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Thanks for your
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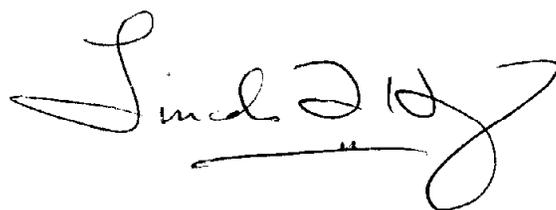
THE BATTLE OF NUUANU

APRIL, 1795

PREPARED BY THE 30TH MILITARY

HISTORY DETACHMENT

DECEMBER, 1992



BATTLE OF NUUANU

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BACKGROUND

In 1794, the kings of the major islands of Hawaii were: King Kamehameha I, ruler of the island of Hawaii; King Kahekili, ruler of Maui; King Kalanikupule, son of Kahekili, ruler of Oahu; and King Kaeo, half brother of Kahekili, ruler of Kauai. Kahekili, whom some say was the real father of Kamehameha (unknown to Kamehameha), was Kamehameha's arch enemy from Kamehameha's birth until Kahekili's death from natural causes in 1794. In the ensuing struggle for power among his heirs, Kalanikupule killed Kaeo in a battle on Oahu. The stage was now set for Kamehameha to triumph over his enemies.

In early 1795, Kamehameha set out from Kona on the island of Hawaii with 15,000 men, 500 canoes, a battalion of riflemen, and a battery of cannon. Because Kalanikupule was on Oahu with most of his army, Kamehameha did not receive much resistance when he invaded Maui, then Molokai. On the way to Oahu, Kamehameha received a major setback when one of his generals, Kaiana, deserted with 3,000 of his men. They conveniently became lost in the crossing of the Molokai Channel and landed further north on the Oahu coast at Kailua, while the rest of Kamehameha's army landed at Waimanalo.

KING KAMEHAMEHA I (Approx. 1750-1819)

The high caste of ancient Hawaii, the Alii, were very free-spirited and believed in liberal sex among their caste. Both sexes had many mates, officially married or not. The Alii were encouraged to have children by relatives, in wedlock or not. In fact, the closest incest, the wedding of brother and sister, yielded the highest caste children, the Pio. Because of this permissiveness, there was a question about the real father of Kamehameha I. Ironically, many believed that his worst enemy, King Kahekili, was actually his father. The almost disastrous desertion of a key ally, Kaiana, before this critical battle was probably started because of jealousy Kamehameha felt over Kaiana's love affair with Kamehameha's wife, Queen Kaahumanu.

In his prime, Kamehameha stood six feet, six inches tall and was a fearless warrior. At the age of fourteen, according to legend, he moved a gigantic stone called the Naha Stone, which foretold his destiny to be the greatest king of Hawaii. Although he did not support or take part in the killing of the explorer Captain James Cook, he was seriously wounded in the retaliatory artillery bombardment. He learned from this incident about the power of foreign weapons. From that day, he began cultivating foreign ways and began collecting as many of the fearful weapons as quickly as he could.

Kamehameha was an able administrator and kept excellent advisors, including foreigners such as Isaac Davis, at his side.



King Kamehameha I

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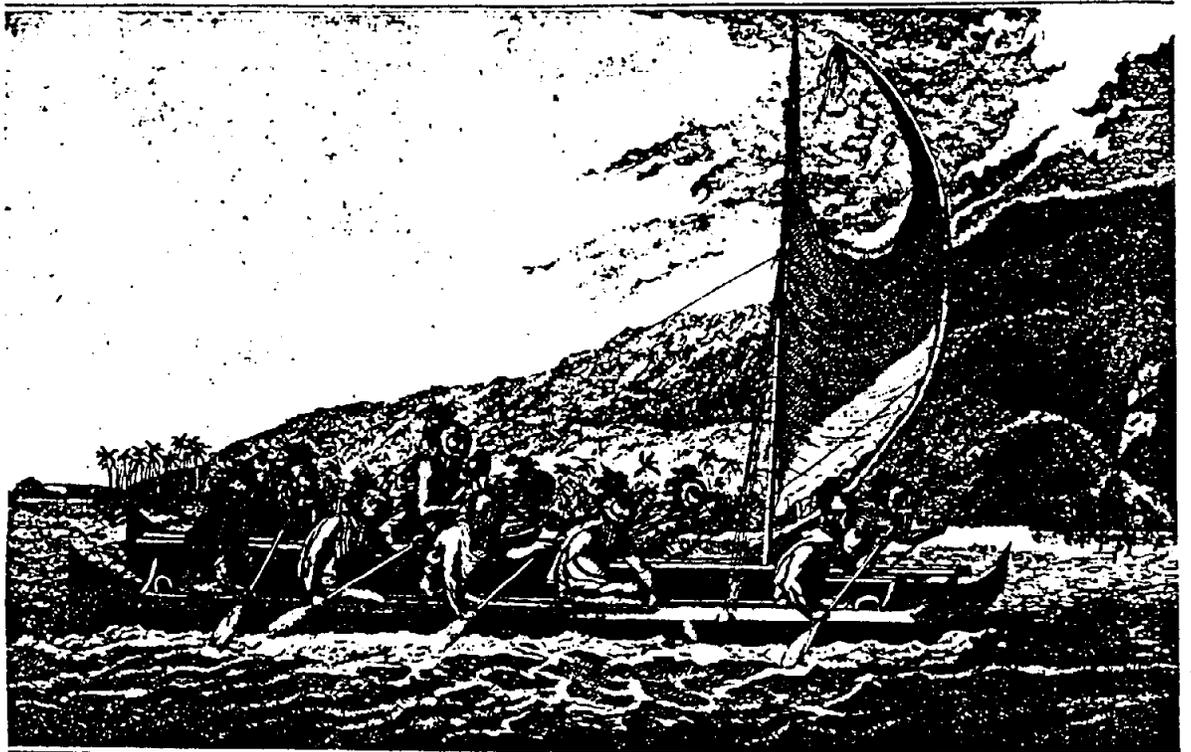


H. Van Lapeere delin.

Del. de G. G. G.

Reine Kaahumanu.

