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## Liminal Encounters and the Missionary Position: New England's Sexual Colonization of the Hawaiian Islands, 1778-1840

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LIMINAL ENCOUNTERS AND THE MISSIONARY POSITION:  
NEW ENGLAND'S SEXUAL COLONIZATION OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS,  
1778-1840

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A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF THE ARTS  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE  
AMERICAN AND NEW ENGLAND STUDIES

BY  
ANATOLE BROWN

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2014

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE  
AMERICAN AND NEW ENGLAND STUDIES

June 20, 2014

We hereby recommend the thesis of Anatole Brown  
entitled "Liminal Encounters and the Missionary Position: New England's Sexual  
Colonization of the Hawaiian Islands, 1778 – 1840"

Be accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Professor Ardis Cameron (Advisor)

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Professor Kent Ryden (Reader)

Accepted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

This study on New England's early contact with the Hawaiian Islands examines the sexual liminality of the initial encounter. Late eighteenth century navigators from Boston recorded what could be described as "intimate encounters" with Native Hawaiian women and men. These fascinating ship logs reveal both heterosexual and male-to-male cross-cultural scenarios that challenge the tired South Sea maiden and horny white sailor trope, an image that has dominated the conception of sexuality in the Pacific. The study then examines how the New England missionaries attacked and framed Hawaiian sexual liminality as a monumental threat against their conceptions of Christian civilization on the Islands. Throughout the work, I illustrate how the Hawaiian people in the western mind changed from the Enlightenment era "noble island savage" to the "debased heathen savage" of religious, and later, American imperial discourse.

To my mother,  
Saeko Brown,  
And the memory of my father,  
William Brown.

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## A NOTE ON THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE

I have tried to maintain the correct Hawaiian spellings of Hawaiian words and names in this study, including the use of glottal stops (*‘okina*) and macrons (*kahakō*) as recommended by The University of Hawai‘i style guide. I used the *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Revised and Enlarged Edition, by Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert (University of Hawai‘i Press, 1986) as my primary source for everyday Hawaiian words and consulted various sources for Hawaiian names and places. For example, readers will note that the correct spelling for “Hawai‘i” uses the glottal stop, whereas the word “Hawaiian” does not. Some words in the Hawaiian language use the macron (long vowel symbol) to denote the plural versus the singular – for example, *kāhuna* (priests) versus *kahuna* (a priest). For the sake of authenticity, I did not alter any of the spellings of Hawaiian words or names in quotes or in book titles. The reader will also come across various terms for the Hawaiian people (and other nationalities) in quotes and in the text, including *Native Hawaiians*, *kānaka*, *Kānaka Maoli*, etc. – my intent was to capture the lexicon and linguistic milieu of the period and not to offend any cultures of the past or present. I use the local Hawaiian convention where “the Islands” with a capital “I” is a shortened form for the “Hawaiian Islands.”

