy of Kahekili’s high priest, Kaleopu‘upu‘u, is clear to me now. If you send your people into battle in defiance of the god’s instruction they will surely be as fish entering the sluice gate of Kahekili’s net. At least send some warriors ahead to discover the whereabouts of Kahekili’s people first. Kamehameha can lead them.”

“Yes, uncle, send me first,” Kameha said. His cousin Kiwala‘ō glared at him.

“No, nephew, if your presence is discovered it would only alert Kahekili’s people to our attack,” Kalani‘ōpu‘u said. “I will not let you risk your life on such a pointless errand. You will march with the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i tomorrow. And I will hear no more foolish talk of branches and sluices and nets,” he barked. Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s voice rose now. “Hear me: We are the fishermen, not the fish. We attack tomorrow in force. The ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i will lead the assault. By day’s end, we shall drink the waters of Wailuku. And that is the end of it!”

“On to Wailuku!” the assembled chieftains shouted. “Death to Kahekili! We shall drink the waters of Wailuku!”

Kamehameha, who was sitting beside Kekūhaupi‘o, did not join in the shouting. He nudged his kahu, stood and gestured at Kekū to follow him.

Now Kalani‘ōpu‘u swiftly issued orders to his chief lieutenant, Puna. Within the hour – as the haoles mark time – the eight hundred warriors of the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i divisions were to go by canoe with him the up coast to Mā‘alaea. “The ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i can move more quickly than the rest of the army,” Kalani‘ōpu‘u told Puna. “By going straight to Mā‘alaea by sea, they can march on Wailuku before dawn. They will surprise Kahekili’s people by falling upon them while they are still rubbing the sleep from their eyes.”

The rest of the army – two thousand warriors – were to follow on foot at daybreak. “It will take all those warriors too long to reach Mā‘alaea by canoe,” he said. “They will make faster progress by land.” Kalani‘ōpu‘u ordered the remainder of the fleet’s canoes to be kept at Kalepolepo under light guard.

While Kalani‘ōpu‘u was speaking to Puna, he did not notice that Kamehameha and his kahu had slipped away. My father noticed, however, and followed the two men into a palm grove, where they paused to talk. “Kekū, it is not well that my uncle is sending men into battle without first knowing where his enemy is,” Kameha said. “Gather enough Kohala fighters sufficient for one double-hull canoe and bring them to me. We will go and learn the truth of it ourselves.”

Overhearing this, my father approached Kamehameha and asked to go with him. “No brother,” Kameha replied, “It is important that our uncle Kalani‘ōpu‘u does not know that I have gone, for he has already forbidden me to leave him. You must stay here, so he will not suspect anything.”

“Your uncle Kameha was being kind,” my father told me, “for in truth, he did not think I was ready for such a mission.”

Kahekili was well aware that his enemy had once again invaded Maui. Villagers fleeing from the army of Hawai‘i reached Wailuku with news of the invasion by evening of the very same day that Kalani‘ōpu‘u came ashore at Ahihi Bay. And while Kalani‘ōpu‘u and his people were marauding and burning the coastal villages, the king of Maui was preparing for the direct assault that was sure to follow. Kahekili may have been uncertain of the attack’s timing, but he had no doubt as to which way it would come.

The direction of Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s assault was ordained by Maui’s geography. The island is shaped like a deformed haole hour glass, tipped on its side. The “top” of the glass – now called West Maui – is much smaller than its bottom, East Maui. Both ends of the island are defined by volcanic mountain ranges. Mount Pu‘u Kukui dominates Maui’s western side and the majestic heights of Mount Haleakala command its eastern side. Between the island’s two mountain ranges is a narrow waist known then as the Kakanilua Valley and sometimes referred to these days as the “Waikapu common.” It is the only passable land bridge between Maui’s southern and northern coasts. And it was along this isthmus that Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s people would have to march to Wailuku, a distance of about seven miles from the southern coast in the haole measure.

Nowadays, people traverse the common along a broad road, its outline beaten into the ground by a myriad of horses’ hooves and wagon wheels. But in those days, the way was only a narrow footpath leading from Mā‘alaea through Waikapu to Wailuku. This path ascended gradually from the coast to the low uplands that lay between the mountain ranges of West and East Maui. It threaded a landscape that habitually received less rainfall than the higher uplands

on either side and it was flanked by grasses and cactus that were well suited to the sandy soil and drier climate and made the most of the miserly flow of water that reached them after the thirstier plants on the higher slopes of Mt. Pu‘u Kukui and Mt. Haleakala had drunk their fill.