Queen Kaahumanu

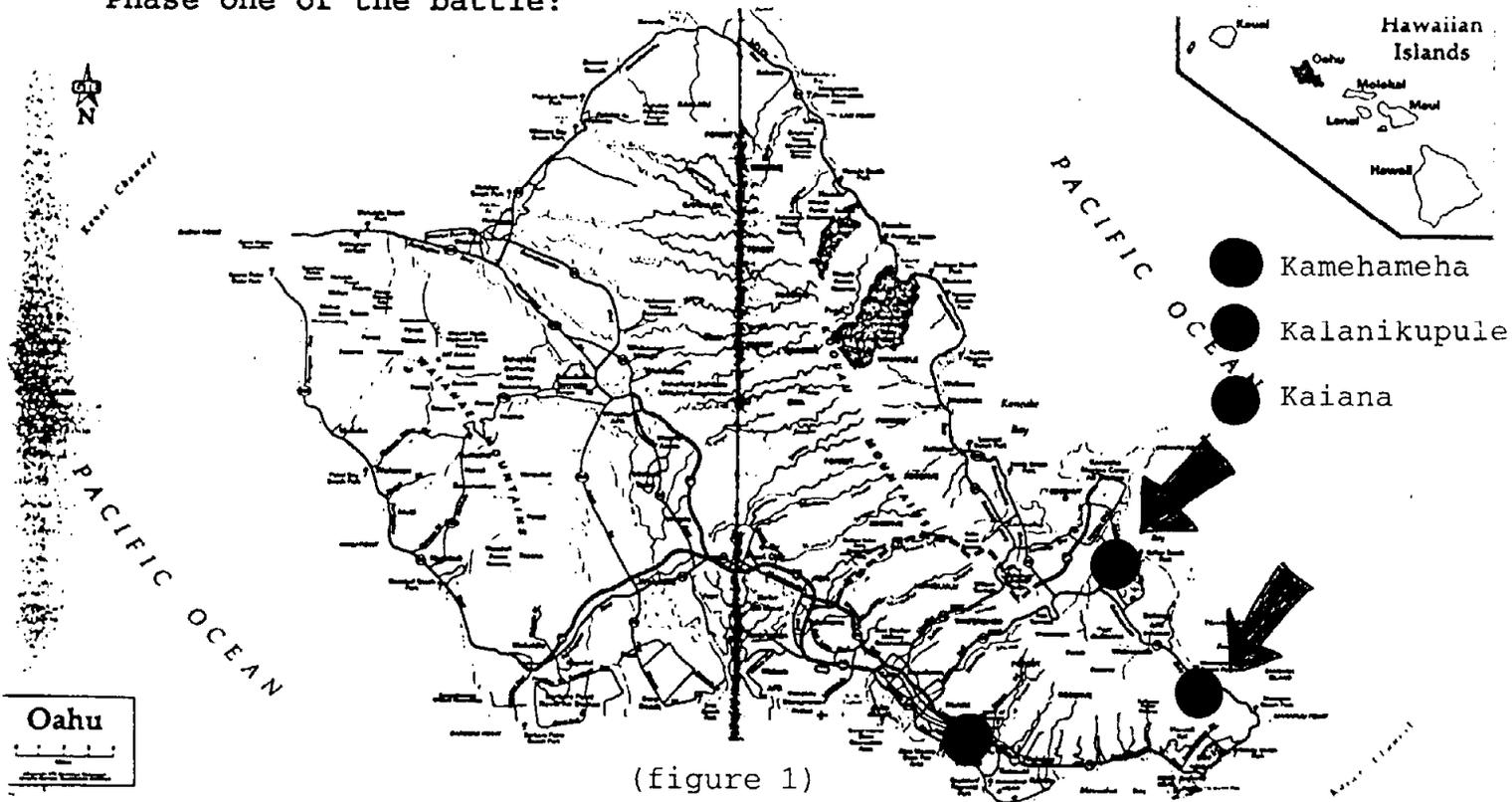


Hawaiian War Canoe, Circa 1780

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Exact times and days cannot be determined because ancient Hawaiians kept all their history orally. The events were passed on from generation to generation through songs and stories. Naturally, the victor's side of the story was probably 'enhanced' (losers were often sacrificed to the gods), but that even happens today. The battle of Nuuanu probably occurred in April, 1795.

Phase one of the battle:



King Kamehameha lands near Waimanalo (see figure 2), with 12,000 men. Kaiana lands at Kailua with 3,000 men. King Kalanikupule awaits at his capital, Waikiki, with 6,000 men (see figure 3 and 4).