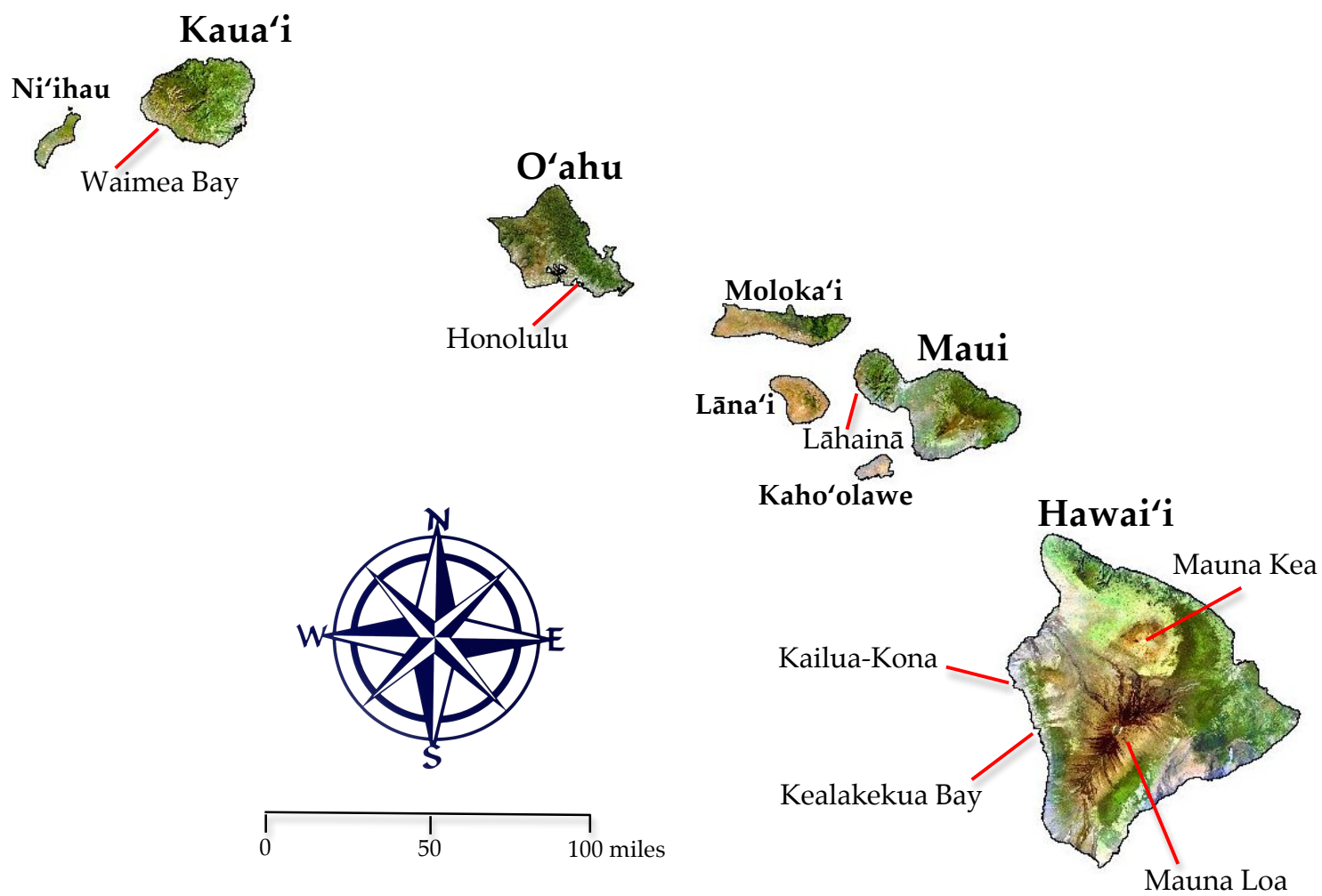


Figure 1 – Map of the Hawaiian Islands

## INTRODUCTION

As we proceeded to the shore, the multitudinous, shouting and almost naked natives, of every age, sex, and rank, swimming, floating on surf-boards, sailing in canoes, sitting, lounging, standing running like sheep, dancing...attracted our earnest attention, and exhibited the appalling darkness of the land, which we had come to enlighten.<sup>1</sup>

– Hiram Bingham.

On April 4, 1820, the pioneer band of New England missionaries, after a five-month journey on the brig *Thaddeus*, finally witnessed the object of their calling. As the ship approached Kailua Bay, the initial sight of near-nude Hawaiians crowding the coastline confirmed their anxieties about the unconstrained sexual openness of Polynesian culture. “O my sisters,” wrote Sybil Moseley Bingham in her journal, “you cannot tell how the sight of these poor degraded creatures, both literally and spiritually naked, would affect you! I say naked.”<sup>2</sup> The “sunburnt swarthy skins” of the Hawaiians equally appalled Sybil’s husband, Reverend Hiram Bingham, while others in the missionary band sobbed and “turned away from the spectacle.”<sup>3</sup> The first task set about by the missionary wives – even before leaving the ship – was to form a “sewing circle.” “Thus feeble, voyage-worn, having long been without fresh provisions, and withering under a tropical sun” wrote missionary leader Bingham, “[the women]

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<sup>1</sup> Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* (New York: Sherman Converse, 1847), 86.

<sup>2</sup> Sybil Bingham, March 31, 1820, *Journal of Sybil Moseley Bingham 1819–1823*, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library.

<sup>3</sup> H. Bingham, 81.

began before we cast anchor.”<sup>4</sup> The sewing frenzy continued for months, long after the pioneer mission band set up their stations on the Islands. For the chiefly class of Hawaiians, or the *aliʻi*, foreign clothing represented a new and exciting form of western class and status – a means to connect to the expanding outside world. Yet for the Calvinist New Englanders, clothing the Native Hawaiians helped to overcome their own shame in witnessing what they viewed as an unchecked form of open sexuality. The missionaries thus framed their “first contact” moment as a shocking scene of indecency, where near-naked bodies frolicked in every manner all around the shore – surfing, lounging and dancing. For the overwrought travelers five months out of Boston, the furor to cover Hawaiian nudity was their first serious and moral undertaking.

From British navigator Captain James Cook’s “discovery” of the Hawaiian Islands in 1778 to the arrival of the New England missionaries in 1820, the most prominent feature of Europe and America’s early foray into the Hawaiian Islands was, according to Lee Wallace, “the sexual charge of the encounter.”<sup>5</sup> For over half a century after Cook, sailors and adventurers came home from the Pacific with lurid tales of “South Sea maidens,” exotic sex rituals, native cabin boys, same-sex *aikāne* partners, third gender *mahu* consorts, polygamy, royal incest and other bodily practices that confused, titillated and appalled westerners. The loosely-defined familial structures, unabashed sexual behaviors and, to borrow Niko Besnier’s term, “gender liminality” of Polynesian-Hawaiian

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<sup>4</sup> H. Bingham, 85.

<sup>5</sup> Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 1.



culture caused westerners to react in intense and often excessive ways.<sup>6</sup> Although sailors from around the world followed in Cook's wake, New Englanders and their descendants soon dominated the archipelago as a colonizing force and were largely responsible for paving the path to America's annexation of Hawai'i in 1898, and eventual U.S. statehood in 1959. As a distinct New England coded brand of politics, religion, law and mercantilism infiltrated the Islands during the nineteenth century, the Native Hawaiians were forced to adopt western notions of sexuality and body regulations as an integral part of the colonizing process.

