

CURIOSITY CHRONICLES



Snapshots of Early Modern History

by Rachel Meyers, M.A.

Volume 2

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Globally Minded History

by Rachel Meyers, M.A.

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Early Modern History

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Culture Corner

The Enlightenment



Lily: Hey, everyone. Arthur and I are jumping in before this book gets going because we need to introduce a new philosophy.

Arthur: This philosophy is going to underpin what happens in the next several decades.

Lily: It's time for the Enlightenment! The Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution go hand-in-hand. Both believe in reason above all else. Both use reason to question superstition and tradition. In the words of Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot, "All things must be examined, debated, investigated without exception and without regard for anyone's feelings."

Arthur: The Enlightenment reached its peak in the late 1700s. At first the Enlightenment was just for philosophers, but the Lisbon earthquake turned it into something even ordinary people were discussing.

Lily: An earthquake struck the Atlantic Ocean outside Lisbon, Portugal on November 1, 1755. The earthquake rocked Lisbon for several minutes and created chasms up to sixteen feet wide in the middle of the city. Forty minutes later, three massive tidal waves swamped Lisbon. Then a fire broke out! Tens of thousands of people died and over 80% of the city lay in ruin.

Arthur: Lisbon had been one of the largest and richest cities in Europe before the quake. All of Europe was left reeling at the scale of destruction.

Lily: In the Middle Ages, people would have blamed an event like this on God or other supernatural forces. But because reason and the Enlightenment had been taking hold in Europe, some people fiercely rejected such claims. Those people refused to accept that this earthquake was an act of God. They also rejected that the destruction was somehow a good thing.

Arthur: French philosopher Voltaire led the charge on that one. He took every superstitious argument that would have worked in the Middle Ages and tore them to shreds. While debunking the philosophies of the past, Voltaire also fiercely defended free speech, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

Lily: More and more people were beginning to believe in the power of reason. By doing so, they weren't just embracing scientific innovations, they were also questioning some of the bedrock ideas of European society.



1755 engraving by unknown artist of Lisbon the Lisbon Earthquake.



Far left, portrait of Denis Diderot in 1767 by Louis-Michel van Loo; Left, portrait of Voltaire based on Maurice Quentin de La Tour painting 1736.

Arthur: John Locke's ideas had also deeply taken root. Many people now believed that ordinary people had rights. Instead of debating if people had rights, they began debating what exactly those rights were and how they should be protected.

Lily: In the process, they questioned government itself. Is monarchy the best solution? Or maybe something else?

Arthur: Enlightened philosophers also supported reforms in education.

Lily: Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a leader in education reform. At this point in Europe, only the richest men could afford education. Rousseau supported expanding how many men received an education. He also thought education should teach practical skills, not just book learning. Unfortunately, education for women was still sorely lacking.

Arthur: Speaking of book learning, Denis Diderot created the *Encyclopedie*, which was the largest and most comprehensive encyclopedia of its time. It was also secular. It separated religious ideas from other fields of study.

Lily: Enlightened philosophers published lots of books and newspaper articles, which influenced the opinions of ordinary people. In France, wealthy women started salons where they invited the richest, smartest, and most influential people around to their homes to discuss Enlightenment ideas. These women carefully fostered and spread the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Arthur: As the Enlightenment grows, it's going to shake up the world and cause many—often bloody—consequences.

Lily: Give it another 50 years, and a whole new batch of philosophers are going to start questioning the Enlightenment too!



1812 painting by Anicet Charles Gabriel Lemonnier of Madame Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin's salon. The gathering is led by Madame Geoffrin and there are several other women in attendance. The men in the scene include most leading Enlightenment philosophers including Rousseau and Diderot. The bust in the back is of Voltaire.

Lily: Before we go I want to define a couple of words. Words are very important tools for talking about history but the meaning of words can change over time. The Enlightenment is going to lead to a lot of changes in politics and government, which will lead to a lot of new words. Here's a run down of some of the most important political words for the late 1700s and 1800s. Many of these words are still common today, but may not mean the same thing now. Make sure you learn these definitions so you don't mix-up past and current meanings!



Constitutional Monarchy

- A constitutional monarchy is a monarchy where the monarch has limited power.
- The country has a constitution which creates the framework of the government.
- The monarch must follow the law.
- Since the monarch doesn't have complete power there are other branches of government that rule along with the monarch, such as a Parliament and a system of judges.
- The common people may be represented in a constitutional monarchy.

Example of a constitutional monarchy: Great Britain after the Glorious Revolution.

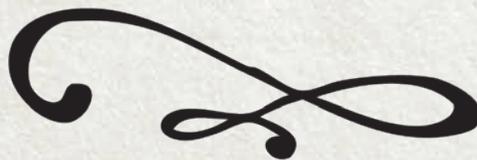
Absolutist Monarchy

- A monarchy where the monarch has absolute power and can act however he/she pleases.
- The monarch does not have to follow the law and can change the law on a whim.
- There may be other branches of government that advise the monarch, but the monarch can ignore them.
- The common people are not represented.

Example of an absolutist monarchy: France under Louis XIV.

Royalist

People or ideas that support the monarch and having a monarchy.





Republic

- A government where power is divided between multiple leaders or branches of government.
- There is no monarch.
- A republic has a constitution or similar framework of laws to govern the country.
- The people vote to elect leaders for some government positions.
- Who is allowed to vote and how many leaders are directly elected may be severely limited.

Most of the countries that emerge in the late 1700s and early 1800s will be republics.

Democracy

- A government where the people vote directly on the leaders and laws of the country.
- Ideas from democracy will be blended with republics to create democratic republics in this era of history.
- No true democracies will be created.

Examples of democracy: Ancient Athens and the Haudenosaunee.

Democratic

People or ideas that support the right to vote.

Republican

People or ideas that support having or creating a republic instead of a monarchy.



Liberal/Progressive

People or ideas that support changing the rigid social order of the Middle Ages and creating a more equal society.

Examples of liberal ideas: expanding education, getting rid of the nobility, creating republics, separating church and state, religious freedom, expanding who has the right to vote, ending slavery, and supporting equal rights.

Conservative

People or ideas that support keeping or returning to a rigid social order.

Examples of conservative ideas: supporting monarchy, keeping the nobility, giving the nobility special privileges, having just one approved religion, limiting or removing the right to vote, strictly enforcing moral codes, limiting education to a select few, and maintaining the balance of power.

Section 19: Enlightened Absolutism



Chapter 37: Catherine Seizes Power

Mona: In our last book, we left off by setting the stage for a whole new phase of history. The Seven Years' War was the first global war and its consequences were felt across the world.

Ted: Great Britain became the most powerful country in Europe, gained significant amounts of land in North America, and was increasing its power in India.

Mona: British colonialism was on the rise, but at the same time, the cost of the Seven Years' War would sow the seeds of the American Revolution.

Ted: France was losing power and money at an alarming rate. Spain had proved size doesn't always equal power. Austria, Prussia, and the other German states were as disunited and war-torn as ever. And Russia...wait, what happened to Russia?

Mona: Russia suddenly withdrew from the Seven Years' War near the end, so we didn't talk about what happened to it.

Ted: Oh right, when Empress Elizabeth died, Peter III took the throne and said, "peace out!" and left the war. But why?? The Russian-French-Swedish-Austrian side probably could have won if Russia had stuck it out.

Mona: It's time for some Russian history to find out! Empress Elizabeth was the daughter of Peter the Great, but her rise to power was far from a straight path. Her mother, brother, and a few cousins all held the throne before Elizabeth. Elizabeth was unmarried and childless. Given the number of short-term tzars Russia had already had, Elizabeth knew she needed to select a strong heir. She chose her nephew, Peter III. Peter was the grandson of Peter the Great, so on paper, he was a solid choice. In reality, there were some problems.

Ted: Like what?



*Portrait of Empress Elizabeth
painted in 1757 by Vigilius Eriksen*

Portrait of Sophia/Catherine painted around her marriage in 1745 by Christoph Gooth.



Mona: Peter was born and raised in the Duchy of Holstein-Gottorp, part of the Holy Roman Empire. He was raised Protestant. His first language was German. He was in love with all things German. Only begrudgingly did he learn Russian and convert to Russian Orthodox Christianity. He never loved Russia, nor did he dream of becoming tzar of Russia—but Elizabeth didn't much care what he wanted.

Ted: Yeah, having a leader that doesn't actually like the country is not a fantastic plan.

Mona: Picking a strong heir is more than a one-generation decision. Elizabeth also knew she needed to pick the right wife, who could give birth to the right child, to guarantee the future success of Russia. That is when Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst enters our story. Sophia was the daughter Christian August, a minor German noble, and Joanna Elizabeth Holstein-Gottorp, the great-granddaughter of the King of Denmark.

Ted: So she's got royal connections on her mom's side of the family but not much on her dad's side.

Mona: Joanna was ambitious and wanted to use Sophia's marriage as a way to gain more power for herself. She reached out to her royal family to try to find Sophia a powerful husband. She was surprised at how well those plans worked when Empress Elizabeth summoned them to Moscow. Elizabeth wanted to see if Sophia would be a good wife and mother for the future tzars of Russia.

Ted: Joanna nearly botched everything up because as soon as she arrived, she embroiled herself in court plots and tried to spy on behalf of Frederick the Great of Prussia.

Mona: Sophia wasn't about to be dragged down by her mother. She did everything in her power to impress Empress Elizabeth. Sophia threw herself head-first into learning Russian culture, language, and religion. She was so determined to learn Russian, she would wake up in the middle of the night and pace her room, reciting her lessons. Sophia's apparent love of Russia was quickly gaining her favor with Empress Elizabeth.