figure 2
Present day picture of possible
invasion landing site

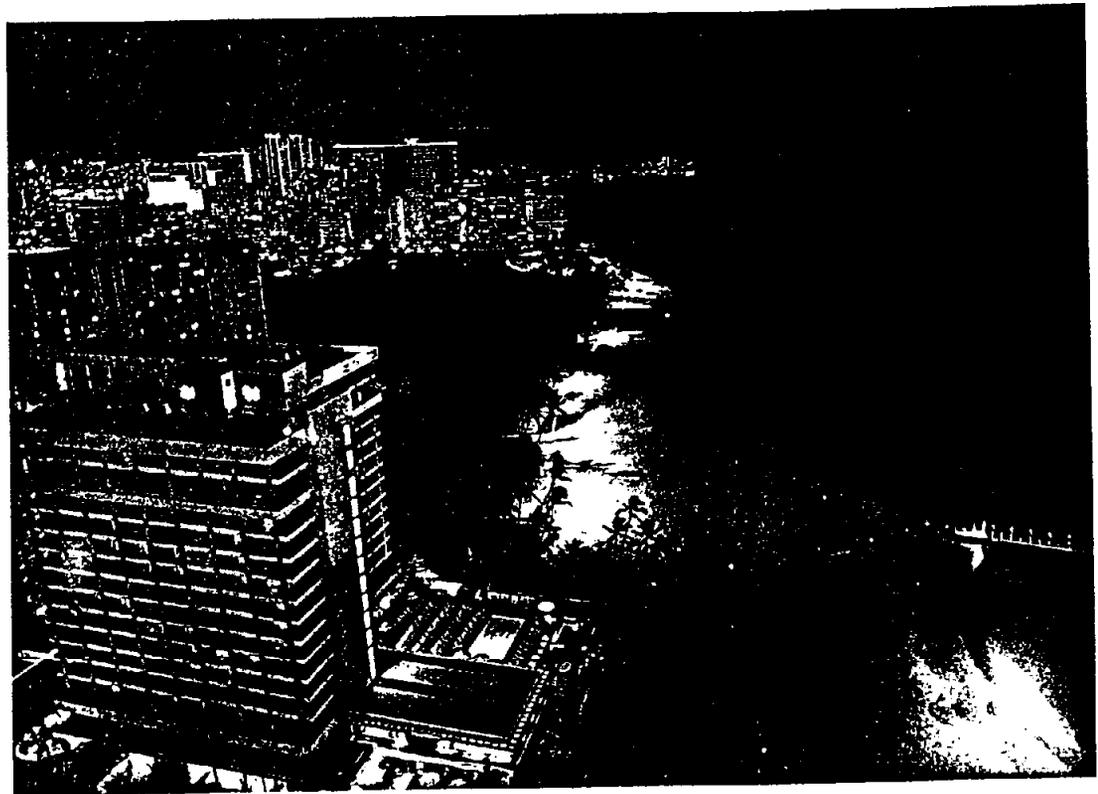
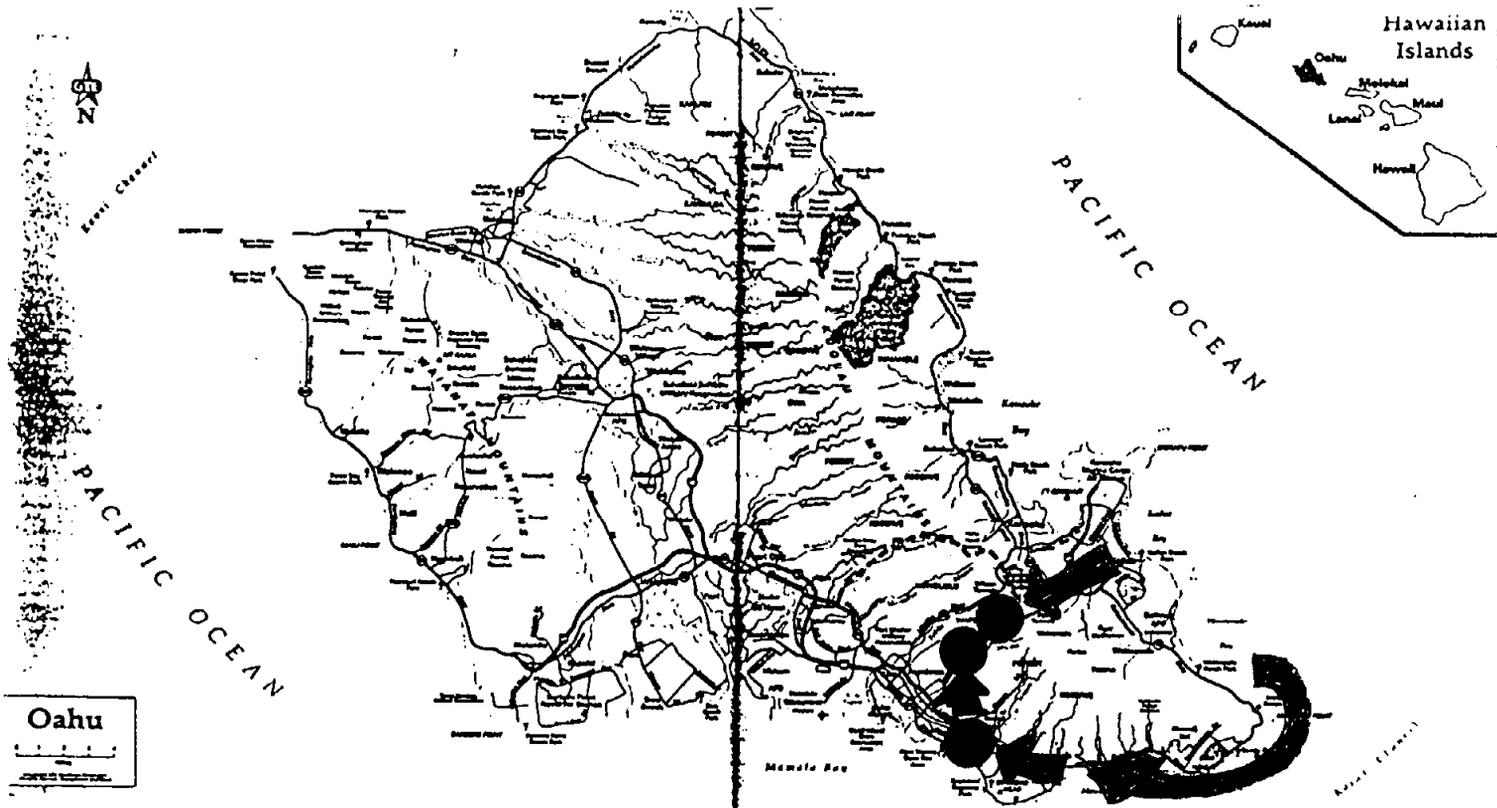


figure 3
Modern Waikiki



figure 4
Sketch of Waikiki, circa 1800

Phase two of the battle:



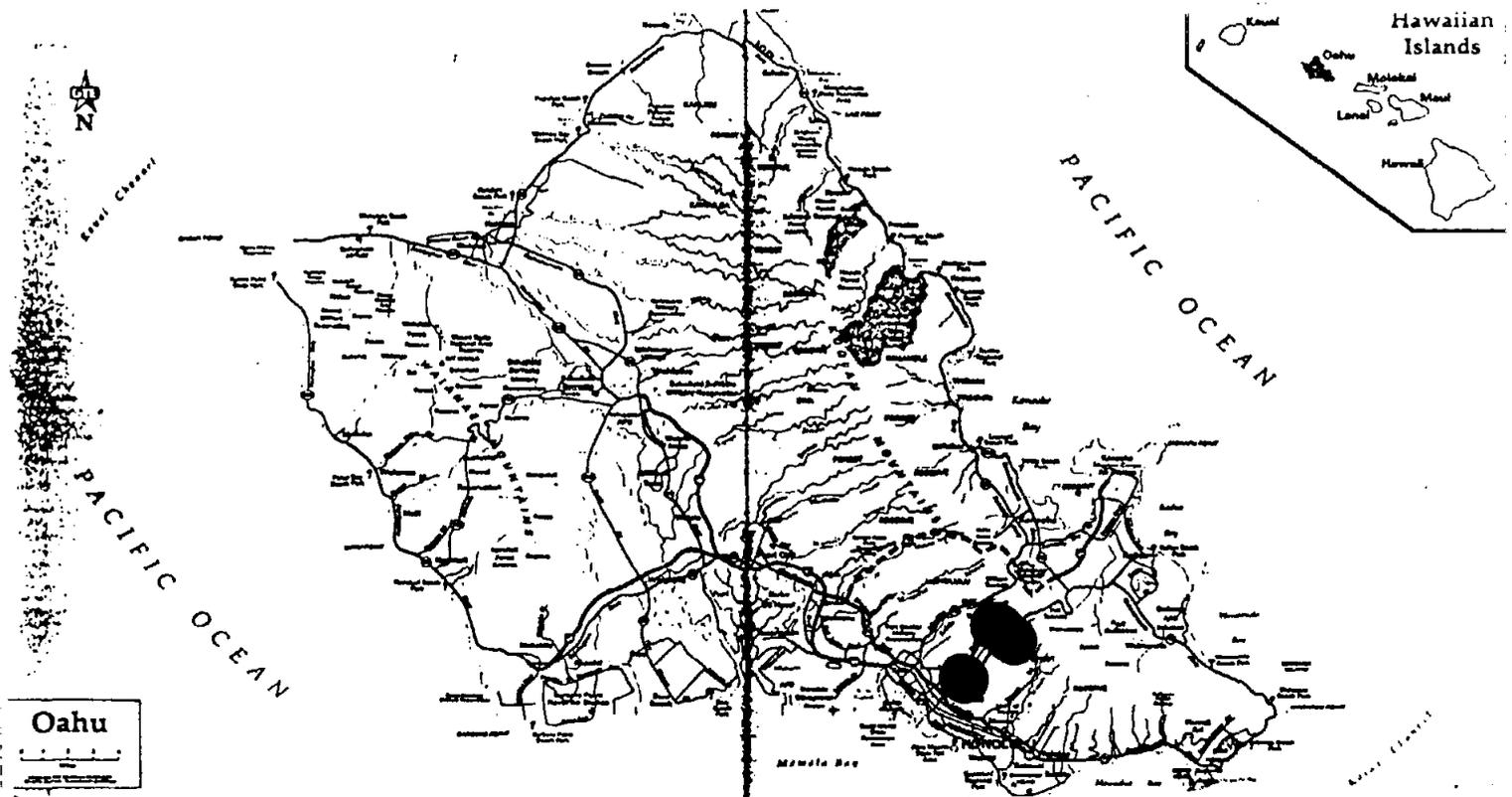
(figure 5)

King Kamehameha's army advances to Waikiki uncontested by Kalanikupule. Kaiana crosses the Koolau Mountain Range at the lowest spot, Nuuanu Pali (see figure 6) and joins with Kalanikupule in Nuuanu Valley, after Kalanikupule had retreated from his capital, Waikiki.



figure 6
Ancient Hawaiian footpath across the Pali
circa, 1800

Phase three of the battle:



(figure 7)

Kamehameha's army makes contact with the enemy and pushes them up Nuuanu Valley. The enemy attempts to hide from the artillery and rifle fire behind defensive walls made of stone but the canon destroy the walls. Many die in the blast, including the traitor, Kaiana (see figures 8-12).