This study examines New England's contact with Hawai'i as an erotic point of entry; that is, from the perspective of "the body" as a zone of intercultural engagement. According to Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, "the body-as-contact-zone is a powerful analytical term *and* a useful pedagogical tool for understanding the nature and dynamics of imperial, colonial, and world histories."<sup>7</sup> Yet "the body's oxymoronic status as a *discursive object*," Ballantyne and Burton warn, can overemphasize ideological symbolisms that often detract from the very real physical interactions of intermingling cultures. In the case of Euroamerican contact with the Hawaiian Islands, however, the Hawaiian body was an actual *corporeal* concern to Westerners – as real and front-and-center as any of their voyage experiences. Ship logs, journal entries, travel memoirs, recorded histories and other "Pacific texts" written by New Englanders during

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<sup>6</sup> Niko Besnier, "Polynesian Gender Liminality Through Time and Space," in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, ed. Gilbert Herdt (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 285–328.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, "Postscript: Bodies, Genders, Empires: Reimagining World Histories," in *Bodies in Contact*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 407.

the Revolutionary to Antebellum period are replete with anxieties and intrigue over the bold physicality and sensuality of Hawaiian culture.

A common theme that runs throughout these Pacific narratives is the “first contact” event. Like Bingham’s description of excited natives thronging the shore to witness the arrival of the *Thaddeus*, westerners gave immense significance to their arrival at the Islands in their travel writings. This recreation of “Genesis in oceanic form,” as Elvi Whittaker coins the term, established a “natural” beginning, as if the arrival of “civilized” westerners were a preordained course in history for Hawaiians living in “prehistoric” conditions.<sup>8</sup> Within these first-contact narratives, the motives of the visitors were often plainly revealed. John Boit, a seventeen-year-old sailor who arrived in the Islands in 1792, for example, stood on the ship deck agog at the sight of “Many Canoes along side containing beautiful *Women* [his emphasis]” all in a “state of Nature.”<sup>9</sup> Later in the 1820s however, missionaries took the same scene of sensuous Islanders to establish a rhetorical dichotomy where their gospel came to “enlighten” the “appalling darkness of the land.”

Chapter One of this study examines the “prototype” for all first-contact narratives in Hawai’i: British navigator Captain Cook’s visits to the Hawaiian Islands in 1778 and 1779, where he was famously worshipped as an *‘aumakua*, or ancestor-deity, then was later killed in a fracas with the local Islanders. Although rarely noted in mainstream world history, Cook’s expedition employed a

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<sup>8</sup> Elvi Whittaker, *The Mainland Haole: The White Experience in Hawaii* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>9</sup> John Boit, “Boit’s Log,” in *Voyages of the “Columbia” to the Northwest Coast, 1787–1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1941), 418.

number of sailors that identified themselves as Americans, many who hailed from the New England region and as far down as Charleston, South Carolina. Out of these early American adventurers, John Ledyard from Groton, Connecticut, was the only crewmember to document his voyage with Cook. As James Zug notes, Ledyard's journal is "the only one from the 18<sup>th</sup> century age of British circumnavigations written by an American."<sup>10</sup> From the perspective of one Revolutionary era American, Ledyard offers some unique views on his first-contact moment, such as his thoughts on the interactions between the ship's men and Island women, as well as his reaction to sodomy, which he discovered to be "very prevalent if not universal among the [Hawaiian] chiefs."<sup>11</sup>

The first chapter delves into the journals of Ledyard and other travelers on Cook's voyage to outline the initial framework of this "sexually charged" Polynesian encounter, a persistent imagery that westerners used to define the Hawaiian Islands for the next one hundred years. William Ellis, surgeon's mate and artist on the voyage, for example, summarized his encounter with Hawaiians in unequivocal terms: "there are no people in the world who indulge themselves more in their sensual appetites than these; in fact, they carry it to a most scandalous and shameful degree, and in a matter not proper to be mentioned."<sup>12</sup> This strange first-contact account of sex, religion, gods and death in the remote Pacific, significantly reinforced the western paradigm of the beautiful-yet-savagely-mysterious image of Islander culture. To a large extent,

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<sup>10</sup> James Zug, ed., *The Last Voyage of Captain Cook: The Collected Writings of John Ledyard* (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2005), XVIII.

<sup>11</sup> John Ledyard, *The Last Voyage of Captain Cook*, 89.

<sup>12</sup> William Ellis, *An Authentic Narrative of a Voyage Performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke* (London: G. Robinson, 1784), 153.

Captain Cook's shadow loomed over all western authors who wrote about their experiences in the Pacific. Cook's death thus served as the original "Genesis" for a westernized version of Hawaiian history.

For the Hawaiians, history was stored within oral traditions and ritualistic art forms, including genealogical chants, the *hula*, tattoos, healing practices, the naming of children and the passing down of generational wisdom. Ancient Hawaiian "pre-contact" history, or the *mo'olelo*, eluded English written compilation until the 1830s and 1840s when David Malo, Samuel Kamakau and John Papa 'Ōi – all Native Hawaiians who studied in American Protestant missionary schools – collected and recorded the last remnants of faded memories, legends and practices from the "pre-Cook" generation. Caroline Ralston cautions that these texts "form the nucleus of information about pre-contact Hawai'i, but they can only be used with the full recognition of their chiefly [i.e. elite] and male bias and the influence of the newly imposed Christianity."<sup>13</sup> Yet these Native authors, particularly Kamakau, were aiming for accuracy and authenticity for the sake of preservation. Essentially, the bulk of *mo'olelo* literature focuses on the fundamental and distinct differences between ancient and modern ways of Hawaiian life, both in the forms of nostalgia and morally inspired self-flagellation. Despite the occasional tinge of Christian bias, the collected narratives surrounding Captain Cook and his landings give startling insights into the overt sexual nature of the contact from a non-western perspective.