Ted: What about Peter, her potential husband?

Mona: Peter didn't like Sophia, and Sophia didn't like Peter. Sophia found him weak and childish. She hated how he was obsessed with playing with his toy soldiers and was disgusted that, despite only being a teenager, Peter was already an alcoholic. But Sophia was both ambitious and realistic. She wasn't going to let her dislike of Peter get in her way. Shortly after arriving in Russia, Sophia became terribly ill. When it looked as though Sophia was on the brink of death, Joanna requested a Lutheran minister be summoned. Sophia stirred from her fevered dreams and demanded it be a Russian Orthodox priest. This dedication to Russia while on the brink of death won over Elizabeth.

Ted: What's next?



Portrait of Peter III in 1761 by Lucas Conrad Pfandzelt.

Mona: Next, Elizabeth arranges for Sophia to be baptized into the Russian Orthodox faith. As part of the ceremony, Elizabeth gave Sophia a new name. Sophia is now Catherine.

Ted: Wait!! Are we talking about Catherine the Great of Russia??

Mona: Yes, we are!

Ted: She ruled Russia for over thirty years! How do we go from here to there?

Mona: Catherine was married to Peter and eventually had a son named Paul. At that point, Elizabeth felt like Catherine's story was done. Elizabeth took Paul and raised him herself.

Ted: But then Empress Elizabeth died in the middle of the Seven Years' War, and Peter took the throne and immediately made peace with Prussia.

Mona: Those events are why Catherine's role in history didn't end with Paul's birth. Peter III took the throne but was not crowned. He didn't actually bother to hold a coronation ceremony, so his status as czar had not yet been cemented.

Ted: Ooo, that's the kind of thing an enemy can use against you.

Mona: Making peace with Prussia significantly hurt Russia. Russia had spent a lot of money and sacrificed many soldiers' lives in the war.

Ted: If they'd stuck the war out and won—which they likely could have—Russia would have gained power, and Prussia would have been forced to repay them for the cost of the war. Russia would have come out in a pretty good position. Dropping the war like a hot potato right at the end meant Russia had wasted a bunch of money and lives for nothing.

Mona: Do you know why Peter pulled out of the war? Beyond just loving all things German and wanting to be friends with Frederick the Great? Peter was also Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, a small duchy on the border of the Holy Roman Empire and Denmark. Peter wanted to leave the Seven Years' War so he could use Russian troops to invade Denmark and reclaim land for Holstein-Gottorp.

Ted: Basically, Peter's throwing all of Russia under the bus in favor of his little duchy?

Mona: Exactly. Catherine was enraged by Peter's poor choices for Russia. She was also worried about her own future. She feared Peter would force her to become a nun, so he could marry someone else. These concerns pushed Catherine to act after Peter had been on the throne for just six months.

Ted: Now, this is the kind of story I love! Catherine knew how to play her cards!

Mona: She knew how important the Orthodox Church was in Russia and had regularly shown her support of the clergy.

Ted: Peter, who preferred Lutheranism, had made many enemies in the Orthodox Church.

Mona: Catherine knew how important the nobility was and had made friends with the most influential people.

Ted: Peter, who obviously preferred Holstein-Gottorp to Russia, had offended many nobles.



Mona: Lastly, Catherine knew she needed the military on her side. She had befriended many high ranking officers and made clear her support of Russian honor.

Ted: Peter was ready to use the Russian military as cannon fodder for his personal gain.

Mona: Catherine conspired with Grigory Orlov, a military officer. Together they began approaching the right people and placing bribes in the right hands to make sure Catherine had the support she needed.

Ted: On July 8, 1762, one of Catherine's conspirators was arrested. Peter was away from St. Petersburg, partying at one of his palaces. It was now or never. Catherine put on a military uniform, then made a speech in front of the military. She asked them to support her in her support of Russia. The military swore allegiance to her.

Mona: Next, Catherine rode to a cathedral where members of the Orthodox clergy were waiting to crown her Empress of Russia. Once she was crowned, Catherine ordered the arrest of her husband.

Ted: Taking power like this is called a coup. A coup can go terribly wrong, but Catherine's went off without a hitch! Peter was blindsided by the whole thing. His supporters quickly scattered when they heard what had happened. Peter tried to run for it. He tried to take refuge in an island fortress. When the guards at the gate would not let him in, Peter yelled out in a fit of rage, "Do you not know me? I am your emperor!" The guard answered back, "We no longer have an emperor. Long live Empress Catherine!"

Mona: Peter was arrested and imprisoned. He signed a statement of abdication, officially giving up his claim to the throne. Eight days later, he died in what looks suspiciously like an assassination but may have simply been a drunken fight. Catherine always insisted she did not order his death. Either way, Catherine was now the undisputed ruler of Russia.

Ted: What about her son? Wouldn't he inherit after his dad died?

Mona: Technically yes, but Catherine hadn't done all this just to hand power off to a kid. She had the support she needed. She was going to rule.

Ted: I mean, she risked everything. May as well enjoy it. What was Catherine's reign like?

Mona: Catherine was an enlightened absolutist.

Ted: Let me unpack that weird combo of words. We've talked about absolutism before with people like Ivan the Terrible and Louis XIV. An absolutist has complete control to do whatever they want and are above the law.

Mona: Arthur and Lily just stopped by to explain the Enlightenment. Enlightened people supported logic and reason. They believed in the rights of individuals. They believed governments were meant to serve and protect the people. They supported education and all-around wanted to create a fair and just society. Catherine was so involved in the



Portrait of Catherine the Great in military uniform in 1762, the year of her coup.

Enlightenment, she personally wrote letters back and forth with some of the most influential Enlightenment philosophers, such as Voltaire and Denis Diderot.

Ted: Maybe I'm missing something, but "enlightened" and "absolutist" sound like opposites. . . ?

Mona: In a lot of ways, they are! Catherine believed in the lofty ideals of the Enlightenment but didn't always live up to them. She even called herself an "enlightened despot."

Ted: That sounds very confusing and conflicted. What does she do during her reign?

Mona: First off, Russia's laws needed to be reformed! As an enlightened person, Catherine thought the people should have a say in those laws.

Ted: How are the people going to help her write the laws? Russia doesn't have a parliament.

Mona: In 1767, Catherine wrote and published the *Nakaz*. The *Nakaz* were a set of guidelines on making laws that were heavily based on Enlightenment ideas. Catherine hoped her people would read the *Nakaz* and then be able to help her reform the laws.

Ted: I'm still stuck on how enlightened and absolutist are opposites. Did this work for her?

Mona: The *Nakaz* was the first major work of Enlightenment philosophy written in Russian, so it did hugely influence Russian intellectuals.

Ted: But did she reform the laws?

Mona: Well...Catherine convened the All Russian Legislative Commission in 1767. She invited over 500 representatives from all the free classes in Russia to advise her on reforming the laws. It was a nice idea and by far the most representative thing Russians had ever seen.

Ted: Russia has been absolutist since Ivan the Terrible. It doesn't take much to increase representation when you start at zero.

Mona: Because Russians had never before been asked to advise the monarch like this, the representatives weren't quite sure what to do. Most of them had no idea what the *Nakaz* actually said. Many of them were afraid this was some sort of test where they were supposed to guess what Catherine wanted them to say. The whole thing failed miserably and the laws weren't reformed.

Ted: It's a big leap to go from having no say in your government to being asked to help the Empress write the laws.

Mona: Catherine the Great wasn't the only enlightened absolutist of her day and she was far from the only one running into problems with it. We might take enlightened ideas for granted today, but they were a huge departure from what Europe had been like. Even

Catherine's Coup
Peter III becomes emperor
Empress Elizabeth dies
1762

Nakaz Published 1767
Catherine inoculated
Russo-Turkish War begins 1768
All Russian Legislative Commission

1745 — Catherine and Peter marry
1754 — Paul is born



Fellow Enlightened Absolutists ruling at the same time as Catherine. From left to right they are Joseph II of Austria, Frederick the Great of Prussia, Gustav III of Sweden, and Charles III of Spain. They all attempted broad reforms like Catherine. Their successes were mixed.

thinking about enlightened ideas was radical. Actually trying to implement them. . . Well, that was a very messy can of worms. The failure of the *Nakaz* was a pretty mild set back compared to the mess Joseph II of Austria found himself in.

Ted: That's ominous. What happened to him?

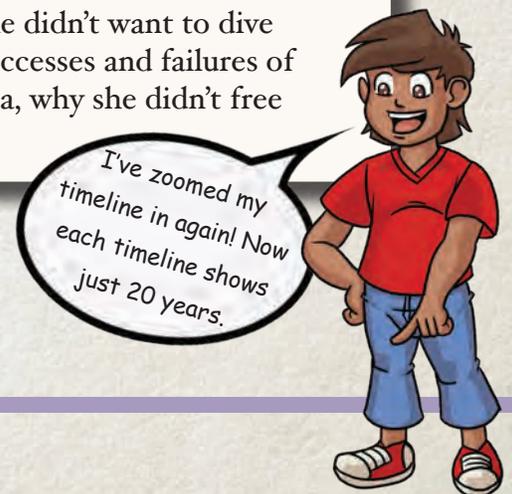
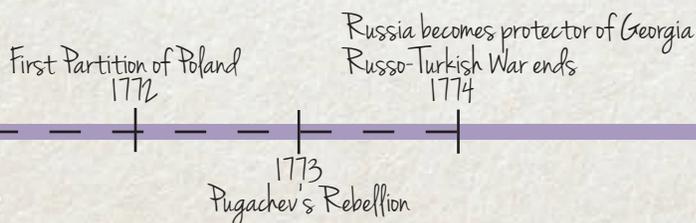
Mona: Joseph II was Holy Roman Emperor at the same time Catherine was ruling Russia. He tried to implement liberal, enlightened reforms with a lot of gusto! He limited the power of the clergy, took major steps to separate the church from the government, and seized many church lands to use for secular purposes. He limited the power of nobles in the government. He spread education among his people and supported the arts. He made German the official language of all his lands to make his country more unified and efficient. He outlawed the death penalty. Most importantly, he freed the serfs. Many peasants in Europe were still serfs, virtually enslaved to the nobles who owned the land they lived on. Joseph freed them and declared they had to be paid for their work.