figure 8
Sketch of Nuuanu Valley, circa 1800

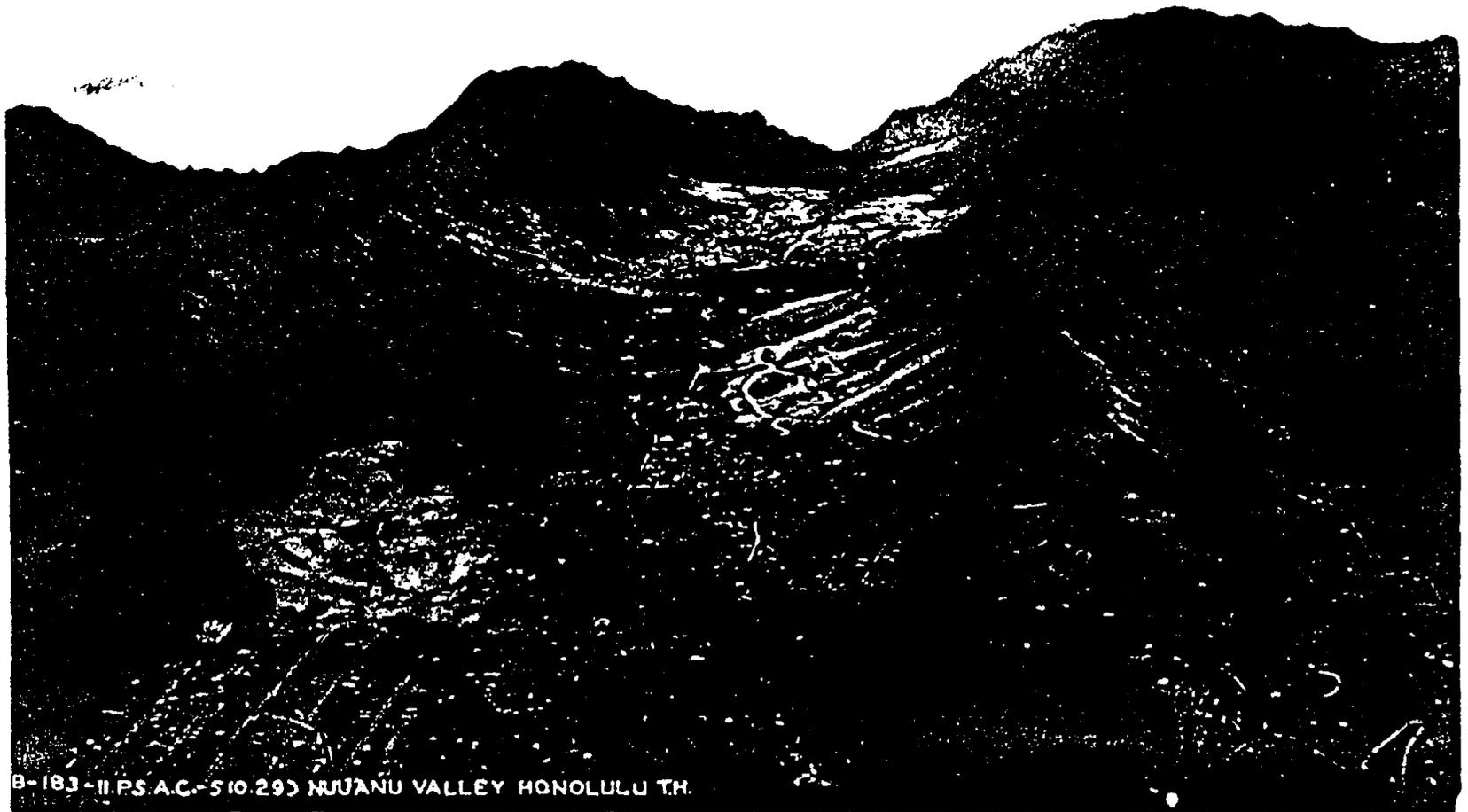


figure 9

Picture of Nuuanu Valley, circa 1920

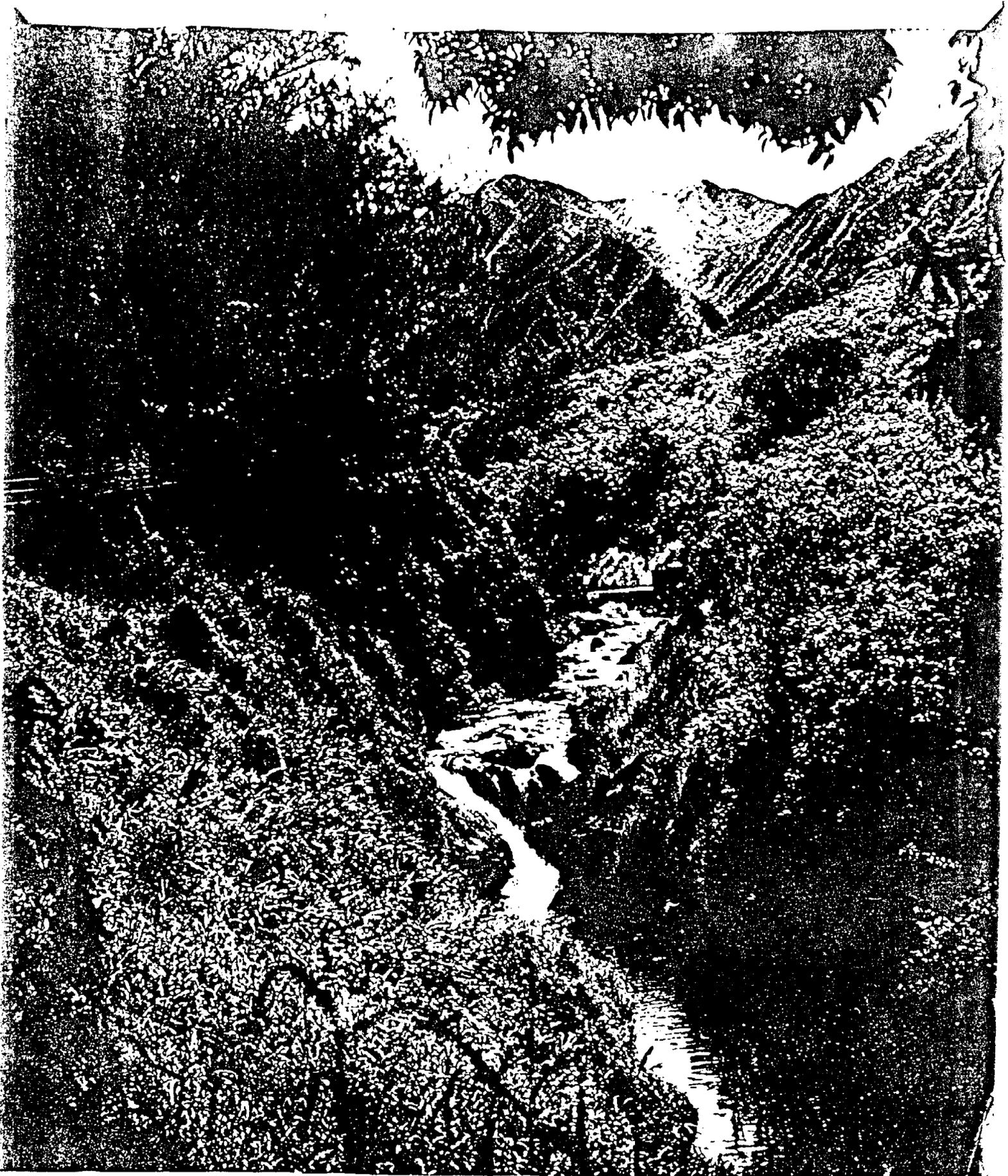


figure 10
Nuuanu Stream, circa 1920



figure 11

Nuuanu Valley, circa 1920

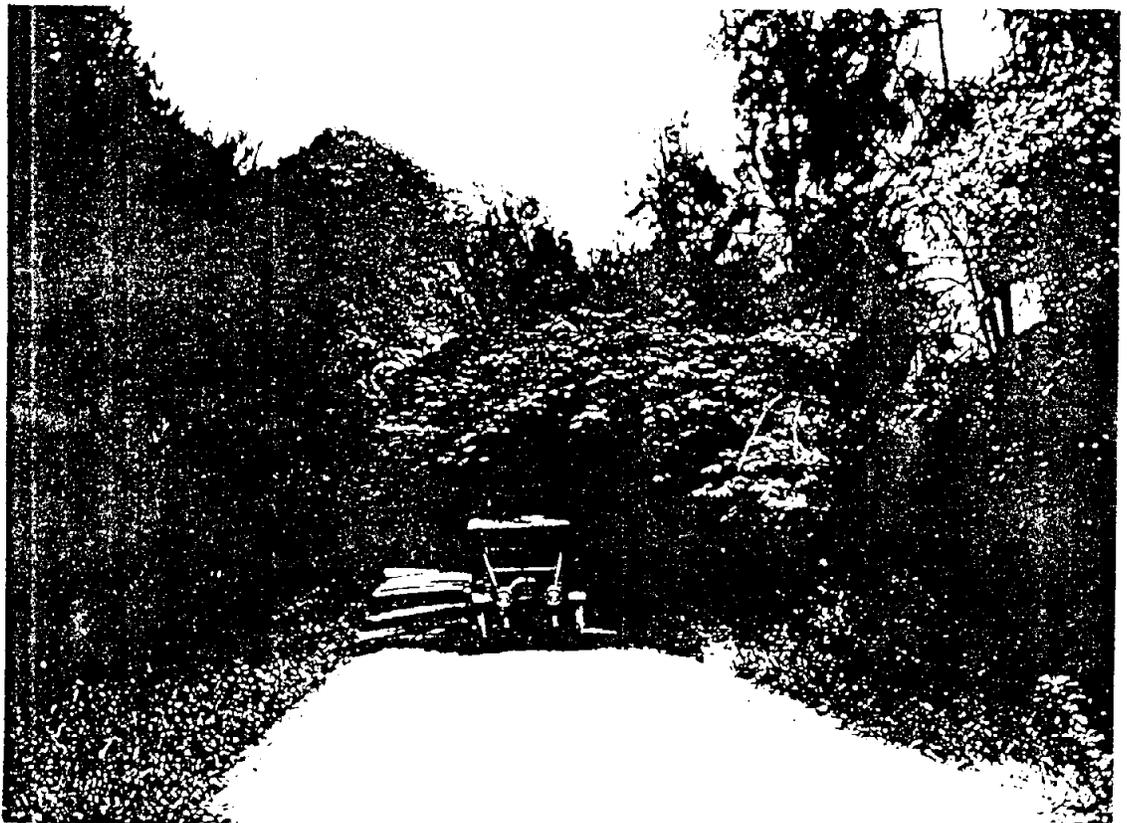


figure 12

Phase four of the battle:

The Oahu army is routed. The small, narrow passes cannot accommodate