From about Waikapu to Wailuku, the footpath traversed low sand hills dotted with scrub. Just before it reached Wailuku, the path dropped through a tight defile into a shallow valley and skirted its western edge for the remainder of its way to the village itself and beyond to the sandy beach at Kahului Bay.

The very evening that Kahekili learned of Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s landing, he issued orders for his people to deploy along his foe’s inevitable line of march. Summoning his favorite general, Kāne‘olaelae, and the Oahu king Kahahana to his hale, he laid out his plan of battle in the dirt of the courtyard. Using a stick to draw a rough map of the terrain and placing konane stones – from our people’s own checkers game – here and there, he showed his commanders where to place their men. Kahekili directed Kāne‘olaelae – the same commander who had routed Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s people at Kaupō a year earlier – to take his warriors to the sand hills between Waikapu and Wailuku and place them in concealment on both sides of the footpath. He ordered Kahahana to hide his warriors on along the defile and on both flanks of the valley leading to Wailuku. Kahekili also dispatched a small band of warriors in the direction of Mā‘alaea to spy on Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s movements and return with warning of his advance. These men were especially swift runners and only lightly armed.

Mindful of his own kahuna nui’s prophecy, Kahekili told Kāne‘olaelae and Kahahana to order all of their warriors to remain hidden and allow Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s men to pass unmolested until in his words, as the story was later told, “each of them had seen the last of their foes’ heels.”

The combined forces of Kahahana and Kāne‘olaelae numbered some four thousand warriors. They were armed with spears and clubs, and most importantly, with slings. The next day, at their commanders’ orders, they took up their positions, dug shallow holes for themselves in the soft soil, and gathered branches to cover themselves. Then they waited. Kahekili had cast his fishing net and the sluice gate was open.

Kalani‘ōpu‘u did not notice that Kamehameha had detached himself from the fleet. “Kameha begged permission from our uncle to travel to Mā‘alaea with his own Kohala people in a separate canoe, instead of riding with Kalani‘ōpu‘u in his great war canoe,” my father told me.

“It is good that you want to go to battle with your own men,” Kalani‘ōpu‘u told his nephew. “Go with your people. We will meet again at Mā‘alaea.”

“Kameha went immediately to the beach, where Kekūhaupi‘o and the Kohala warriors were waiting by their canoe,” my father said. “This canoe was smaller, lighter and swifter than most others in the fleet, and Kamehameha and his people were away quickly.” Indeed, darkness had fallen, the moon was only just rising and no one, save my father, saw them go.

It was Kamehameha’s intention to land at Mā‘alaea and move *mauka* ahead of the advancing fighters of the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i to discover and report the whereabouts of Kahekili’s people. But by the time he and his men reached Mā‘alaea, the warriors sent by Kahekili had reached the beach there as well.

“The moon was rising by this time,” my father told me. “Kameha could see these enemy warriors gathering along the beach and he knew that they could also see his own canoe in the moonlight. He decided to try for a different landing place.”

Kamehameha told his men to make for a sandy cove near Papawai Point, at the western edge of Mā‘alaea Bay. His people paddled hard, but Kahekili’s warriors saw where they were headed and ran harder. They reached the cove just ahead of Kamehameha and were waiting for him on the white sand beach.

“Kameha saw that the enemy warriors were confronting him once more and realized that there was now no chance of carrying out his spy mission,” my father said. “But now he had a new worry: that these warriors of Kahekili would run back to their king and warn him of his uncle Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s attack. He had to prevent this.”

Kamehameha turned to Kekūhaupi‘o. “What shall we do, Kekū?” he asked.

“Some of those warriors may flee if we land now,” Kekūhaupi‘o replied. “But if we keep to our canoe, they will be uncertain of our intentions and they will stay there to keep watch on us.”

“Then we will stay where we are until daybreak,” Kamehameha said. “By then the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i will be on their way to Wailuku, and it will be too late for those men to run to Kahekili.”