Ted: All that sounds spectacular! Catherine should do that!

Mona: It was more like a spectacular failure! Every reform benefited one group of people but hurt another group. He made so many reforms, he made pretty much everyone angry. The reforms failed so thoroughly that Joseph himself asked for his gravestone to read, "Here lies Joseph II, who failed in all he undertook."

Ted: That is not a glowing recommendation. . .

Mona: Catherine was enlightened, but she was also cautious. She didn't want to dive head-first into failure like Joseph had. Next time, we'll see the successes and failures of her enlightened ideas, how Catherine expanded the size of Russia, why she didn't free the serfs, and what happened to Poland.



Chapter 38: Catherine Expands Russia

Mona: Today, we're going to start with the biggest success Catherine had as an enlightened absolutist. This success was a solution to the biggest problem Russia was facing: smallpox.

Ted: We've talked about smallpox before. It's a nasty disease and was responsible for the death of millions of Natives in the Americas.

Mona: Smallpox was a very deadly disease in Europe too. Catherine was worried about the dangers of smallpox for herself, her family, and her nation. Smallpox had killed quite a few European royals, plus millions of Russians. The fact that Catherine and her son Paul had never had the disease was a great source of worry. A new outbreak of smallpox could easily kill Catherine and Paul, leaving Russia with a succession crisis.

Ted: What could Catherine do about that though? She didn't have antibiotics or advanced medical knowledge or any other way to stop the disease.

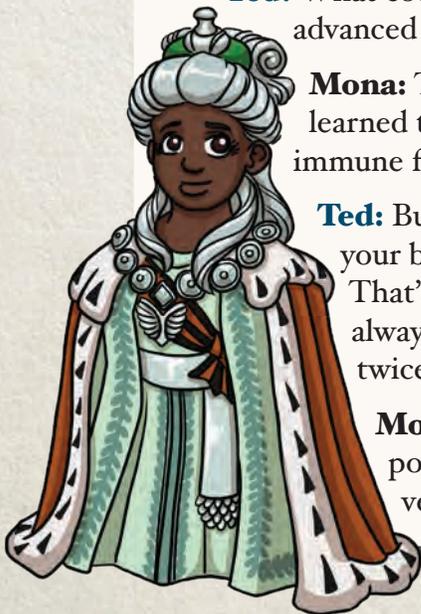
Mona: Thanks to the Scientific Revolution, all that was changing! Doctors had learned that once a person had smallpox, if they managed to survive, they were immune from ever getting it again.

Ted: But smallpox was difficult to survive! Plus, if you did manage to survive, your body was probably covered in scars and your hair would be super thin. That's actually why Queen Elizabeth I of England painted her face white and always wore a wig—smallpox! So as cool as it is that you can't get smallpox twice, no one wants it once.

Mona: Not all cases of smallpox are the same. Some strains of the smallpox virus aren't as bad. So what if you intentionally gave yourself a mild version of it?



*Portrait of Catherine the Great in the 1780s
by Johann Baptist von Lampi the Elder.*



Ted: That sounds insane! Intentionally giving yourself a deadly disease? Who would do that?

Mona: At the beginning of the 1700s, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was living in Istanbul as the wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul, she saw firsthand the Ottomans use a process called inoculation. During inoculation, Ottoman doctors would intentionally infect people with a mild strain of smallpox. It wasn't a risk-free process. Sometimes the person would develop a bad case of smallpox and die, but often the person became immune for life after a mild illness. Lady Montagu introduced inoculation to Europe, where it began to spread. When Catherine the Great was looking for a solution to the smallpox problem, she wrote to Dr. Thomas Dimsdale, the leading inoculation expert in Europe and invited him to Russia.

Ted: As an enlightened person, she would support science. Who got the first inoculation in Russia?

Mona: Catherine herself! People in her court thought she was crazy. Dr. Dimsdale wanted to test the process on a peasant first, to make sure it would work with Russian strains of smallpox. Catherine was insistent. She needed to be an example to her people. She must be the first. Catherine arranged for several high-speed carriages to be standing by, just in case the process went wrong and Dr. Dimsdale needed to hightail it out of Russia. Fortunately for everyone, it worked! Catherine was sick with a mild case of smallpox for less than two weeks. Then she was back to normal.

Ted: Wow! That was a really risky move on her part!

Mona: Catherine explained her choice by saying, "My objective was, through my example, to save from death the multitude of my subjects who, not knowing the value of this technique, and frightened of it, were left in danger." After that, Catherine had her son Paul successfully inoculated and then started programs to inoculate the common people of Russia. By 1800 more than two million Russians had been inoculated. In 1801, Russia



1808 political cartoon by Isaac Cruikshank depicting the celebrations of the success of vaccination. The caption at the bottom reads "Vaccination against Small Pox, or mercenary and merciless spreaders of Death and Devastation driven out of society!"

The three men on the left side are personifications of small pox. Their speech bubbles read "Curse on these vaccinators we shall all be starved, why Brother I have matter enough to kill 50." "And those would communicate it to 500 more." "Aye, aye. I always order them to be constantly out in the air in order to spread contagion."

In the center are victims of small pox.

The three men on the left are Thomas Dimsdale, Edward Jenner, and George Rose. Jenner is saying "Oh Brothers, Brothers, suffer the love of Gain to be overcome by compassion for your fellow creatures and do not delight to plunge whole families into deepest distress, by the untimely loss of their Nearest and Dearest relations."

switched to using the newer, safer technique called vaccination that was invented by the English doctor Edward Jenner. Slowly but surely smallpox was being eradicated in Russia and across the whole world.

Ted: Good for her! That is an enlightened success. Now I want to talk about some things that weren't enlightened but were successful. Catherine fought lots of wars!

Mona: At the beginning of her reign, Catherine arranged for a close ally of hers to become King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. She wanted him to be a puppet king, where she was basically ruling Poland but it didn't look like she was.

Ted: The Poles and Lithuanians revolted when it became clear this new king was only interested in helping Russia. Catherine sent in an army to put down the revolt and accidentally stumbled into another war. While chasing down some Polish fighters, the Russian army crossed into the Ottoman Empire.

Mona: So then, the Ottomans declared war on Russia. Catherine figured a war with the Ottomans was the perfect chance to carry on the dreams of Peter the Great.

Ted: Peter wanted warm water ports! You hear me? Warm! Water! Ports! He had succeeded in getting one on the Black Sea and one on the Baltic Sea. Now Catherine was going to get more! The Ottomans thought they could win easily since many of the conflicts were taking place on the sea. The Ottomans had a navy. Russia's navy was sitting up in the Baltic Sea, utterly useless. In a remarkably bold move, Catherine decided to sail her navy all the way around Europe, into the Mediterranean Sea, through the Bosphorus, and surprise attack the Ottomans from behind. It worked! The Russians were able to expand their territory along their southern border.

Mona: Meanwhile, Pugachev's Rebellion started, which means we need to talk about the serfs. Russia had A LOT of serfs! Way more than other parts of Europe. In fact, nine out of every ten Russians were serfs.

Ted: What exactly are serfs and how did Russia end up with so many?

Mona: Serfs are peasant farmers required to work for the nobility. Getting so many serfs was a long process. At first, Russia just had a large population of peasant farmers, like most of Europe in the Middle Ages. Ivan the Great limited when and how serfs were allowed to move to new land. Other laws limited what rights serfs had. Peter the Great bound serfs to the land they lived on, meaning they weren't allowed to move. They were required to farm the land they lived on without pay. They weren't allowed to leave their land without the landowner's permission. Landowners were also in charge of the safety, welfare, and discipline of the serfs on their land, which means the landowners could treat the serfs however they pleased.

Ted: So they were slaves. 90% of the country was enslaved. That's mind-boggling! As enlightened as Catherine says she was, she should do something about that!

Mona: She thought about it. But she was so busy doing all these other things at the beginning of her reign, she hadn't decided what to do about the serfs before Pugachev's Rebellion started.



“The Court of Pugachev” by Vasily Perov in 1875 depicting the chaos of Pugachev’s Rebellion.



Ted: Right, the rebellion. How did that start?

Mona: Yemelyan Pugachev was a disgruntled former lieutenant of the Russian army living in the middle of the Ural Mountains. He convinced a large group of Coassks (an often persecuted minority in Russia), a whole bunch of serfs, and the Old Believers (people who didn’t support newer reforms within the Russian Orthodox Church) that he was actually Peter III. He claimed to have escaped assassination by his cruel wife. Now he was going to reestablish the true Russian government.

Ted: It is crazy the things people could get away with before the days of photographs and television! How were these people supposed to know he wasn’t Peter III? They’d never seen Peter.