the high volume of escaping soldiers and many fall to their deaths 4,000 feet below the sheer cliffs (see figures 13-18). Kalanikupule escapes but is found three months later and is then sacrificed to the gods.

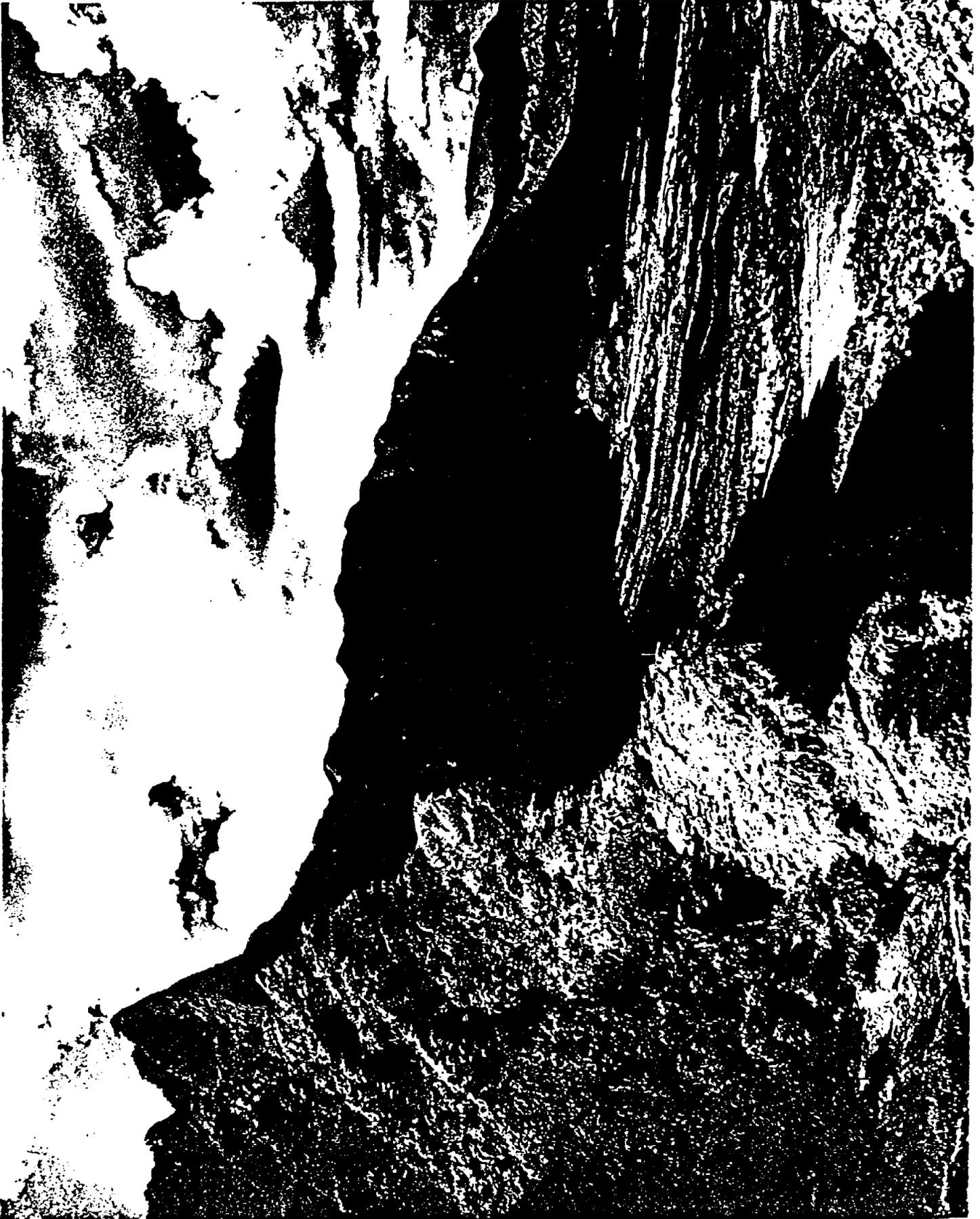


figure 13
Sheer cliffs below the Pali



figure 14
Pali, circa 1900



B-2314-11.PS.A.C.-10.24.24.-12.1500-NUUANU VALLEY ROAD & CITY OF HONOLULU FROM NE.