Kekūhaupi‘o was correct in his surmise. For the remainder of the night while Kamehameha and his people idled in their canoe, steering it in lazy circles just beyond the surf line, the Maui warriors maintained their vigil on the shore. None of them left. They sat on the sand and waited for their opponents to come ashore. Occasionally, they would hurl taunts at the men in the canoe. “Come meet us here on the beach!” they called. “What are you afraid of? Our own women are braver than you!” On Kamehameha’s orders, his people resisted the temptation to respond. “When Kāne’s light shines again, we will show them who is brave,” he said.

While this standoff continued, Kalani‘ōpu‘u and the vanguard of his invasion force, the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i, came ashore at Mā‘alaea. Thanks to the diversion of Kamehameha’s aborted

spy mission, there were no enemy warriors on hand to observe their landing, only some sleepy villagers who were awakened by the commotion and emerged from their haes to see what was going on. These people were quickly rounded up and confined to a single house. They were told it was kapu for them to leave. Disobedience would be swiftly punished by death. Though no guards were placed over these villagers, the kapu's threat was enough to hold them there. There was no one to carry a warning to Kahekili now.

The eight hundred warriors of the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i quickly formed up their ranks and stepped off toward Wailuku in the faint glow of the pre-dawn light. Every man among them carried a long, barbed spear. The barbs, made from sharks' teeth, were set in the spears' shafts, behind their sharp, fire-hardened points. Like the haoles' pikes, these spears were not meant to be thrown. In our islands, it was the fashion of warriors carrying such weapons to attack their foes in broad, but close-knit formations with their spears held firmly under their arms and all extended at once. Charging together in a line, they would drive these barbed weapons into opposing warriors, and then with a sharp twist break off the spear points, leaving the barbed shafts deep in their enemies' own flesh.

Warriors who employed this style of fighting were known as spear-point breakers. They would be followed in close order by more warriors wielding shorter spears and other weapons, such as daggers and clubs, who would finish off the fallen enemy fighters, now writhing helplessly on the ground like so many hooked fish. But this day, there were no other fighters following the spear-point breakers of the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i.

My father, who had landed at Mā'alaea with Kalani'ōpu'u, Kiwala'ō and Holo'ae, saw them go. "They were a magnificent sight to behold in their bright yellow and red cloaks and feathered helmets," he said. "Before they left, they raised their spears in salute to their mō'i and shouted

as one: ‘Today, we drink the waters of Wailuku!’ And who could doubt it after all? They were our best warriors. Who could possibly stand against them?”

Kalani‘ōpu‘u, who had no doubts, watched his elite fighters march off to battle with great satisfaction. “Fear not,” he said to his kahuna nui. “The ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i will drink the waters of Wailuku, and the god Kū will drink the blood of Kahekili before this day is out.” Holo‘ae said nothing.

Kalani‘ōpu‘u turned away from the silent priest to observe the first elements of the rest of his army, just now arriving at a fast trot from Kalepolepo, their ranks already beginning to fill the beachfront at Mā‘alaea. The mō‘ī of the Big Island was pleased. But as he surveyed his army, he became puzzled and turned to my father. “I did not see your brother with the ‘Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i,” he said. “Where is your brother Kamehameha?”

“Now!” Kamehameha shouted. “We attack now!”

The new day’s sun was just clearing the summit of Mt. Haleakala to the east and the enemy warriors on the beach were clearly illuminated in the dawn’s light, as were Kamehameha and his people in their canoe offshore.

At Kamehameha’s command, his men swiftly brought the canoe around, pivoting the prows of its double hulls toward the beach. Kamehameha moved forward to stand at the bow of one hull and his kahu, Kekūhaupi‘o, took up his position at the bow of the other. Each man carried several long spears. Kameha was also armed with a slashing club embedded with sharks’ teeth.

Now digging their paddles into the water in unison, the men of Kohala drove the canoe forward with such force that even with Kameha and Kekūhaupi‘o weighing them down, its twin

prows still skimmed the water's surface, sending billows of spray before them. A gentle following swell added to the boat's gathering momentum.

At the sight of the oncoming canoe, the warriors on the shore jumped to their feet and ran to the water's edge. As soon as the canoe was within range, they began hurling their spears directly at Kamehameha and Kekūhaupi'o. Kameha and his kahu easily parried these missiles, knocking some of them into the water with their own spears and catching others and dropping them onto the narrow platform between the canoe's hulls.

Now all at once the Kohala warriors' canoe was surging toward the beach on the crest of a low wave. Several of the men stowed their paddles and jumped to the canoe platform to stand behind Kameha and Kekū, while the others kept their seats and dug their own paddles into the wave like fish fins to keep the canoe straight and true on its final rush to shore.