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<sup>13</sup> Caroline Ralston, "Changes in the Lives of Ordinary Women in Early Post-Contact Hawaii," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 49.

Chapter Two investigates the shipboard relations of New Englanders and Hawaiian men in the “post-Cook” era from the late eighteenth century until the arrival of the missionaries in 1820. Almost immediately after Cook’s voyage, young Hawaiian men took to the seas as deckhands for European and American ships that plied the growing trade routes across the Pacific Ocean. Early navigators from Boston such as Robert Gray, Joseph Ingraham, Amasa Delano and others had what can be described as “intimate encounters” with Native Hawaiian men during these multiyear voyages. These fascinating ship logs reveal male-to-male cross-cultural encounters that go beyond the tired heterosexual trope of South Sea maidens seducing sex-starved white sailors. The mainstream historical image of western contact with Hawai’i, Wallace argues, is erroneously transfixed on the “dull certainty” of “heterosexual presumption,” where Island women are cast as the subjugated objects of white male colonial obsession.<sup>14</sup>

In reality, however, the writings of many Yankee skippers reflected a distinct “man’s world” on the Pacific, where western gender-based proprieties of female domesticity and male gentility were left far behind the gates of Cape Horn. Within the culture of Pacific ships, “masculine preferment,” Wallace notes, served as “the slick conduit for personal advancement [and] sometimes its spectacular ruin.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the combination of male bonding on the lonely seas and the open male-to-male exchanges of Polynesian friendship created a magnetic intersection for both white sailors and Hawaiian men. Native Hawaiian women in some respects lost their initial “exoticness” in the eyes of sailors, as

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<sup>14</sup> Wallace, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace, 3.

western-style prostitution became a regular mode of commerce around the growing harbors of Hawai'i. Yet the shipboard relations between foreign men and Native women also produced profound changes in the structures of Hawaiian society and gender relations; an effect that in some ways paved the way for the missionaries.

Ultimately, the West's encounter with Hawai'i during the early decades of contact is not easy to categorize and fails to fit into any convenient theoretical metaphor for gender and colonialism. As Jeffrey Geiger explains, "Western representations of Polynesia, the records suggests, have always been crossed and recrossed by inner inconsistencies with respect to gender and sexuality that tend to problematize the (hetero-)sexual assumptions that many critics have cited as underlying features of imperial narratives."<sup>16</sup> Essentially, Polynesian sexuality and familial relations evaded any form of western categorization. The Pacific journals of the eighteenth century, for example, show that westerners preferred to use terms such as "ineffable" or "not proper to be mentioned" when confronted with sexual practices that went beyond the boundaries of "normative" western social protocol.

Even today, modern western terminologies such as transgender, bisexual, and even marriage are inadequate in describing the sociosexual patterns of traditional Hawaiian relations. The most salient aspect of these cross-cultural physical interactions were the ways in which the participants brought their own preconceived cultural notions of sexuality into the exchange. For Europeans and

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<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Geiger, *Facing the Pacific: Polynesia and the U.S. Imperial Imagination* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 197.

Americans, sexuality was tied into notions of privacy, a concept that only had peripheral meaning within Hawaiian society. Along the same lines, as Richard Landsdown notes, many Pacific explorers, as the texts show, also discussed “sex and theft, and that area where they overlap: property.”<sup>17</sup> During the “pre-missionary” period, however, westerners generally preferred the prevailing unrestricted forms of exchange with Islanders and even expressed admiration for their “natural” ways. These nebulous realms, however, were also fraught with danger as both sides tried to navigate the uncertain waters of overlapping cultures.

Finally, Chapter Three investigates the arrival of the Calvinist missionaries in 1820 and their attempts to dismantle this sexually charged setting within their process of establishing a “Christian civilization” – a model based on an idealized version of Puritan-era New England. For the missionaries, Native ideas of the human body and sexual customs were the prime battlegrounds in their contest to spread “civilization” and “morality” during the nineteenth century. Through the extensively published works of the missionaries, the image of the Hawaiian body in the western mind quickly changed from the Enlightenment era “noble island savage” to the “debased heathen savage” of religious, and later, American imperial discourse. Between 1820 and the church’s gradual withdrawal in the 1840s, the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sent nearly one hundred missionary families and couples to Hawai’i, a number of whose descendants still live on the Islands today. In many ways, the missionary enterprise was a highly

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Landsdown, *Strangers in the South Seas: The Idea of the Pacific in Western Thought: An Anthology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 69.

coordinated theological attack against what they considered to be the epitome of human perversion, or the absolute debased condition of humanity.

Prior to the departure of the first missionaries in October 1819, the ABCFM gathered the pioneer band of rural New England Congregationalists at the newly built Park Street Church in Boston and boldly outlined the mission's "civilizing" endeavor: "to aim at nothing short of covering those Islands with fruitful fields, pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches; of raising up the whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization."<sup>18</sup> While the main impetus of the mission was to "convert the heathen" in the name of Christian salvation, once the missionaries landed, they were continually perturbed by what they considered to be the "debased" condition of the Hawaiian people. The old world-styled Calvinists placed strict proscriptions on the everyday behavior of Hawaiians – including manners of speaking and eating – as a means to promote "Christian civilization."