figure 15
Aerial view of Nuuanu Valley

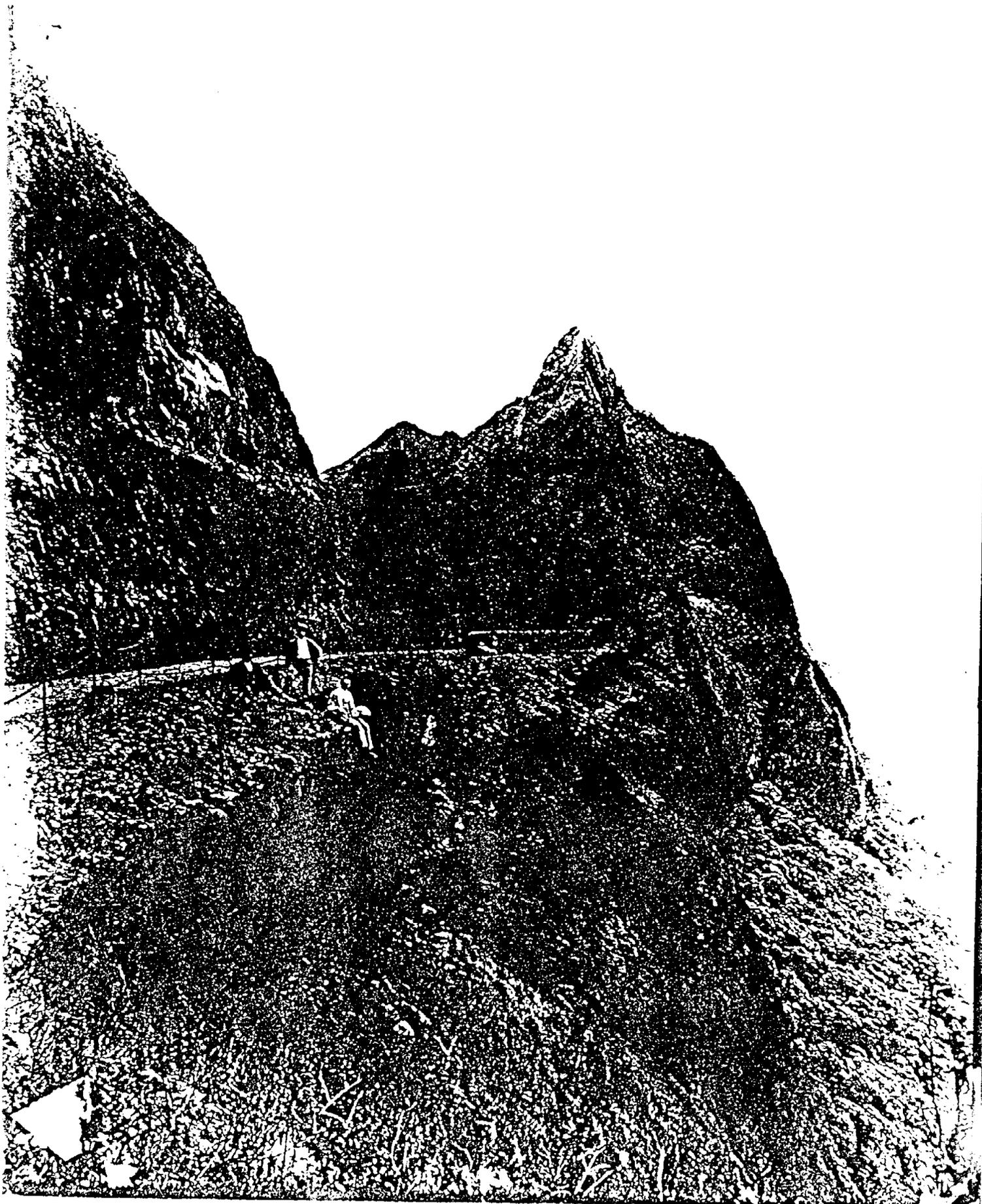


figure 16, Old Pali Road, circa 1920



figure 17
Old Pali Road

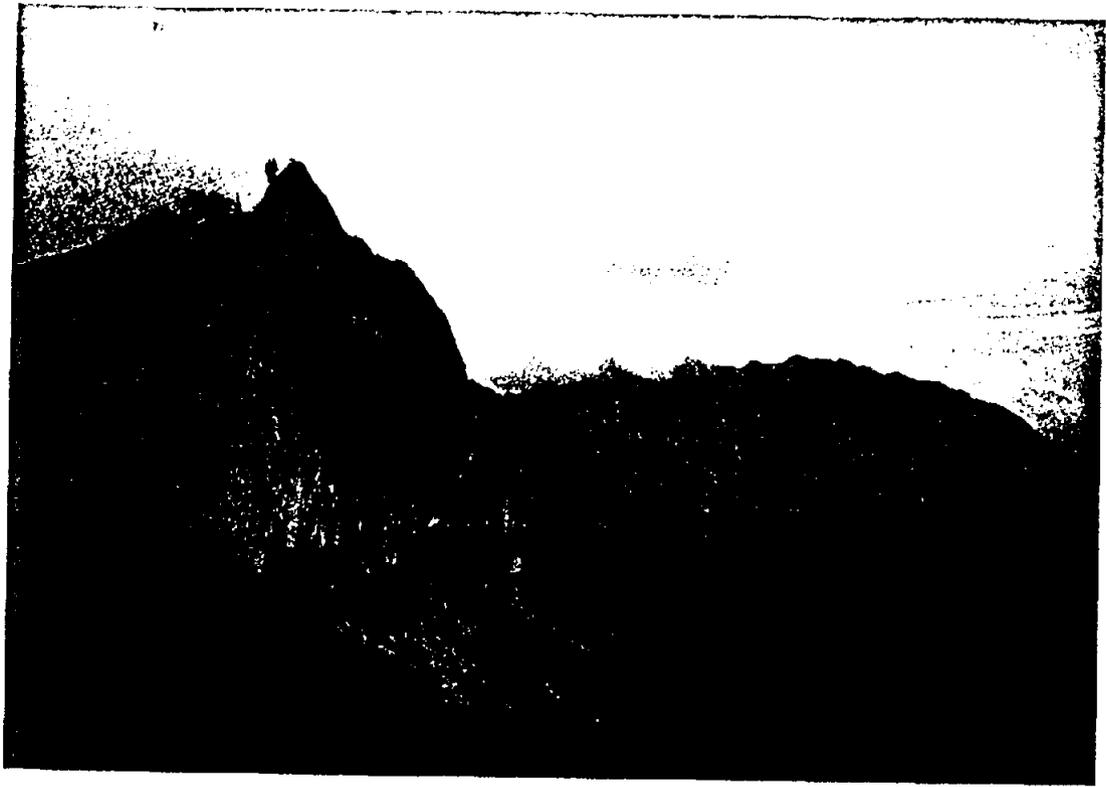


figure 18
Modern picture of the Pali
(relatively unchanged)

LESSONS LEARNED

Kamehameha's use of cannon and rifles was the decisive factor in the battle. Instead of being afraid or angry at foreigners after almost being killed by them, Kamehameha embraced foreign ways and almost forcefully retained foreign advisors. He steadily acquired as many weapons as possible. However, he faithfully kept to the old customs and laws and in this way, did not alienate his subjects.