Kamehameha, Kekūhaupi'o and their people were now looking down into their enemies' startled, upturned faces. "Spears!" Kamehameha shouted, "Throw now!" As one, Kameha, Kekūhaupi'o and their warriors hurled their own spears at a group of men who stood momentarily frozen in a tight knot directly ahead of them. Every weapon struck home and the enemy warriors fell away, writhing and screaming in pain even as the canoe's twin hulls, released now by the wave, came crashing down among them.

With his own people close behind him, Kamehameha leaped from the canoe as the hulls struck the sand and charged into the midst of the enemy warriors still standing, slashing right and left with broad sweeps of his shark-toothed club. He was all furious momentum, exploiting his big stature and the long reach of his own powerful arms to deadly advantage. The enemy toppled before him like palm trees before a violent storm. Following in his wake, Kekūhaupi'o

and the Kohala warriors thrust with their spears at these foes who were now lying stunned and near helpless in the sand. Their anguished screams filled the air.

More Maui warriors were now converging on the men of Kohala. They came at a run from both sides of the cove. At Kamehameha's command, his people formed a tight circle around him and his kahu, pointing their spears in all directions. Kameha towered head and shoulders above his own men. "Come closer!" he shouted at the advancing enemy fighters, brandishing his bloody shark-toothed club at them. "This *niuhi* club is still hungry. Come closer so that she may bite you as well!"

At the intimidating sight of Kamehameha bellowing his challenge, one of the advancing Maui fighters halted well short of the bristling thicket of spears. He remembered the story that had circulated widely on Maui the previous season about the fearsome, giant warrior of Hawai'i who single-handedly slew so many men during the fight in the sweet potato field at Kaupō and he screamed a warning to his comrades. "Flee!" he cried. "It is Pai'ea! Pai'ea has come! He will drink our blood!" At this, the men of Maui broke and ran.

Kamehameha lowered his club and his people lowered their spears. "Well done ... Pai'ea," Kekūhaupi'o said. He gestured at the fleeing enemy warriors. "Those men will not reach Kahekili in time to warn him of Kalani'ōpu'u's attack."

"We should return to my uncle now," Kamehameha said. Stepping over the broken bodies of their fallen enemies, he and his men returned to their canoe. With the help of a mighty shove by Kameha, they pushed the canoe off the sand and into the shallows, where they jumped aboard, retrieved their paddles, brought the twin hulls around and made for the beach at nearby Mā'alaea.

Kalani'ōpu'u was forming up the rest of his army to follow the warriors of the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i to Wailuku when Kamehameha and his people reached Mā'alaea.

“Our uncle Kalani'ōpu'u had intended to reprimand Kameha severely for leaving without his permission,” my father said. “But that was before he saw him.”

Indeed, Kamehameha was a terrible sight. His arms and chest were caked with blood. “At first, Kalani'ōpu'u thought it was Kamehameha's own blood,” my father said, “as did I.”

Kalani'ōpu'u rushed to his favorite nephew. “Kameha, what has happened to you?” he wailed.

Kamehameha grinned in response, but his smile, exaggerated and framed by flecks of dried blood that were also spattered across his broad face, was more frightful than reassuring. “Do not worry, uncle. Nothing has befallen me,” he said. “It is Kahekili's people who have suffered at my hands this day.”

Kameha told how his plan to land at Mā'alaea in order to move inland and learn the whereabouts of Kahekili's warriors had been thwarted, and about the ensuing fight at Papawai Point. “Uncle, I am sorry that I failed to discover where Kahekili's people are,” he concluded apologetically.

“You should be sorry that you disobeyed your mō'i and deserted the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i to go on your own imprudent mission,” said Kiwala'ō, who had come to stand beside Kalani'ōpu'u. Kamehameha ignored him, as did his own father.

“It is no matter,” Kalani'ōpu'u said, laughing and clapping his hands and addressing his beloved nephew. “For you see, Pai'ea, by your actions you drew Kahekili's own spies away from here and thus they could not give him timely warning of our attack. The brave warriors of

the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i are already closing on Wailuku. They will fall upon Kahekili and his people while they are still eating their breakfasts!"

