

young, it is dynamic and unpredictable, like the Big Island of Hawai'i, but lacking the scars of experience from its short battle with the elements. The first people to occupy these islands were blessed with riches beyond their wildest dreams.

THE FIRST SETTLERS

Sometime around the fourth or fifth century A.D., a large double-hulled voyaging canoe, held together with flexible sennit lashings and propelled by sails made of woven pandanus, slid onto the sand on the Big Island of Hawai'i. These first intrepid adventurers, only a few dozen or so, encountered an island chain of unimaginable beauty.

They had left their home in the Marquesas Islands, 2,500 miles away, for reasons we will never know. Some say it was because of war, overpopulation, drought or just a sense of adventure. Whatever their reasons, these initial settlers took a big chance and surely must

have been highly motivated. They left their homes and searched for a new world to colonize. Doubtless most of the first groups perished at sea. They could not have known that there were islands in these waters since Hawai'i is the most isolated island chain in the world. (Though some speculate that they were led here by the golden plover—see box on previous page.)

Those settlers who did arrive brought with them food staples from home: taro, breadfruit, pigs, dogs and several types of fowl. This was a pivotal decision. These first settlers found a land that contained almost no edible plants. With no land mammals other than the Hawaiian bat, the first settlers subsisted on fish until their crops matured. From then on, they lived on fish and taro. Although we associate throw-net fishing with Hawai'i, this practice was introduced by Japanese immigrants much later. The ancient Hawaiians used fishhooks and spears, for the most

The Last Battle for Supremacy

One of the more popular lookouts on O'ahu is the Pali Lookout on Hwy 61. The view from this precipice is simply glorious. As you soak in the beauty of the lookout, it's difficult to believe that this was the scene of one of O'ahu's bloodiest battles.

King Kamehameha was sweeping across the islands on his way to becoming the first man to conquer them all. When his fleet landed at Waikiki, he steadily drove the O'ahu army farther and farther up Nu'uuanu Valley. Once they got to what is now the Pali Lookout, they had nowhere to go but down the cliffs. With the help of western arms and sailors (whom he had captured and then cunningly made into his advisors), Kamehameha's army was turning the battle into a rout. Once at this location some of the enemy tried to scramble down the cliffs. Around 400 others were driven off, their bodies smashing onto the rocks below. This would be the last major battle for conquest in Hawai'i. Kaua'i would eventually surrender, and Kamehameha would at last have his kingdom.



part, or drove fish into a net already placed in the water. They also had domesticated animals, which were used as ritual foods or reserved for chiefs.

Little is known about the initial culture. Archeologists speculate that a second wave of colonists, probably from Tahiti, may have subdued these initial inhabitants around 1000 A.D. Some may have resisted and fled into the forest, creating the legend of the Menehune.

Today Menehune are always thought of as being small in stature. Initially referring to their social stature, the legend evolved to mean that they were physically short and lived in the woods away from the Hawaiians. (The Hawaiians avoided the woods when possible, fearing that they held evil spirits, and stayed instead on the coastal plains.) The Menehune were purported to build fabulous struc-

It's hard to imagine, but 50 generations of Hawaiian royalty were born at these sacred rocks in central O'ahu.

tures, always in one night. Their numbers were said to be vast, as many as 500,000. It is interesting to note that in a census taken of Kaua'i around 1800, some 65 people from a remote valley identified themselves as Menehune.

The second wave of settlers probably swept through the islands from the south, pushing the first inhabitants ever north. On a tiny island north of Kaua'i, archeologists have found carvings, clearly not Hawaiian, that closely resemble Marquesan carvings, probably left by the doomed exiles.

This second culture was far more aggressive and developed into a highly class-conscious culture. The society was