Had Kalanikupule joined forces with his uncle Kaeo instead of killing him, their combined force may have defeated Kamehameha. The choice of Nuuanu as the defensive position may also be questioned. The valley was too wide to defend adequately and the escape route was not adequate to handle a hasty retreat. Where was the rear guard? Why were there no ambushes set up to at least slow the Kamehameha forces?

FINAL COMMENTS

Kamehameha then attempted to invade the island of Kauai in 1796 but a disastrous storm wiped out his fleet. The king of Kauai, Kaumu-alii, son of Kaeo, later made peace with Kamehameha and pledged fealty to him, in 1810. Kamehameha died of natural causes in 1819.

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**SPEECH TO DAUGHTERS OF HAWAII
ON THE BATTLE OF NUUANU (APRIL 1795)**

APRIL 22, 1993

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting me on this lovely cruise to talk about this important historical battle. My name is Lincoln Higa and I'm a military historian with the United States Army Reserve. Mrs. Adams has told me that the Daughters of Hawaii have discussed this battle every April for the past 90 years. I'll try to discuss the military aspects of this battle.

From a military standpoint, I cannot say for sure if anything that the Oahu forces under Kalanikupule and Kaiana did, would have changed the outcome of the battle. There were a number of advantages, perhaps by themselves not enough to decisively decide the battle, but together, caused the lopsided victory.

I will discuss what I feel are the critical military issues and how the Oahu forces could have overcome their shortfalls in these areas. Keep in mind that historians are like 'armchair quarterbacks' who have the luxury of time, and were not there on the field of battle, looking at the hostile enemy, seeing people dying, hearing the sounds of cannon and muskets and the screams. History is always written by the survivors, most likely the victors.

As I mentioned in my paper, after almost dying in the artillery bombardment in retaliation for the killing of Captain James Cook, Kamehameha began acquiring as many cannon and rifles, as well as haole advisors, as he could. If Kalanikupule had not been so greedy as to try to steal Captain William Brown's cannon and rifles in 1794, he could have used their weapons to even the odds. As you know, although Captain Brown was killed, his men managed to escape with all of their weapons.

As to the numerical superiority of Kamehameha's army, as I also mentioned in my paper, if Kalanikupule had not fought and killed his uncle Kaeo, they might together have joined forces to defeat Kamehameha. As you may have heard from CNN in the Gulf War, current military doctrine is that it takes at least a 2-1 or 3-1 numerical superiority in order to defeat an entrenched foe.

Logistically, the supply line for Kamehameha's army from the big island was long. In contrast, the Oahu army was at home. After Kamehameha's invasion force landed at Waimanalo, Kalanikupule simply gave up his capital, Waikiki, to Kamehameha without a fight. Perhaps they could have evacuated all food and supplies and destroyed what they could not carry. In fact, just before arriving on Oahu after defeating the Maui forces, Kamehameha burned and devastated a great deal of Maui in order to keep the people from rebelling.

Napoleon, who Kamehameha has been compared to, once stated that the art of war dictates that defense can only be effective if it is followed by an offensive strategy. This is still in consonance with current military strategy. Great military strategists, Clausewitz and Jomini, who served under Napoleon and Frederick the Great, lived during the same period of time as Kamehameha. Perhaps some of his 39 haole advisors were familiar with their tactics.

In fact, current military doctrine on offensive operations dictates that a commander should:

- Seize the initiative early.
- Develop the situation and initiate maneuver rapidly.
- Attack violently and resolutely.
- Maintain momentum by synchronizing the actions of combat.

Kamehameha did all these things.

George Patton carefully distinguished haste from speed. "Haste exists," he wrote, "when troops are committed without proper reconnaissance, without the arrangement for proper supporting fire, and before every available man has been brought up. The result of such an attack will be to get the troops into action early, but to complete the action very slowly. Speed is acquired by making the necessary reconnaissance, providing the proper artillery and other tactical support, including air support, bringing up every man and then launching the attack with a

predetermined plan so that the time under fire will be reduced to the minimum. At the battalion level, four hours spent in preparation for an attack will probably ensure the time spent under fire not exceeding thirty minutes. One hour spent in ... preparation ... will most certainly ensure time under fire lasting many hours with bloody casualties." Kamehameha's forces carefully planned their assault, but after the initial contact, they did not hesitate or slow down.

In addition, Kamehameha's forces conducted 'deep operations' by secretly sending a small group of soldiers into the Oahu forces' rear area to disable the few cannons that they had positioned on the ridge of the pass. Current doctrine also calls for commanders to concentrate all available firepower on the defender's position at the beginning of the assault. Kamehameha did this - in fact near the old Pali road, at a defensive wall constructed by the Oahu army, the cannon 'Lopaka' blasted the wall and killed Kaiana and caused the defenders to flee.

In contrast, as I mentioned earlier, a defense cannot normally win a war. It normally is followed by a counterattack at the enemies weaknesses. There did not seem to be a plan for counterattack by the Oahu forces. Frederick the Great of Prussia once defeated a larger army by retreating quickly, then turning on the larger force and attacking. He also utilized concealed forces who hid on the enemies' flanks, coordinating the attack.

As I mentioned in my paper, there could have been organized defensive positions where fresh troops could take over for tired troops. Without a force in reserve, the Oahu army had no way of controlling the battle - for example reinforcing weak points and attacking Kamehameha's weak points. If there had been at least a covering force, the Oahu army could have slowed down Kamehameha's forces enough so that a controlled retreat could have been accomplished. Instead, hundreds and possibly thousands plunged to their deaths from the Pali. The Oahu army could have lived to fight another day.