Mona: Pugachev was offering freedom for the serfs, freedom of religion, and freedom from taxes.

Ted: That is a pretty sweet deal!

Mona: A lot of people liked the sound of that deal! They crowned him Tzar of Russia and set up their own little country.

Ted: Which was not ok with Catherine! She sent some people to deal with what she thought was a small rebellion. When the commander of the force was beheaded, Catherine realized this was a much more serious problem than she thought.

Mona: The rebellion grew quickly. As soon as Catherine finished up her war with the Ottomans, she sent those soldiers straight to the Urals to deal with this problem. The conflict was exceptionally bloody. In the end, Catherine won but her thoughts of freeing the serfs died with that rebellion. From there on out, she’s a pretty run-of-the-mill absolutist. The Enlightenment was just some nice ideas, not something practical.

Ted: The last big thing we need to talk about is how Catherine made Russia bigger. As if it weren’t big enough! The war she fought with the Ottomans gave her control of new ports along the Black Sea. Those ports were important for both trade and defense.

Mona: The peace treaty with the Ottoman’s declared that Crimea, a peninsula on the Black Sea, was independent from the Ottoman Empire.

Ted: That was some short-lived freedom because in 1783, while everyone else was distracted with other wars, Catherine decided to just scoop Crimea into the Russian Empire. She didn’t fight a war to capture Crimea. She just declared, “Crimea is part of Russia!” Crimea

had been at war for so long, they were in no position to resist. This event is called the Annexation of Crimea—and it's at the root of some hot button political issues today.

Mona: That wasn't the only thing Catherine did that's still causing issues today. Under Catherine, Russia became the official protector of the Kingdom of Georgia. Georgia was a small Christian kingdom in the Caucasus Mountains. It was an essential spot for travel between the Middle East and Russia. The only problem with Catherine becoming the protector of Georgia is that Russia and Georgia didn't border each other. To ensure she could properly protect Georgia, Catherine built a road through the Ottoman Empire. That part of the Ottoman Empire was inhabited by Chechens. That was the beginning of conflicts between Russia and Chechnya that are still going on today.

Ted: Catherine didn't just expand south. She also expanded east. She made great advances in developing the settlements in Siberia and even pushed so far east she began colonizing Alaska! In Alaska, Russian merchants found many different soft, luxury furs like sea otter, beaver, wolf, fox, muskrat, and mink. The Russians realized Alaska was a positive goldmine of furs and began preparing for more and more trade and colonization efforts.

Mona: We'll wrap back around in a later snapshot to see what Russia's colonization of Alaska was like, but now we need to talk about what happened to Poland.

Ted: Ah yes, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth used to be one of the largest and most populous countries in Europe.

Mona: Things have been getting steadily worse for the Commonwealth for some time.

Ted: Catherine did get a puppet king elected, so she's been kind of running Poland for a while.

Mona: "Kind of" being the keyword. The Commonwealth kept rebelling and being uncooperative with Catherine's plans.



Ted: Catherine wasn't the only one getting annoyed with Poland. Let's return to our old friend, Frederick the Great of Prussia. Frederick had a problem. Prussia wasn't one continuous territory. There was the main bit over in the Holy Roman Empire.

Map published in 1792 showing the full extent of the Russian Empire, including the colonization of the Aleutian and Kodiak Islands in Alaska.

Annexation of Crimea
1783

Russo-Turkish War begins
1787



1770 pre-partition

First Partition 1772, also shows
Annexation of Crimea.

Second Partition 1792

Third Partition 1795

Then there was another bit that was completely surrounded by Poland. It would really help Frederick out if he could connect the two pieces of his country. After the Seven Years' War, he was in no position to just declare war on the Commonwealth to get that land. So he hatched a plan! He called up his two former enemies, Russia and Austria and pretty much said, 'Hey, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is right in the middle of our three awesome countries. We all find it a bit annoying. How about we all just take a bit of it? Austria, you can have this nice big bit right next to you. Russia, you can take a big chunk too. I'll just take this little bitty part over here. Sound good?' Austria and Russia agreed. The three countries used their influence to get puppet politicians in the Polish Sejm to legally approve the partition in 1772. That is how the Partition of Poland began.

Mona: Prussia and Russia repeated that process in 1790, making Poland even smaller.

Ted: Then in 1795, the three hungry countries said, 'Why does Poland even exist anyway?' and the rest of Poland got eaten up.

Mona: Poland and Lithuania won't reappear on the map again until after World War I.

Ted: That about wraps up Catherine's reign. She supported the arts, sciences, and education throughout her reign, spread Enlightenment ideas, didn't free the serfs, and significantly expanded the size of Russia. Most importantly, Catherine cemented Russia's status as a true European powerhouse.

Mona: In many ways, she completed Peter the Great's lifelong dreams.

Ted: Where to next?

Mona: How about the Pacific?

Want to know more?

Try researching the following topics:

- Grigory and Alexei Orlov
- Grigory Potimkin
- History of Crimea and Chechnya
- Edward Jenner and history of vaccination
- Siberian fur trade
- Bolshoi Theater
- Smolny Institute

Russo-Turkish War ends
1792

1793
Second Partition of Poland

Third Partition of Poland
1795

1796
Catherine the Great dies

Section 20: Life in the Pacific



Chapter 39: Captain Cook Searches for Fabled Lands



Ted: Today, we're talking about one of the most famous explorers of all time! Captain James Kirk! Oops, I mean Captain James Cook.

Mona: Captain James Cook is the inspiration behind the *Star Trek* character Captain James T. Kirk, so it's an understandable mistake.

Ted: Captain Kirk's motto was "To boldly go where no man has gone before," and Captain Cook said his goal in life was to go "as far as I think it is possible for a man to go." Let's get into what he did!

Mona: Long before he was a captain, Cook made a name for himself in the British Royal Navy with his impressive cartography skills. It was his map of Quebec that allowed Admiral James Wolfe to scale the cliffs before the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.

Ted: After that, he made a map of the coast of Newfoundland that was so accurate it was in use for over two hundred years. And have you seen Newfoundland's coast? That is not an easy thing to map!

Mona: Cook had proved himself a very able navigator and cartographer. That means when the Royal Society, an elite scientific group in London, needed someone to lead an expedition to the Pacific, Cook was the obvious choice.

Ted: Cook set off in the HMS *Endeavor*. The Royal Society gave Cook two missions. Mission 1: Go check out the transit of Venus.

Mona: The Royal Society knew Venus was going to pass in front of the sun in 1769. They wanted to have astronomers in



Portrait of Captain James Cook in 1776 by Nathaniel Dance-Holland.

several spots across the globe to observe the event. They hoped that by having data from different locations, it would allow them to calculate the distance between the earth and the sun more accurately.

Ted: Mission 2: Don't die of scurvy.

Mona: What is scurvy?

Ted: Scurvy is a disease. It was why being a sailor in those days was so incredibly terrible. Like the absolute worst! Now, sailors had lots of bad conditions to put up with like cramped spaces, rat infestations, strict rationing of food and water, tropical diseases—don't even get me started on the bathroom situation—but scurvy was the worst problem of all! When Ferdinand Magellan circumnavigated the globe, he lost 80% of his crew, most of them to scurvy.

Mona: Did only sailors get scurvy?

Ted: Non-sailors would sometimes get scurvy, but it was only on long ocean voyages that scurvy would reach catastrophic levels. Scurvy is a nasty disease. It causes difficulty breathing, ulcers, rotting flesh and teeth, seized up limbs, extreme emotional reactions, and irrational behavior.

Mona: That sounds like a horrid disease. . . What causes scurvy?

Ted: We know today that scurvy is caused by vitamin deficiencies, especially a lack of B and C vitamins, but they didn't know that at the time of Cook's voyage. All doctors knew was that if a sailor made it to land and ate the right foods, he could recover. Eating fruits and certain vegetables helped people recover from scurvy. Cook's ships were part of a diet experiment to try to prevent scurvy. At the end of Cook's first voyage, none of his sailors had died of scurvy, which was a huge success! Though that actually turned out to be more luck than science.

Mona: So Cook sails to the other side of the world just to see the transit of Venus and not to die of scurvy?

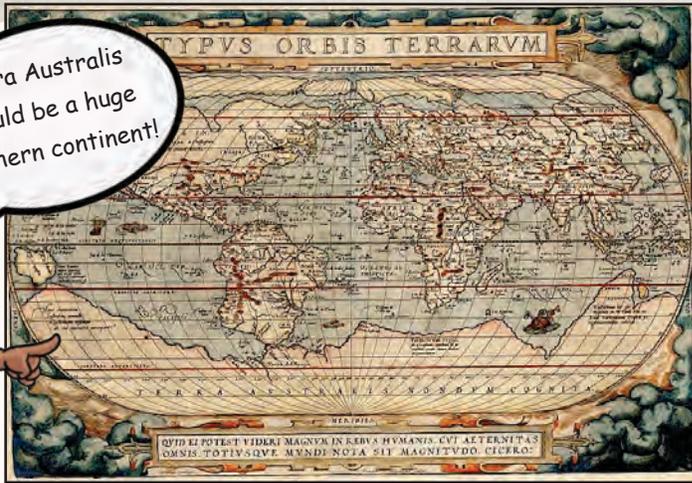
Ted: Officially, yes, but after the transit of Venus, Cook opened an envelope that had a secret mission. (How cool is that??) His secret mission was to find the fabled continent of Terra Australis.