At this, Kiwala'ō frowned deeply and glared at Kamehameha, who smiled back at him knowingly, and with relish. "Kiwala'ō was upset with his own father for showing his cousin Kameha so much favor," my father said. "And your uncle could not resist mocking him for it." It was a fleeting moment, no doubt quickly forgotten by Kamehameha but not so quickly by Kiwala'ō.

Kalani'ōpu'u did not notice it. "Now, warriors of Hawai'i, we march!" he shouted. "Let us join the 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i who are already drinking the waters of Wailuku!"

The two warriors, bloodstained and disheveled, staggered toward Kalani'ōpu'u and half fell, half prostrated themselves at their mō'ī's feet. "Oh lord, forgive us for bringing you this news," one wailed. "All are lost!" cried the other.

"What is the meaning of this?" Kalani'ōpu'u demanded. "Who is lost?"

"The 'Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i, lord," the first man answered. He kept his eyes fixed on the ground and spoke as if to the earth itself. "They are all lost. We are the only ones who remain."

Now Kalani'ōpu'u recognized the soldiers. They were both young ali'i from the Big Island's Waimea district. "They are all dead?" he asked them in disbelief.

"Yes lord, all are slain but us," the second warrior answered. Neither man dared to look up at their king.

The terrified warriors had come upon Kalani'ōpu'u and his people while they were advancing toward Wailuku. They had not quite reached Waikapu when the two men found them. It was about mid-afternoon. Until this moment, the soldiers of Hawai'i had been

marching in boisterous disregard for the imminent perils of battle, so certain were they of victory this day. They joked among themselves about who among them would be the first to “drink the waters of Wailuku” and whether there would be any left for them after the “greedy” Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i had gorged themselves. But now a choked silence settled over the vanguard around Kalani‘ōpu‘u. Then it rolled like a wave through the successive ranks of two thousand men as they shared the awful news with their comrades. And when this breaker finally crashed in army’s rear a new wave commenced – beginning as a low murmur and ending as a cacophony of anguish that engulfed the entire company.

“I had never heard anything so terrible in my whole life,” my father recalled. “And I hoped never to hear anything so horrible again.”

But the story that the battle’s only survivors told was equally horrible in its own right.

“We were advancing swiftly and in good order,” the first warrior said. “The sun had hardly cleared Mt. Haleakala and already we were beyond Waikapu.”

“We had marched through Waikapu unopposed,” said the second man. “No one came to stop us. We were certain that our enemies did not expect us and we were confident of victory.”

So confident of victory were the eight hundred elite warriors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i that they marched into Waikapu loudly boasting of how they would slake their growing thirst in the cool waters of Wailuku. Their individual boasts soon coalesced into a chant:

“We will march to swift victory this day, under Kāne’s light,

“No foe can stop us this day, as we march to victory under Kāne’s light,

“The war god Kū is with us as we march to victory this day under Kāne’s light,

“We will drink the waters of Wailuku this day, under Kāne’s light,

“After we bathe in our enemies’ blood this day, under Kāne’s bright light!”

The men of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i were indeed growing thirsty. They had been advancing at a swift trot since leaving Mā‘alaea, intent on surprising Kahekili and his people at their breakfast. Though Kāne’s light was not yet high in Lono’s sky, it was already beating down hard upon them and taxing them sorely in their exertions. The rear of their column had just passed through Waikapu and entered the sand hills beyond when Kahekili’s warriors commenced their attack.

The two survivors were marching near the front of the column. Thus they did not witness the beginning of the attack. “We heard a commotion toward the rear,” one of the men said. “We were told it was no more than a skirmish, perhaps with some of Kahekili’s people who had been in hiding when we marched through Waikapu and who had followed us afterwards to harass us.”

“Our commanders ordered us to ignore it,” the other man said. “They said the rearguard would easily dispatch these troublemakers. ‘Nothing must slow our march to Wailuku,’ they said.”

“*We will drink the waters of Wailuku this day!*” the warriors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i chanted in response. “*Under Kāne’s bright light!*”

Unbeknownst to them, the “skirmish” to the column’s rear was actually the beginning of a rout.

Kahekili’s forces hiding in the sand hills beyond Waikapu were divided into small groups numbering a few score warriors each. These groups of fighters lay in concealment all along the low heights on either side of the footpath where the warriors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i must pass. Each group was under the command of a single warrior whose task it was to keep his own people from attacking until, as Kahekili and their generals had ordered, they had seen “the last of their foes’ heels.” Only then did these commanders signal their men to cast aside the branches with

which they had concealed themselves amid the surrounding scrub and rise from the shallow pits they had dug and hidden in since before dawn. The Maui warriors in the sand hills were armed with slings and short spears. With shrill screams, as each leader called his group to battle, they jumped up from their hiding places and unleashed volley after volley of sling stones to deadly effect upon the heads of the soldiers of Hawai'i below.