One of the strongest forces, or perhaps, *the* strongest force to promote these everyday western values came from the missionary wives. Prior to the arrival of the missionaries in 1820, white females were non-existent on the Islands. Once the women arrived, however, their influence was significant. Despite the very public endeavors of the male missionary leaders, the wives were instrumental in pushing new ideas of gender and familial roles on Hawaiian women. Like many of their rural neighbors at home in New England, the missionary wives championed "The Cult of True Womanhood," the

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<sup>18</sup> Herman Humphrey, "The Promised Land," (1819) quoted in John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 118.



prevailing nineteenth century middle-class value system that espoused female domesticity, piety and submissiveness to paternal authority.<sup>19</sup>

Predictably, missionary ideas of marriage and bodily restraint clashed tremendously with the relaxed sexual tolerance and nebulous family structures of Hawaiian society. The everyday behavior of Hawaiians became infantilized within church rhetoric; the missionaries, according to Sally Engle Merry, “developed the theory that Hawaiians were incapable governing their sexual desires and therefore were childlike.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, this discursive hierarchy between the “savage” and the “civilized” came to rationalize the larger American impetus for colonizing Hawai‘i in later years. As Noenoe Silva points out, “after eighty years of missionization, the same discourse was deployed to justify the U.S. political takeover of Hawai‘i: the uncivilized were said to be incapable of self-government.”<sup>21</sup>

The notion of “self-government” extended to ideas of controlling one’s body. For the missionaries, Merry notes, “The fight over sexuality was really about the disciplining of the body in the name of civilization, decency and decorum.”<sup>22</sup> The restraint of the body – from containing bodily fluids, to the suppressing of overt emotions, and even the shunning lewd thoughts – formed the basis of the “civilized” character, at least outwardly. True conversion to Protestant Christianity was an entirely different matter. In fact, the ABCFM in

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<sup>19</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, “New England Missionary Wives, Hawaiian Women and ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’” in *Family and Gender*, 19–44.

<sup>20</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 250.

<sup>21</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 54.

<sup>22</sup> Merry, 231.

Boston and their missionaries in Hawai'i continually debated internally on whether "civilizing" was a perquisite for Christianizing, or if civilization could be separated from Christianity at all. Yet the prevailing sentiment was clear, as ABCFM senior secretary proudly declared in 1845 while reviewing the Sandwich Island Mission, "the civilization which the gospel has conferred upon our New England is the highest and the best, in a religious point of view, that the world has ever seen."<sup>23</sup> The Kingdom of Hawai'i adopted New England style "blue laws" (i.e. no drinking, no adultery, observe the Sabbath, etc.) by as early as 1826 and enacted an Anglo-European style constitution by the 1840s.

The long haul to annexation in 1898 and eventual statehood in 1959 is too large and complex for this study. By the mid-nineteenth century, several other factors forced significant changes on the Islands, including the arrival of French Catholic missionaries and the rise of Hawai'i's plantation economy. Foreign business interests increased with the Great *Mahele* land division and redistribution act of 1848, when the traditional Hawaiian land tenure and stewardship model was converted to the western capitalist real estate model, a consequence that still has multiple ramifications on Native Hawaiians and their descendants today. Western diseases also continued to ravage the population of the Native Hawaiians. Families were torn apart as ancient villages were abandoned in favor of the bustling "foreign" port of Honolulu while young Hawaiian men took to the seas and many never came back. To make up for the loss of indigenous labor, the growing plantation industry brought in large labor

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<sup>23</sup> Rufus Anderson, "The Theory of Missions to the Heathen," in *The American National Preacher*, volume 20, ed. Reverend W. H. Bidwell (New York: W. H. Bidwell, 1846), 180.

forces of Japanese, Chinese and Portuguese immigrant workers as the nineteenth century wore on, a phenomenon that drastically altered the racial and cultural landscape of the Islands. Yet throughout all the changes, the influence of the early New Englanders and their descendants persisted as a dominant force. Yankees proved to be the “great facilitator for white hegemony,” according to Whittaker, due to their “relatively early arrival in the Islands and the swiftness of their impact.”<sup>24</sup>

### **New England’s Hidden Imperial Past**

Today, the heritage of old New England is still felt strongly by residents of Hawai’i. The character of Hawai’i’s New England past is continually reinforced through a myriad of cultural organizations and programs across the Islands including museums, local historical literature, travel brochures, guided walking tours, local artwork, architectural restoration projects and other forms of public cultural dialogue. From colonial-style missionary homes, to coral-built spire churches, to floral-patterned bed quilts and rusted whaler harpoons, the architectural and cultural representations of Yankee New England on the Isles often astonishes – and sometimes even disappoints – visitors expecting an exotic Polynesian getaway, far from the tendrils of western influence. Oddly, however, this New England-Hawai’i connection is virtually unknown on the East Coast, the point of origin for this authoritative relationship. Rather, Hawai’i is seen by many Americans today as an extension of California’s liberal surfer lifestyle, or the final outpost of the Western Frontier. In reality, however, Hawai’i was a

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<sup>24</sup> Whittaker, 35.

direct recipient of New England's overseas imperial ambition – a rarely discussed phenomenon within mainstream American history.

