

# THE MAHELE (READING 2) (Exhibit C)

## The Division of the Lands

### The Land Commission

Although Kamehameha III and his chiefs tried to keep Hawaiian land from being sold to foreigners, it was not to be. Foreigners continued to complain and demand changes.

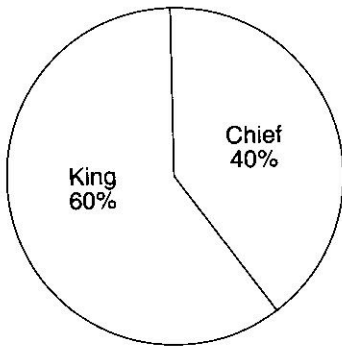
In **1845**, acting upon the advice of a few trusted foreigners, the king created a "Land Commission." The Land Commission was a five-member committee appointed to study the land claims of both Hawaiians and foreigners. Their decisions would be final.

What happened during the next five years would change the land system in Hawai'i forever.



The Māhele Book  
Photo courtesy of Bishop Museum

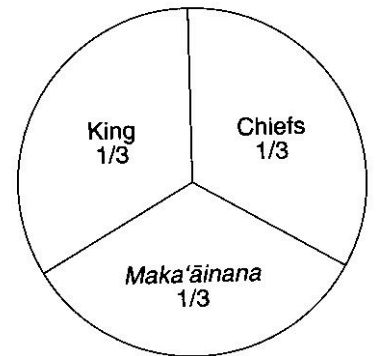
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### The Māhele

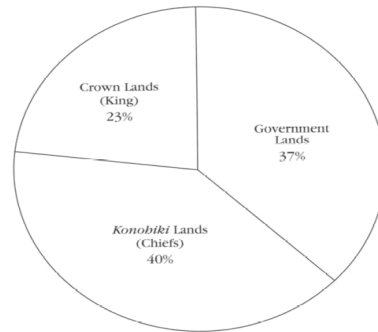
On **January 27, 1848**, the Māhele, or division of lands, began. With the Māhele the foreign concept of "land ownership" was established in Hawai'i. The traditional relationship Hawaiians had held with their *āina* would never be the same.

The Land Commission had determined that the land should be divided into equal thirds. **One third would go to the *ali'i*, one third would go to the government and the final third would go to the *maka'āinana*. This division, however, was never used.**



Instead, Kamehameha III was given the responsibility for sharing the lands between the chiefs and himself. The king divided up land between himself and 245 chiefs. His lands were called "Crown Lands." Those for the chiefs were called "*Konohiki* Lands." This division was recorded in the *Māhele Book*.

Six weeks later, on **March 7, 1848**, Kamehameha III gave a large portion of his Crown Lands to "the chiefs and people of my Kingdom." This portion was then called "Government Lands" and was also recorded in the *Māhele Book*. Of the total lands available **23 percent were "Crown Lands," 37 percent were "Government Lands" and 40 percent were "Konohiki Lands."**



*The division of lands on March 7, 1848*

After the king divided his Crown Lands that March day the Mahele was officially over. It had lasted a total of forty-one days. From that time until today, the *Māhele Book* and the land awards granted by the Land Commission have been the basis for all land titles, or ownership documents, in Hawai'i.