Mona: You mean, Australia? Because in addition to the Australian Aboriginals, several Austronesian explorers, and probably some other Asian ships, the Dutch found Australia in 1642. Except they called it New Holland, not Australia.

Ted: But that's not what Cook was looking for. There was a theory that had been popular since ancient history that said the earth should be balanced. Scientists thought there should be equal amounts of land in the northern and southern hemispheres because that would be cool. Like there's Europe and some of Africa north of the equator and then some more of Africa south of the equator, so it's sort of balanced. The theory held true with the Americas. North America and South America sort of balance each other out.

Mona: I mean, sort of. In both those examples, there's still a lot more land north of the equator. And what about Asia?

Terra Australis should be a huge southern continent!



Ted: Exactly! What about Asia? There must be a massive Asia-sized continent lurking somewhere in the Pacific Ocean to balance everything out! The Europeans had already named this continent Terra Australis—even though they'd never seen it and had no proof of its existence.

Mona: If you say so. . . and Cook is supposed to find this missing continent?

Ted: That's right! This is where Cook's voyages start to really matter to history. He sets out to map the Pacific! He circumnavigated New Zealand and created a pretty darn good map of it in the process. The circumnavigation was important because it proved New Zealand wasn't Terra Australis.

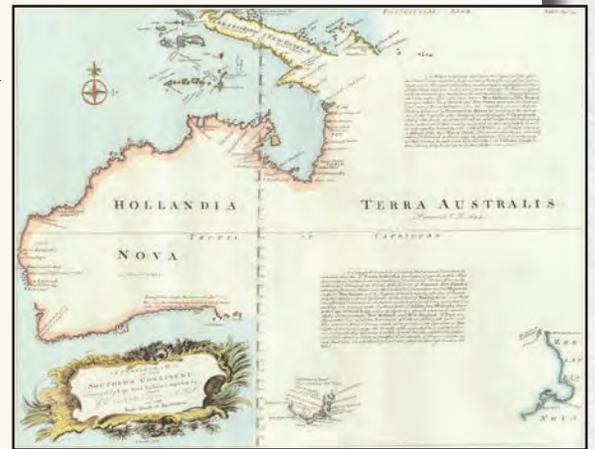
Mona: That was a big deal because if you take a look at this 1744 map, you can see there was a lot of the Pacific Europeans had never sailed to and had no idea about.

Ted: After circumnavigating New Zealand, Cook then turned west and charted the eastern coast of Australia.

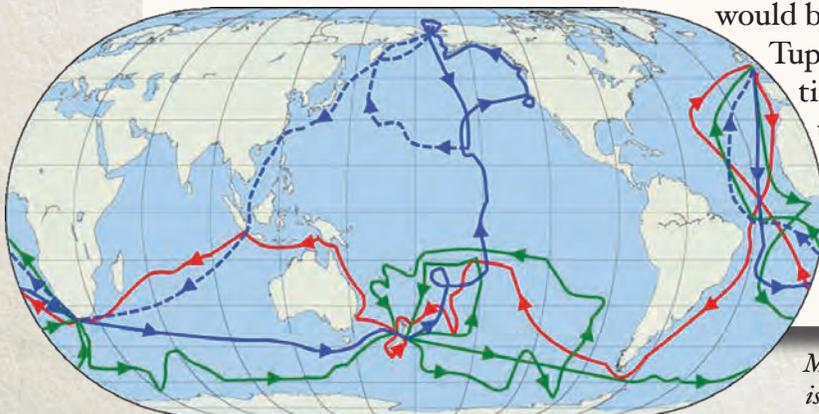
Mona: Botany Bay was the first place Cook made landfall in Australia. There he met the Gweagal people. Cook stole some of their spears and shields, which led to violence. This was Great Britain's first interaction with people in Australia, and it set a bad tone for future interactions. Hey, I have a question for you, Ted. Looking at this map of Cook's voyage, he's doing an excellent job of sailing directly to his destinations. There's not a lot of meandering about. Seeing as he didn't have a map, how'd he manage that?

Ted: While at their first stop in Tahiti, the ship's botanist, Joseph Banks, met a Tahitian man named Tupaia. Tupaia was a highly respected navigator and spiritual leader. Banks was immediately impressed with Tupaia's scientific knowledge, navigational skills, and map-making abilities. Banks managed to convince both Tupaia and Cook that Tupaia would be a valuable addition to their voyage.

Tupaia used his traditional Polynesian navigational skills to guide the Endeavor directly to each location they were looking for. He explained his traditional wayfinding techniques in a way that Cook and his men could follow with their European instruments. In most places, Tupaia was



1744 map showing large uncharted regions of the Pacific Ocean.



Map showing Cook's three voyages. The first voyage in 1768–1771 is shown in red. The second voyage in 1772–1775 is shown in green. The third voyage in 1776–1779 is shown in blue.

Drawing by Tupaia showing a Maori man and Joseph Banks trading a crayfish and piece of cloth.



warmly received by the native people. This meant the voyage was mostly peaceful. Compared to the other explorers of his day, Cook was quite open-minded which helped keep the peace, but there were a few violent encounters and cultural misunderstandings.

Mona: Given the time period, it could have been a lot worse.

Ted: Unfortunately, Tupaia got sick and died while the Endeavor was stopped at Batavia in modern Jakarta. When Cook got home to England, he went down in the history books as a hero. He circumnavigated the globe and made science even trendier than it already was! The British were in love with the idea of going out and finding the unknown. Cook proved just how much the British didn't know, and they were hungry for more!

Mona: So hungry, Cook was soon sent out on a second expedition.

Ted: Even though Cook's first maps proved Australia was continental in size, the Royal Society was still sure there was another, even bigger, southern continent. They sent Cook out to find it! This time he was aided by the Tahitian navigator Omai.

Mona: Except this time, Cook really was just wandering around.

Ted: In his defense, it's hard to find signs of a continent that doesn't exist. Cook became the first known navigator to cross the Antarctic Circle. He almost discovered Antarctica, but he turned back just a little bit too soon. Cook's failure to find Terra Australis finally convinced people that maybe it didn't exist.

Mona: While in the Pacific, Cook stopped off at quite a few islands such as Rapa Nui, Tonga, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, and Vanuatu. Cook gave a bunch of Pacific islands English names, many of which are no longer used.

Ted: When Cook got back to England for the second time, he became incredibly popular and was promoted to the rank of Captain. Now we can officially call him Captain Cook!

Mona: The Royal Navy offered Cook the chance to retire—two circumnavigations would be enough for most people—but Cook wasn't ready to call it quits. He soon volunteered to go and find the Northwest Passage.

Ted: Ah, the supposed passage around North America that Europeans had been trying to find for centuries! Cook set out again, this time on the HMS *Resolution*. First, he dropped Omai off in Tahiti, then he sailed north. He'd been told by both Tupaia and Omai there was a group of islands to the north called Hawaii. When he got there, he decided to name Hawaii the Sandwich Islands because the Earl of Sandwich was in charge of the British Royal Navy.

Mona: How did things go for Cook as the first European in Hawaii?

Ted: Pretty well. The Hawaiians welcomed Cook. Cook did a little exploring, then he left to start looking for the Northwest Passage. He charted the Pacific Northwest and southern Alaska.

Mona: While in the Northwest, Cook spent over a month docked in Nootka Sound. There he met the Mowachaht people who were led by the powerful ruler Maquinna. The Mowachaht were experienced traders who drove a hard bargain. Cook was annoyed he had to trade much more valuable items with the Mowachaht than he'd had to trade elsewhere.

Ted: What'd the Mowachaht have to offer that was so valuable?

Mona: Sea otter pelts! Sea otter pelts are softer and lusher than beaver pelts and completely waterproof.

Ted: Wow! We've already seen the wars people will fight over beaver pelts! In a few years, one of Cook's officers, George Vancouver, will return and explore the area in more detail. After poking around for a while, Cook proved there was no Northwest Passage. He even went up and explored in the Bering Strait, but ice blocked him from going any further.

Mona: Cook deserves credit not only for what he did discover but also for what he didn't find. Thanks to Cook, Europeans could stop looking for Terra Australis and the Northwest Passage.

Ted: Now that the Northwest Passage was debunked, Cook just needed to make it home again. That proved to be unfortunately complicated. Cook's ships needed to stop and resupply before they could make it back to England, so he headed back to Hawaii where things went from bad to worse. The peaceful days of Cook's voyages were at an end.

Mona: What happened?

Ted: Cook's crew needed firewood, so Cook decided to steal the fence around a graveyard and temple.

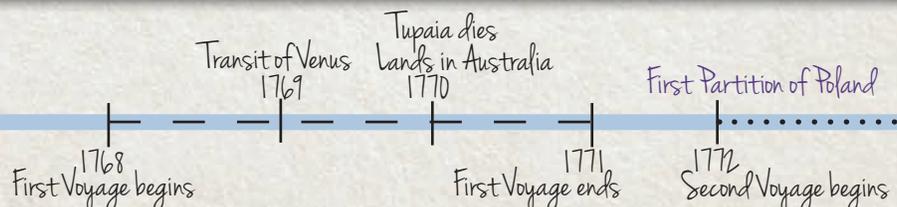
Mona: Yeah, that's going to cause problems.

Ted: Cook tried to smooth things over by—I kid you not—offering to give the Hawaiians two steel hatchets. “Hi, I desecrated your sacred land, would you like a hatchet? How about two?” Now in Cook's defense, Cook may have been developing scurvy at this point. One of the symptoms of scurvy is irrational behavior. These actions were out of character for him. It's possible he was losing his grip on reality.