I concur with Sally Engle Merry's observation that "Hawai'i represents...a space of denial in the consciousness of America."<sup>25</sup> Merry correctly notes that the American consciousness acknowledges the dispossession of Native Americans, "but not the dispossession of the Kanaka Maoli [Native Hawaiians]."<sup>26</sup> Hawai'i is "America's Paradise," thus a complex history is rarely welcome by visitors to the Islands. For most visitors, the history of Hawai'i begins with the attack on Pearl Harbor and ends with an indefinite shore leave that continues along the thousands of beachside resorts today. What eludes most people, including myself when I first started this study, is that Hawai'i was of particular interest to many early New Englanders long before the westward expansion across U.S. mainland. Essentially, various aspects of nineteenth century New England culture were continually "packaged and shipped" to Hawai'i with little cultural mediation. In one notable example, the missionaries brought the first printing press to Hawai'i in 1820 and created the widest variety of publications and the most literate group of people west of the Rockies by the 1830s. And yet, this highly public New England experimentation in the middle of the Pacific is virtually forgotten in New England.

Today on the Islands, the debate on the colonization of Hawai'i is as strong as ever. President Bill Clinton's Apology Resolution in 1993 – a non-legally-binding proclamation that essentially admits the usurpation of the Hawaiian Kingdom by the United States during late nineteenth century – has

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<sup>25</sup> Merry, 24.

<sup>26</sup> Merry, 25.

spurred the Hawaiian sovereignty and other Native Hawaiian social movements to establish themselves as significant voices in shaping the discourse on Hawaiian history. In reexamining the history of Hawai'i, many activists view the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1898 by the American government and business interests as an act of outright war.<sup>27</sup> Scholarship surrounding Hawaiian history has thus become an increasingly complex, controversial, and highly emotional issue, where a myriad of perspectives – from anti-imperialist secessionists to pro-statehood nationalists – compete for consideration and legitimacy.

Recent trends in Hawaiian historiography seek to dispel the long-held “passive Hawaiian” image. As Wallace notes, “traditional” historians often condensed the history of nineteenth century Hawai'i as an uncomplicated narrative based on the “adaptable resilience of Pacific culture to missionary conversion and the more secular inroads of capitalism.”<sup>28</sup> Certainly, the “classics” of Hawaiian history such as those penned by Ralph Kuykendall (1938), Bradford Smith (1956), Gavan Daws (1968) and others painted a relatively smooth transition into westernization, where the Hawaiians – particularly the *maka'ainana* (commoners) – held little agency or a “transgressive” voice. However, in recent decades works from Noenoe Silva, J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Jonathan Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio and others have focused on uncovering the dissenting voice of Native Hawaiians, to dispel the prevailing notion that

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<sup>27</sup> See Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Wallace, 19.

Hawaiians were indifferent, or at worst complicit, in America's takeover of the Islands.

Although my study centers on the sexual and bodily politics of colonization, my underlying intent is to bring Hawai'i into the discourse of New England Studies. Hawai'i is an integral part of New England's heralded maritime, religious and literary past, yet as Merry notes, the Fiftieth State gets "little play" in East Coast institutions.<sup>29</sup> In many ways this lack of attention, or historical myopia, is also part of the larger and ongoing denial of American colonialism and Native displacement. The historical reexamination of New England's role as a colonizing force also needs to take place "on the mainland," as Hawaiian residents say.

After all, many of the same forces that influenced New England's sense of regional identity were also responsible for the cultural colonization of Hawai'i. Hawai'i witnessed the same "forefathers" of New England cultural identity as described by Joseph Conforti, including "Providential Puritans," "Whiggish antebellum Yankees" and "nostalgic colonial revivalists."<sup>30</sup> Part of my aim in this study is to demonstrate how New England's experience in the Hawaiian Islands also played a vital role in shaping New England's sense of identity during the

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<sup>29</sup> Merry, 25. The one exception is probably the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, which keeps an extensive collection of Oceanic and Hawaiian artifacts brought back by New England sailors during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The museum has on display a large wooden statue of the ancient Hawaiian god Ku – only one of three left in the world from the nineteenth century – where patrons of Native Hawaiian descent are allowed to conduct ceremonies and pay their respects.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations in Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6.

early nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> For much of Hawai'i's story is also about Yankee clippers, Nantucket whalers, Boston merchants, rural farmhands, Puritan preachers, colonial revivalists and maritime romantics. To a large extent, many of these Yankees viewed Hawai'i as a bold experiment in building a New England Commonwealth in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

### **Liminality within the Contact Zone**

The main focus of this study is to explore the ways in which New Englanders and Hawaiians negotiated with each other within the *liminal* realm of the *contact zone*. Victor Turner uses the term "liminal" to describe a "protracted marginal" stage during a "rite of passage" when participants are neither neophytes nor qualified initiates.<sup>32</sup> During this "betwixt-between" phase, Turner argues, "the basic building blocks of culture" become exposed, thus participants within this mid-transition or liminal realm are left vulnerable to the ambiguous forces of cross-cultural exchange. Marie Louise Pratt defines the area of this intercultural exchange as the *contact zone*, or as a space where "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."<sup>33</sup> However, as long as the contact zone maintains the ambiguous conditions of the *limen*, the power relations of the participants remain nebulous and indistinct within that realm.

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<sup>31</sup> Conforti, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1967), 93-110. The chapter in this book, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," can be found separately in various publications due to the large scholastic impact of Turner's ideas on "liminality."

