

portance that the wife of the king should be of as high blood, if not higher, than any other female in the nation. For this reason, if there were several women of the same rank, the king felt it important to secure them all as his wives, in order that there might be no competition, on the ground of rank, for the kingdom after his death. On this account Kamehameha had five wives at the same time. In order to prevent the existence of competitors, it was often thought expedient for the kings to marry their own sisters, although this incestuous intercourse is, in other cases, contrary to the customs, habits, and feelings of the people. The offspring of such a union was deemed of the highest possible rank.

It is said the present king was desirous of marrying his own sister, Nahienaena, but that this was prevented by the missionaries.

The public feeling was so strong against the king's having heirs by a woman of inferior rank, that it often caused the children to be put to death in infancy by the high chiefs, in order to avoid any of them laying claim to the throne, or to a higher rank than they were willing to allow them.

Illegitimate children of the king were almost sure to be put to death in infancy, and sometimes by order of the father.

The rank of a woman was not materially altered by her marriage to the king. She acquired no authority in the government, and no special rights or privileges, but usually received a present of lands from the king, to be held during his lifetime. On his death, her right to them ceased, although they might, through courtesy, be left in her possession. It will easily be understood, that when a chief has a wife of the highest rank and purest blood, he is naturally an object of jealousy and distrust to the reigning house.

Under the new constitution the descent is regulated, as has been seen, but great latitude of choice is allowed. The king's heir shall be the person whom the king and chiefs may appoint during his lifetime. If there should be no appointment, then the chiefs and House of Representatives shall exercise it; and I found it the prevailing opinion that their former customs would have much weight in their decision.

The next heir to the throne has already been chosen, in the person of Prince Alexander, the third son of Kinau, and grandson to Kamehameha I. In this choice his two elder brothers, who are quite as intelligent, have been passed over. The king is married to the daughter of a petty chief. It was a match of affection, and they have no children; but should he have an heir, it is thought that, notwithstanding their former customs, the low rank of his wife, and the choice already made, her child would inherit.