Mona: How did the Hawaiians respond?

Ted: Super-duper nicely all things considered! They didn't retaliate like they could have. They just hurried the Europeans along in their repairs and resupply and sent them on their way. This story could have had a happy ending. But then a storm damaged the mast of the HMS *Resolution* and Cook was forced to turn back to Hawaii.

Mona: How'd the Hawaiians feel about their quick return?





Painting by John Cleveley the Younger who traveled with Cook showing the death of Captain Cook in Hawaii.

Ted: According to crew member John Ledyard, “It was also equally evident from the looks of the natives as well as every other appearance that our friendship was at an end, and that we had nothing to do but to hasten our departure to some different island where our vices were not known, and where our intrinsic virtues might gain us another short space of being wondered at.”

Mona: So this is going to end badly.

Ted: Yep! One of the European lifeboats was stolen shortly after they redocked in Hawaii. Cook decided to deal with the theft by kidnapping Kalani‘ōpu‘u-a-Kaiamamao, the ruler of this part of Hawaii. It’s not super clear what happened next. Somehow in the middle of trying to escort Kalani‘ōpu‘u onto the ship, a fight broke out. Some accounts say Cook shot first. Others say the violence began when a Hawaiian seized Cook. Whatever happened, the end result was that Cook was killed as well as four other British sailors and an unknown number of Hawaiians.

Mona: There’s another version of events, written by one of Cook’s crew members, that says the Hawaiians mistook Cook for the god Lono and killed him as part of a ritual sacrifice. That’s actually the most common story you’ll hear about what happened to Cook, but it’s got some problems. The description of Hawaiian religion is quite jumbled and doesn’t match other records. Plus, the whole “they mistook him as a god” thing looks a lot like European propaganda. So, treat that story with a grain of salt.

Ted: Even though Cook died in a bizarre fight in Hawaii, he left behind a considerable mark on the world.

Mona: The maps he made and the knowledge he brought back to Europe had a huge impact on future colonization and how Europeans thought about the world.

Ted: Cook made being an explorer, an adventurer, and a scientist incredibly popular in England. Those were pretty much the celebrity careers of his day. Charles Darwin and David Livingstone are two very influential men who will follow in those footsteps.

Mona: We need to talk about some of these places Cook went, like Australia, New Zealand and—

Ted: Hawaii!! Let’s start with Hawaii! Because that means I get to talk about King Kamehameha!



Chapter 40: King Kamehameha Unites Hawaii



Ted: Welcome to Hawaii! It might be a world-famous vacation spot today but for a lot of history, no one knew it existed.

Mona: Hawaii was one of the last places settled by humans. Polynesian navigators discovered and began settling Hawaii around 400 CE.

Ted: It wasn't until Captain Cook arrived that non-Polynesians discovered Hawaii.

Mona: Hawaii is made up of five major islands, Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Maui, and Hawaii, plus some smaller islands.

Ted: So there's an island named Hawaii, but all the islands together are also called Hawaii?

Mona: That's right. To avoid confusion, let's call the island of Hawaii by its nickname, the Big Island.

Ted: Got it. As you might guess, those islands weren't all united. Each island was its own nation and some islands, like the Big Island, were divided into multiple nations. There were often wars on and between islands for control. The leader of each Hawaiian nation was called an ali'i, which is similar to the title "king."

Mona: Hawaiians were polytheistic. Daily life in Hawaii was governed by a system of spiritual rules called kapu. Kapu declared what people were and weren't allowed to do. Kapu covered everything, including eating, housing, gender roles, work, politics, and religion. For example, kapu banned war and unnecessary work four months out of the year, forbade women from eating certain foods, and declared a commoner's shadow could not touch the ali'i's house.



*Top, map of the Hawaiian Islands.
Bottom, satellite image of Hawaiian Islands.*

Ted: Seems a bit excessive. Why'd they have so many rules?

Mona: Many Polynesian cultures believe in a concept called mana. Mana is a supernatural power given by the gods. Certain people, places, and objects have a lot of mana. The ali'i and his family have the most mana. The kapu system was designed to protect mana. The actions forbidden by kapu were things that could steal mana.

Ted: So people, places, and things can have this supernatural power from the gods, but that power can be stolen? And kapu tried to stop that? I can see why the rules were so strict then. Speaking of mana, we need to move along to the main topic for today—a man who had a lot of mana—Kamehameha!

Mona: Kamehameha was born a prince on the Big Island.

Ted: The name Kamehameha means “the lonely one” because Kamehameha was raised in hiding. A bright star appeared in the sky shortly before his birth, and priests prophesied the star meant a new leader was about to be born who would defeat the rival ali'is and unite Hawaii.

Mona: We're not actually sure when Kamehameha was born, but Haley's Comet appeared over Hawaii in 1758 so that may have been the bright star prophesying his birth.

Ted: The current ali'i, King Alapai, didn't like the sound of a new conquering king and ordered the baby prince to be killed. Instead, the baby was smuggled away and raised away from the palace. When he came of age, he took the name Kamehameha because of his lonely childhood. After Alapai died, Kamehameha's uncle, Kalani'opu'u, took the throne, and Kamehameha was invited back to court.

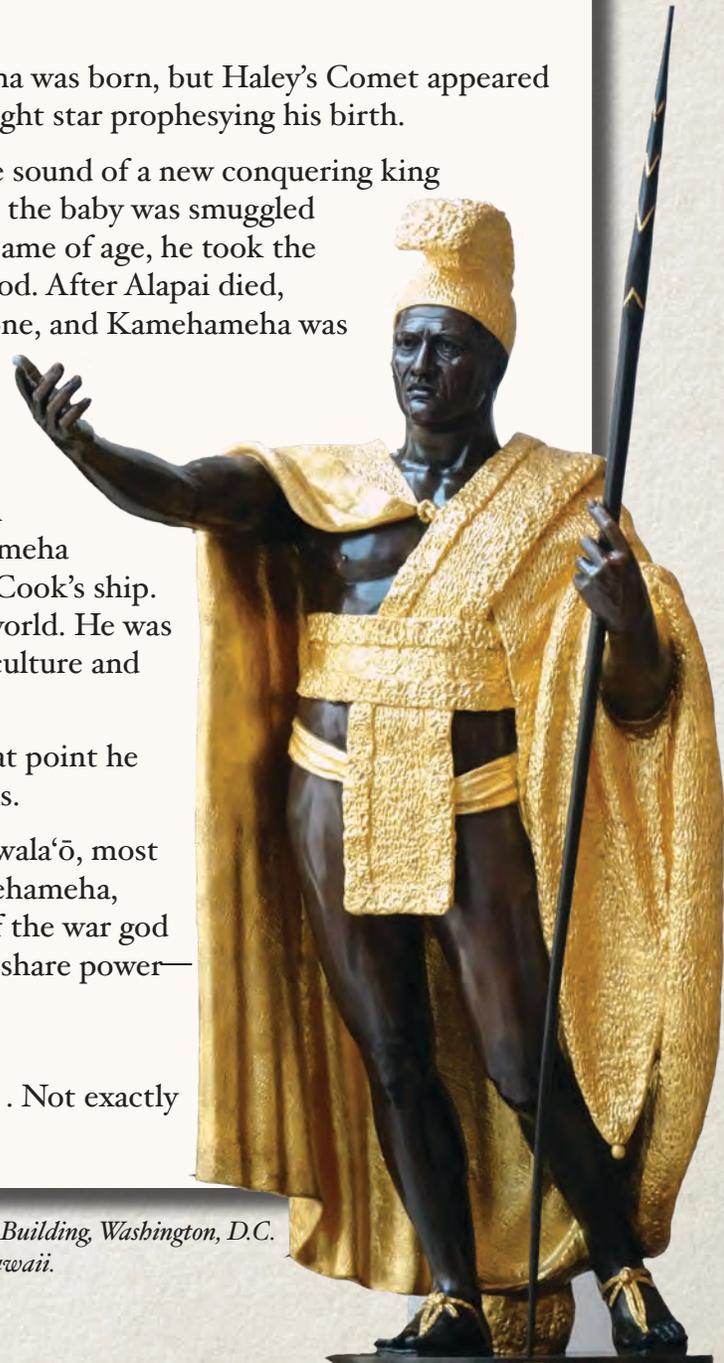
Mona: That's the same Kalani'opu'u that Captain Cook tried to kidnap.

Ted: That means that Kamehameha met Captain Cook. On Cook's earlier, friendlier visit, Kamehameha personally talked with Captain Cook and toured Cook's ship. Kamehameha was very intrigued by the outside world. He was interested in setting up trade routes and sharing culture and technology.

Mona: Kamehameha wasn't the ali'i yet, so at that point he was just getting ideas and exploring future options.