<sup>33</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Profession*, volume 91, (New York: Modern Language Association, 1991), 34.

The missionaries vehemently objected to this ambiguous state, or what Wallace calls the “the slippery lovefield that was the pre-missionary Pacific.”<sup>34</sup> The “erotics of the Pacific,” therefore, had to be expunged using every “civilizing” means including religion, education, law, and literature, but most significantly, through the English translation (or mistranslation) of the Hawaiian language. Anne McClintock views this jurisdictional process of colonization as a profound form of European “male anxiety and boundary loss,” where westerners sought to gain control of indigenous worlds by “reinscribing, as natural, an excess of gender hierarchy” and “a ritual excess of boundary.”<sup>35</sup> The American missionaries used a systematic approach to suppress the socially liminal conditions and employed various means to categorize, define, identify, distinguish and order Hawaiian culture within the precepts of Christian thought. A cornerstone of this process was to employ what Houston Wood calls the “rhetoric of revulsion,” where the missionaries castigated every element of Hawaiian life as uncouth including hula dancing, surfing, tattooing and even the wearing flowers.<sup>36</sup>

The late Pacific historian Greg Dening captured the essence of Western-Polynesian contact in his lifelong intellectual pursuit in cross-cultural “beach crossings.” The Pacific contact zone is always the beach, a boundary of both physical space and also of the mind. “Beaches are *limen*, thresholds to some other

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<sup>34</sup> Wallace, 44.

<sup>35</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, Routledge, 1995), 24.

<sup>36</sup> Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: The Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 38.



place, some other time, some other condition," Dening wrote.<sup>37</sup> The boundary between sea and land is indistinct, even chaotic. Along the sandy shore waves curl and foam, tides move in and out, the granular terrain is perpetually shaped and reshaped. Nothing is deterministic on the beach, Dening observed, for it is "a double-edged space, in-between; an exit space that is also an entry space; a space where edginess rules."<sup>38</sup> The beach is thus the ideal perspective to view this foamy and rolling edge of cultural exchange. Definitive answers may never wash up on shore, but an intriguing shape always plays at the far edge of the horizon and keeps us staring into the glint.

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<sup>37</sup> Greg Dening, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>38</sup> Dening, 16.

## CHAPTER 1

### GODS, SEX AND DEATH, 1778-1779

#### Initial Encounter

When British navigator Captain James Cook first “discovered” the Hawaiian Islands in January 1778, his primary concern was to avoid introducing western sexual diseases onto the Islands. “As there were some venereal complaints on board both the Ships,” the captain logged, “in order to prevent its being communicated to these people, I gave orders that no Women...were to be admitted aboard the Ships, I also forbid all manner of connection with them, and ordered that none who had the venereal upon them should go out of the ships.”<sup>1</sup> The 182 men crew on the *HMS Resolution* and *HMS Discovery* were not only from Britain, but also from an array of western nations including Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Norway, North America, Bermuda, Nova Scotia and other English and European speaking regions of the late eighteenth century. Cook’s ships were essentially floating repositories of occidental germs, collected from all around the Atlantic, shipped into the Pacific Ocean and regularly unleashed onto flourishing island populations with every berthing. The surgeons of the voyage kept a regular list of sailors who were afflicted with the “foul disease,” but Cook knew that even the “most skillful of the Faculty” could not say whether a sailor was fully cured “as to not communicate it further.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Cook – on his third Pacific voyage in ten years – was overworked and partially resigned to the fact

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<sup>1</sup> James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery, 1776-1780*, volume 3, part 1, ed. J. C. Beaglehole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 265.

<sup>2</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 266.

that once his men landed on shore, “the opportunities and inducements to an intercourse between the sex, are there too many to be guarded against.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, for his loutish sailors, Cook’s decree against sexual contact was just another nagging naval formality – rules that had some impact within the confined and conservative Atlantic, but not out here in the remote and open Pacific. As Cook gazed at his newly discovered and uncontaminated islands of Kaua’i and O’ahu, however, the commander was determined to make his edict stick this time around.

John Ledyard, a New Englander from Groton, Connecticut who served as a marine corporal on the *Resolution*, described the shoreline of Kaua’i as it came into view: “As we approached near the shore we could discern the land to be cultivated, saw smokes, and soon after houses and inhabitants.”<sup>4</sup> Hawaiian oral tradition, as recorded by nineteenth century Native Hawaiian historian Samuel Kamakau, states that the “valley of Waimea rang with the shouts of the excited people as they saw the boat with its masts and its sails shaped like a gigantic stingray.”<sup>5</sup> Ku’ohu, an elderly *kahuna* (priest), somberly declared, “That can be nothing else but the *heiau* [temple] of Lono, the tower of Ke-o-lewa, and the place of sacrifice at the altar.”<sup>6</sup> For the priestly *kāhuna* class, the spectacle offshore suggested the long prophesized physical return of Lono, the ‘*aumakua* [ancestor-god] of harvest, fertility and peace. The warrior ranks, however, were not so certain about their divinity and vowed to ransack the outlandish ships. Ka’eo,

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<sup>3</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 266.

<sup>4</sup> John Ledyard, *The Last Voyage of Captain Cook: The Collected Writings of John Ledyard*, ed. James Zug (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2005), 43.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961), 92.