Kahekili's people must have seemed to the doomed men of the Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i like malevolent spirits erupting from the very earth itself. But only their rearmost ranks would have witnessed this chilling spectacle at any one time. Unfolding always from the rear of the column, Kahekili's attack overtook and engulfed successive forward echelons almost without warning.

The Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i warriors' long spears were of no use to against the sling stones that rained down on them from all sides like the rocks the goddess Pele would on occasion hurl at our people from her fiery home deep within the Big Island's Mauna Loa and Kilauea volcanoes. Rank upon rank of Kalani'ōpu'u's warriors fell helplessly before this maelstrom. Many were killed outright. Others were either severely wounded or so stunned that they could only lie or sit on the ground, clasping their own heads. Their barbed weapons lay scattered all around them. Some of the fallen men tried to get up. But before they could stagger to their feet, their enemies were upon them, jabbing and stabbing with their own short spears. The screams of dying men filled the air. When they had finished this bloody work, Kahekili's people gathered up the weapons their vanquished foes had dropped and raced to join their comrades ahead who were now rising from their own places of concealment to attack more forward elements of the column, to equally devastating effect.

There was no opportunity for resistance, organized or otherwise. Still moving in a column and assailed from both sides by the sling-wielding men of Maui, the Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i could not

regroup into the wide formation best suited for spear-point-breaker fighting. In any event, they had little hope of using their battle tactics and specialized weapons effectively against a foe that was attacking them in irregular order and from higher ground.

Here and there, those warriors of Hawai‘i who were still able to attempt a stand were quickly cut down by the ever-growing number of enemy fighters who swarmed them from the rear. Many of these men were impaled on the barbed shafts of their own fallen comrades’ spears.

By the time the leaders of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i marching at the head of the column understood what was happening to their people at its rear, it was too late to avert catastrophe.

“We were ordered to stand and fight,” one of the survivors said. “But we were now too few and the enemy was too numerous.”

Many of the enemy warriors were now armed with the long pike-like spears of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i, and their own commanders formed these men into a line to hold would-be counter attackers at bay. From behind this bristling protective shield, other warriors continued to volley deadly sling stones into the ranks of their foes.

“We could not close with them and we could not stand against them,” the second man said. “We could only retreat.”

In this way, Kahekili’s people drove the ever-diminishing host of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i before them – like fish into a net.

They drove them relentlessly up the common toward Wailuku. The men of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i no longer thirsted for the waters there. They only wanted to flee back to Mā‘alaea. But that way was now blocked by hundreds of Kahekili’s people, and there was no way around them because hundreds more – all expert sling marksmen – occupied the higher ground on both sides

of the footpath. Thus, the surviving warriors of Hawai‘i were forced to continue their retreat in the only direction still open to them, the way that led to the narrow defile above Wailuku, where Kahahana’s warriors lay in wait.

Kahahana’s people did not attack the first enemy fighters to enter the gap. Nor did they immediately attack the men who came after them. Obeying orders, they waited until they had seen the “last of their enemies’ heels” before jumping up from their own hiding places along the top of the ravine and showering sling stones and spears on the men below. Anguished screams of wounded and dying Big Island warriors mixed with victorious battle cries of Kahahana’s men as the defile quickly filled with bodies. The remaining warriors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i who had moments earlier passed through the ravine unmolested now rushed on in complete disarray, propelled in horror toward Wailuku by the terrible screaming behind them.

As it happened, Kahahana’s fighters had not in fact seen the last of their foes’ heels. For at the last moment, the only two men to survive that awful battle had managed to slip the closing trap. These two warriors, who had been marching in the column’s forward ranks at the beginning of the day, were by this time near its rear.

“We understood by then that we were running toward to our own death,” one of the men said, at last daring to raise his eyes to look into the face of his mō‘ī, Kalani‘ōpu‘u. “We broke away from the column before it reached the ravine and hid ourselves in the scrub.”

“We were fortunate,” said the other warrior. “No one saw us run off. No enemies came looking for us.”