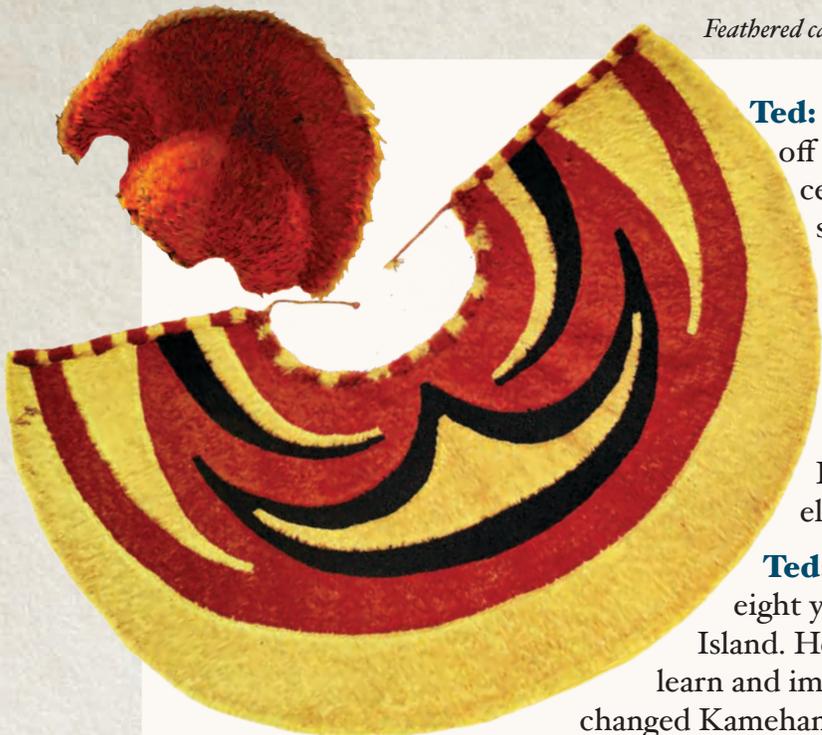
Ted: When Kalani'opu'u died, he left his son, Kīwala'ō, most of his kingdom, but he also left his nephew, Kamehameha, control of one small province and guardianship of the war god Ku. The cousins were supposed to cooperate and share power—but that sort of plan rarely works.

Mona: Let's not forget about that prophecy that Kamehameha was destined to kill the rival ali'is. . . Not exactly the person you want to share power with.



*Statue of Kamehameha in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.
There are identical statues in several locations in Hawaii.*

Feathered cape and helmet worn by Hawaiian royalty.



Ted: An attack on Kamehameha's soldiers set off a war. Kamehameha was strong and an exceptionally skilled warrior. He was also over seven feet tall. He was filled with mana! He used his mana to defeat his enemies in battle, allowing him to seize their mana as his own. He was unstoppable!

Mona: Until he wasn't. Kamehameha quickly gained control of half of the Big Island, but capturing the rest proved elusive.

Ted: He didn't give up. Kamehameha spent eight years fighting with rival ali'i on the Big Island. He used all his losses as opportunities to learn and improve. Then the arrival of Americans changed Kamehameha's options.

Mona: In 1790, the American trading ship the *Elenora* arrived in Hawaii. While in Hawaii, the Americans had several misunderstandings with the Hawaiians and a watchman from the *Elenora* was killed.

Ted: As vengeance, the captain, Simon Metcalfe, set a trap. He sailed to the town of Olowalu and rang the ship's bell, the signal the ship was there to trade. The people of Olowalu climbed into their canoes and sailed to the *Elenora*. As they approached, Metcalfe opened the cannon ports and began firing, killing over a hundred men, women, and children.

Mona: It was a despicable act of violence. A few weeks later, the *Fair American*, the smaller partner of the *Elenora*, arrived in Hawaii. Hawaiians lay in wait for the ship and easily captured it. The *Fair American* only had a crew of five men: four were killed, and one was taken captive, Isaac Davis.

Ted: There was another captive taken after the Olowalu Massacre: John Young. The two prisoners were soon brought to the court of King Kamehameha. King Kamehameha made them an offer they couldn't refuse. If Davis and Young taught him how to build Western-style ships and got him guns and gunpowder, Kamehameha would make them ali'i and adopt them into his family. If not, he would kill them.

Mona: Unsurprisingly, Davis and Young agreed!

Ted: Now, with cannons and guns on his side, Kamehameha was truly ready to unite Hawaii. While the Ali'i of Maui was visiting another island, Kamehameha invaded. It was a long and horrifically bloody battle that only ended when Davis and Young showed up with cannons. Kamehameha succeeded in seizing Maui, only to learn a rival ali'i had

1779 — Cook dies in Hawaii

Rise of Kamehameha

Olowalu Massacre
1789

1782
Kalani'opu'u's dies

Fair American captured

begun attacking his territory on the Big Island while he was gone. Kamehameha had to return home immediately. He engaged in a series of bloody battles, with no clear victory. Finally, both sides decided to retreat and regroup. Then things took a surprising turn. As the rebel army marched across the caldera of a volcano, the volcano erupted, killing most of the army. After that, it wasn't too difficult for Kamehameha to finally seize control of all of the Big Island. In 1795, Kamehameha returned to Maui with over 900 war canoes and succeeded in conquering the island. He then moved on and captured O'ahu. By mid-1795, Kamehameha controlled all of Hawaii except Kaua'i. Now he needed to set about ruling the mostly-united Hawaii.

Mona: Hawaii had been at war for a long time. There was a lot of rebuilding to do. Kamehameha reformed the laws, rebuilt roads, bridges, and farms, and generally worked to get daily life back on track.

Ted: It was a lot like Toyotomi Hideyoshi reforming Japan near the end of the Japanese Warring States Period.

Mona: One law Kamehameha is famous for passing is the Law of the Splintered Paddle.



Ted: That law has an interesting story behind it! During a battle when Kamehameha was younger, he tried to attack two fishermen who weren't part of the battle. They were simply helping a man and a child escape. Kamehameha got his foot stuck in a rock and tripped. The fishermen grabbed a paddle and hit Kamehameha over the head, knocking him out. Then they ran away.

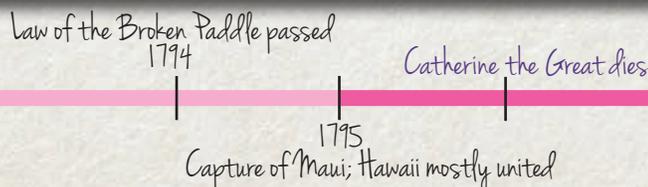
Mona: A commoner touching an ali'i was against kapu, so the fishermen were the ones who had broken the law. After uniting most of Hawaii, Kamehameha tracked down the two fishermen and had them brought to him.

Ted: The fishermen were quite sure they were going to be killed, but when they got there, Kamehameha apologized! He said he had no reason for attacking them, so the blame should lay with him. That's when he passed the Law of the Splintered Paddle. He said all people should have the right to sit by the side of the road in safety. That means you can't attack random people, even during a battle.

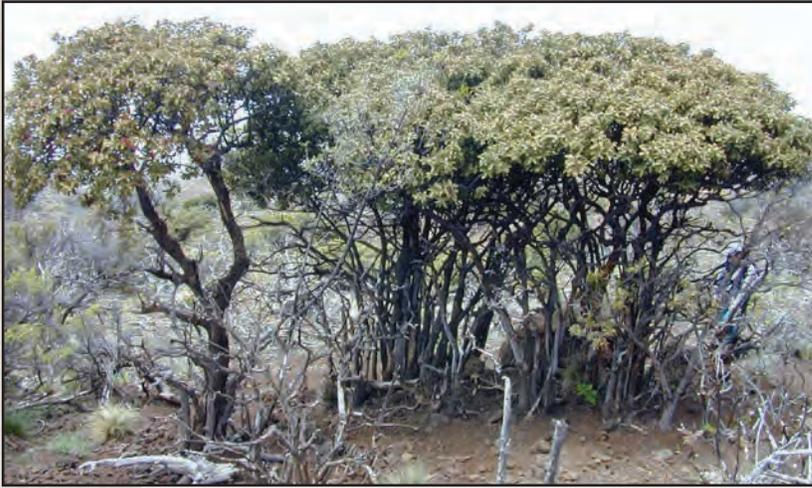
Mona: The Law of the Splintered Paddle is still law in Hawaii today. It set an important standard for how civilians and non-combatants should be treated during war and has been used as a model for human rights laws all over the world.

Ted: That's quite impressive. As Kamehameha met and talked with more and more European merchants and diplomats, he became enchanted with European ideas about kingship. He greatly admired King George III of Great Britain. Kamehameha incorporated many European ideas into the way he behaved as ali'i.

Mona: But Kamehameha didn't abandon traditional Hawaiian beliefs and customs. He maintained the kapu system and Hawaiian religion. In fact, Kamehameha was so devout that the British explorer George Vancouver recommended Britain NOT send Christian missionaries to Hawaii.



Kingdom of Hawaii



Sandalwood trees in Polipoli, Maui in the Hawaiian Islands.

Ted: That is definitely rare in the Age of Colonization!

Mona: Hawaii had a pretty close brush with colonization during Kamehameha's reign. A Russian fur trader purchased land and built a fort in Hawaii, which he planned to use as a base for colonizing Hawaii. When Kamehameha heard about it, he kicked the Russians out and seized control of the fort. Fortunately for Kamehameha, that captain hadn't actually

been given permission from the Russian government to colonize Hawaii, so that was the end of the conflict. Kamehameha saw just how careful he had to be about who he allowed to trade and own land in Hawaii.

Ted: Despite that, Kamehameha really liked foreigners! Foreign technology, like guns, allowed Kamehameha to finally unite Hawaii and revolutionized daily life.

Mona: Ever since Cook put Hawaii on European maps, more and more merchants were stopping in Hawaii because Hawaii had something very rare and in very high demand: sandalwood!

Ted: Why was sandalwood so valuable?

Mona: Sandalwood is a heavy wood with a yellowish color and a highly aromatic scent that lasts for decades.