Indeed, the rest of Kahekili’s people were so intent on overtaking the main body of the retreating Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i that they did not think to slow their pursuit to look for stragglers.

As the two young warriors cowered in the scrub of the last sand hills, the tumult of battle passed them by.

“We remained in hiding until it was quiet,” the first man said, “and then we ran.”

“We saw no more of the battle,” said the second warrior.

Kalani‘ōpu‘u had stood in expressionless silence over the two men during their long account. “And yet you can be certain there are no other survivors?” he now asked.

“Yes, Lord,” the first warrior replied. “After we had gone some distance and were sure that none of the Maui people were chasing us, we stopped to rest. We were still hopeful that others had also gotten away and would find us. But no one came.”

The two lone survivors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i had escaped over the top of Kahekili’s net. Behind them, the sluice gate had closed.

“And what of my nephew?” The question came from Keawema‘uhili, the high chief of Hilo, who was standing in a group of high-ranking chieftains who had clustered behind Kalani‘ōpu‘u. “What of Keawehano?” Keawehano, a young chieftain of the Hilo district, was one of the leaders of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i.

“He was near the very front of the column, Lord,” one of the men responded. “Truly, we never saw him or any of the others again.”

“We did not learn until later, after stories of the battle had begun circulating among the Maui people, what had happened to Keawehano and the rest of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i,” my father said.

The remnants of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i, now less than half their original number, retreated to the center of the shallow valley leading to Wailuku. They formed a circle, and standing shoulder

to shoulder, pointed their barbed breaking spears in all directions and dared their enemies to come to them.

But Kahekili's people would not oblige them. Instead, Kāne'olaelae commanded his men, who were flooding into the valley from the carnage amid the sand hills, to encircle the warriors of the Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i at distance safely beyond the reach of their long breaking spears. They were soon joined by the rest of Kahahana's people, who descended from their positions along the heights on both sides of the valley. Now the few hundred survivors of the proud Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i were entirely surrounded by several thousand enemy fighters. The warriors of Maui and Hawai'i regarded each other in silence. No one moved. Thus they remained for some time, perhaps as long as a half hour or more in the haole measure, until the mō'i of Maui himself, surrounded by a retinue of personal guards, arrived from the village of Wailuku.

Kahekili beckoned his two generals, Kāne'olaelae and Kahahana, to approach. He surveyed the opposing forces and said just three words before abruptly pivoting about and returning to the village: "Slay them all."

Now, at a signal from their commanders, the warriors of Maui began constricting their own circle, slowly advancing toward the Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i from all directions. The men of Hawai'i tightened their grips on their spears, anticipating a charge. But it did not come. Instead, the Maui warriors halted again, their front ranks this time just paces from the tips of their foes' weapons. None of the Ālapa and Pi'ipi'i moved. None dared break their own ranks and risk being cut down by swarming foes. This seeming impasse lasted for just moments. Then the air was filled with a deafening whine as sling stones by the hundreds arced over the front ranks of Kahekili's people. This was followed by the dull thud of missiles striking flesh and bone among the Hawai'ians, and then by their own pained grunts and anguished screams.

The bristling wall of barbed spear points began collapsing as the wounded and dying of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i loosened their grips on their own weapons. Now, as disarray spread among their enemies’ once ordered ranks, the closest of the Maui warriors rushed forward with tripping weapons – *pīkoi* – short clubs with long, weighted cords attached to them that they cast like fishermen casting nets to entangle their opponents about their ankles and bring them to the ground. They were followed by still more warriors who leaped among the fallen, cudgeling them with war clubs, jabbing them with short spears and stabbing them with wooden daggers. Here and there some of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i still stood and fought, but these men were quickly surrounded and brought down.

Those men of Hawai‘i not killed outright were dragged before Kahekili. It was said that one of them was Keawema‘uhili’s own mortally wounded nephew Keawehano. “We later heard that Kahekili had sacrificed the still-living Keawehano on the altar his own war god and watched him bleed to death there.”

The warriors of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i had commenced the day boasting that they would drink the waters of Wailuku. But by mid-day, their broken bodies lay scattered from Waikapu to Wailuku and the waters of Wailuku ran red with their blood.

This battle was forever after known among our people as *ahulau ka Ālapa a me Pi‘ipi‘i i Kakanilua* – bodies of the Ālapa and Pi‘ipi‘i heaped up at Kakanilua.