Ted: So it's a pretty, good-smelling wood. Cool. Why were foreign merchants so interested in it?

Mona: Sandalwood was highly prized, especially in China. Sandalwood was so rare, it was the most expensive wood in the world. Chinese merchants were ecstatic about trading for it.

Ted: China is still isolationist at this point. Getting China to trade at all was hard.

Mona: Europeans REALLY wanted to trade with China. China had long been famous for its porcelain and silk, but Europeans had been finding other sources for those things since China refused to trade. However, China had a near-monopoly on the tea trade and Europe—especially Great Britain—had become addicted to tea.

Ted: So, sandalwood from Hawaii became the solution to the tea trade problem?

Mona: That's right. Kamehameha encouraged foreign merchants to come to Hawaii so he could take advantage of the trade boom. Honolulu Harbor was a large, natural port that was soon bustling with international trade.

Portrait of Liholiho, later known as King Kamehameha II, in 1824 by John Hayter.

Ted: Kamehameha encouraged his people to build docks and learn how to repair Western ships so they could charge docking and repair fees to the many merchant ships coming to Hawaii.

Mona: Hawaiians were making so much money selling sandalwood that sandalwood trees were in danger of becoming extinct. Kamehameha recognized this danger and introduced a new kapu protecting young sandalwood trees. Kamehameha walked a fine line between opening his country up to international trade and preserving its culture, safety, traditions, and environment.

Ted: In 1810, the ali'i of Kaua'i peacefully submitted to Kamehameha's rule, completing the unification of Hawaii.

Mona: Kamehameha lived into his 80s and died in 1819. He passed the kingdom to his son Liholiho, who then took the name Kamehameha II. One of Kamehameha's favorite wives, Ka'ahumanu, was appointed as Queen Regent and ruled alongside Liholiho. Under the new king, Hawaiian life soon changed dramatically. Liholiho shared a meal with Queen Ka'ahumanu, an action that was strictly forbidden by kapu. Over the next several weeks in an event called the 'Ai Noa, the royal family intentionally broke many other kapu. When there was no retribution from the gods for their clear disregard for kapu, the whole system disintegrated. The entire Hawaiian religion was dismantled along with it. Just a few months later, the first Christian missionaries arrived from the United States. The westernization of Hawaii was now fully underway.

Ted: That's a sad note to end on. Let's go see how things turned out in Australia and New Zealand.

Mona: But there was kind of a huge event that happened in the middle of all this we really need to talk about. You know, the American Revolutionary War. . .

Ted: But, but Australia. . .

Mona: We'll get there soon, but surely you don't want to miss out on George Washington!



Want to know more?

Try researching the following topics:

- British Royal Society
- George Vancouver's expeditions
- British and French colonialism in the Pacific
- Hawaiian featherwork, kākau, hula, and other traditional Hawaiian artforms
- Hawaiian Constitution of 1840
- Colonialism, land ownership, and plantations in Hawaii in the 1800s

Kingdom of Hawaii

Kamehameha dies; Liholiho crowned
'Ai Noa
1819

1817
Russian Fort Elizabeth built on Kaua'i



Culture Corner

He'e Nalu



Arthur: Oh boy, am I excited to talk about Hawaiian culture today!

Lily: Hawaii is part of Polynesia. Cultures across Polynesia are similar, yet each island group has its own unique expression of culture.

Arthur: Dance is a big deal across all of Polynesia. Hawaii's most famous dance is the hula! There are many different types of hula, with certain styles for women and others for men. Traditional hula was danced to songs that were chanted. These songs could be religious, praise the ali'i, or just be for fun. The introduction of Western-style instruments, like the ukulele, significantly changed how hula was performed.

Lily: Tattoos are also common across Polynesia. Hawaii has its own tradition of tattooing. Like everything in Hawaiian culture, tattoos were governed by strict kapu. Some tattoo designs told personal or tribal history. Some showed membership or rank within a tribe. Other tattoos were simply beautiful.

Arthur: Many aspects of Polynesian culture revolve around the ocean, like sailing, fishing, and surfing. That's right! We're talking about the history of surfing!

Lily: Cultures in West Africa, Peru, and other parts of Polynesia all developed different styles of surfing, but surfing as we know it today started in Hawaii.

Arthur: Hawaii does have some of the best waves in the world!

Lily: We don't know when the first surfer hit the waves, but it was probably a few thousand years ago. That means surfing might be the oldest continuously practiced sport in history.

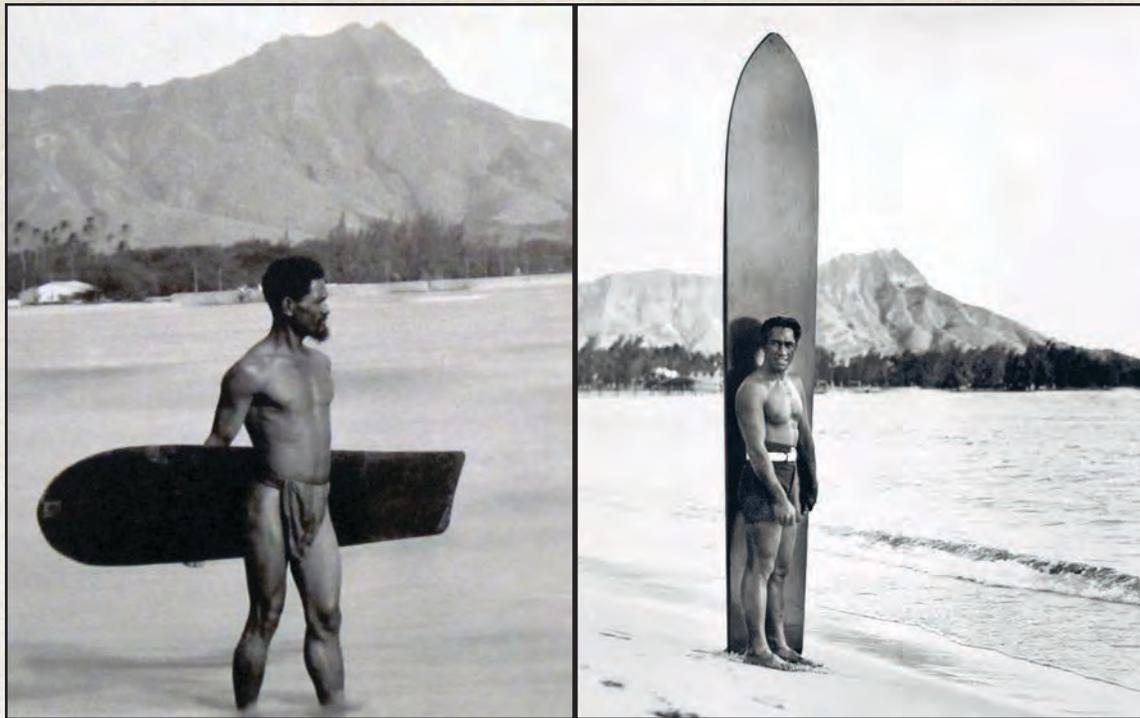
Arthur: In Hawaiian, surfing is called he'e nalu, which literally means "wave sliding."

Sounds fun, right? We don't know precisely how surfing got started, but it's likely Polynesian fishers in outrigger canoes discovered how fun it was to catch a wave. After that, someone must have decided to catch those waves with a single piece of wood instead of a whole canoe.



An 1819 drawing by Marie Joseph Alphonse Pellion who visited Hawaii. The drawing shows the Prime Minister of Hawaii, Kalanimoku, and his wife, Likelike. An olo board lies across the bottom of the drawing.





Far left, an unknown Hawaiian surfer around 1890 standing with a short board in front of Diamond Head, near Honolulu, Hawaii.

Left, Duke Kahanamoku in the 1920s standing in front of a longboard near Diamond Head. An olo board is significantly longer than this longboard.

Duke Kahanamoku was a major force in popularizing surfing, along with George Freeth. Duke was also an Olympic swimmer.

Lily: Today, we think of surfing as a sport and recreational activity, but for pre-contact

Hawaiians, it was so much more. He'e nalu was governed by kapu and could be part of both political and religious events. He'e nalu was also a way for Hawaiians to improve their social status.

Arthur: But he'e nalu was also a sport with many competitions held across Hawaii. And just like today, it was something Hawaiians did just for fun.

Lily: Men, women, and children all participated in he'e nalu. Since he'e nalu was governed by kapu, there were rules about when and where different classes of people could surf. The best beaches and waves were reserved just for royalty.

Arthur: Hawaiians had several different types of boards they used for he'e nalu. None of the boards had fins, so the surfers had to rely entirely on their swimming skills to steer the boards. Some boards were small, like the paipo, which is similar to a modern bodyboard.

Lily: The alaia was a mid-sized board similar to the modern shortboard.

Arthur: But then, there was the olo! The monstrous olo board could be over 24 feet long! That's twice as long as a modern longboard! The olo was reserved for royalty. Seeing someone ride a wave on a 24-foot board would be extremely impressive! It's the kind of thing a king would want to do to prove his prowess to his people.



Lily: The Christian missionaries who arrived in Hawaii in 1819 did not approve of he'e nalu. Over the 1800s, surfing becomes increasingly less common in Hawaii. In the early 1900s, surfing began gaining popularity again, thanks in large part to George Freeth and Duke Kahanamoku, who introduced surfing to California. From there, it became world-famous and turned into the global sport it is today.

An 1855 watercolor by James Gay Sawkins showing a variety of water activities in Hawaii including sailing, canoeing, surfing, and swimming.