<sup>6</sup> Kamakau, 92.

the *ali'i* (ruling chief) of Kaua'i, however, sided with the *kāhuna* and restrained his warriors. The *pono* [proper and righteous] thing to do was to “treat these people kindly,” the wise *ali'i* instructed. But in order to put to rest any questions about whether these visitors were “gods or men,” the chief crafted a plan to see if they would “yield to the temptation of women.”<sup>7</sup> The Hawaiians boarded their canoes and paddled out to greet these remarkable strangers that stood on large vessels resembling “floating islands.” Soon the Islanders and westerners intermingled and generations of cultural and geographical isolation came to an end for the Islands.

The two sides exchanged a few words over the surf and Cook was “agreeably surprised” to learn that the inhabitants of Hawai'i were “of the same Nation as the people of Otaheite [Tahiti] and the other islands we had lately visited.”<sup>8</sup> Although Cook had unloaded his Rai'atean interpreter Omai at the Society Islands, his veteran crew knew enough Polynesian phrases to communicate with the bewildered Hawaiians in their canoes. The familiar words eased the Hawaiians as they tossed overboard a load of stones that were intended as weapons. The Islanders pulled up alongside the ships and exchanged an abundant supply of hogs, fruits, potatoes and sugarcane for mere handfuls of trifling European goods such as beads, nails and mirrors. Cook noticed that the Hawaiians were familiar with iron nails and valued them “above

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<sup>7</sup> Kamakau, 94-95.

<sup>8</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 263-264. Cook and his men were the first to recognize the similarities in Polynesian languages. The well-known Hawaiian word, *aloha*, for example, has similar roots in the New Zealand Maori word, *aroha*, and Samoan, *alofa* – all of which roughly translate to love, or affection.

every other thing.”<sup>9</sup> The erudite commander surmised that at sometime in the past, nails attached to driftwood must have washed up on the islands, possibly from a wrecked Spanish galleon or floating ocean debris from Japan. Whatever the case, Cook was fairly certain that he was the first European to come into contact with the Islanders, for the natives seemed particularly wide-eyed and rattled by the encounter compared to other first-contact situations he had experienced in the Pacific.

Some of the Hawaiian men gained enough courage and came aboard the *Resolution* and *Discovery*. Ledyard described the frenetic scene on the deck of the *Resolution*: “They were exceedingly wild: Ran up to us and examined our hands and faces, then stripping up our shirtsleeves, and opening the bosoms of our shirts to view such parts of our bodies as were covered by our cloths.”<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, a line of canoes with young women using “the most lascivious Gestures” pulled up alongside the ships. David Samwell, a Welsh surgeon aboard the *Discovery*, noted that the Island women were “much chagrined on being refused” when Cook’s men turned them away.<sup>11</sup> James King, second lieutenant on the *Resolution*, felt “abused and ridiculed” as the women paddled away while taunting the sailors with lewd “Manners & gestures”.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Ancient Navigators**

The great British navigator had arrived at the apex of the Polynesian Triangle – a massive swath of Pacific island nations stretching from Aotearoa

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<sup>9</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 265.

<sup>10</sup> Ledyard, 44.

<sup>11</sup> David Samwell in Beaglehole, Pt. 2, 1084.

<sup>12</sup> King in Beaglehole, 498.

(New Zealand) across to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) and northward to Hawai'i. The origins of these oceanic people were a subject of great debate among Cook's crew. How did their ancestors arrive at these remote islands? How long ago did these migrations take place? How did they sail these distances in the open sea without any modern navigational tools, such as the compass or sextant? Cook thus posed the question that would challenge scholars for the next two hundred years: "How shall we account for this Nation spreading itself so far over this Vast ocean?" For Cook, who spent nearly a decade meticulously charting the Pacific Ocean, the sudden appearance of the Hawaiian Islands in this remote patch north of the equator was an astonishing discovery. Cook was on his way to the northwest coast of America for a long arctic journey into the Bering Sea – a frigid and daring mission to verify the existence of the fabled Northwest Passage. As the ships approached the Tropic of Cancer, Cook ordered the ships prepped for colder climes and handed out fearnought jackets and trousers to his men. And yet here – thousands of miles from any habitable land – were a nation of tropical islanders living "in the land of plenty" in complete oceanic isolation.<sup>13</sup>

The first Hawaiian ancestors arrived on the volcanic stretch of islands sometime around 500 AD, according to current archeological evidence. The migration and settlement patterns of early Polynesians across the Pacific are still studied and continually revised by Pacific historians, but most archeologists trace proto-Polynesians to a distinct "Lapita" pottery culture that flourished along the coasts of Southeast Asia and down through Indonesia around 1500 BC. The Lapita people were a great maritime culture with superior seafaring skills

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<sup>13</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 264.

that travelled eastward down the “Austronesian” island chain while intermixing with other indigenous cultures of Micronesia and New Guinea along the way.<sup>14</sup> Evidence of the unique “dentate” style Lapita pottery ceases around Vanuatu and Fiji, and eastward from there – almost exactly at the current International Date Line – at Tonga and the Samoan Islands, the “Cradle of Polynesia” began to form around 100 BC.

Early Polynesians were an ocean-exploring culture in every sense. Many modern historians equate Polynesians to ancient astronauts – or “aquanauts” – a sophisticated and brave culture that perfected seafaring and understood its inherent risks. By the time the Vikings came into existence in Europe, Polynesians were already settled in almost every island in the vast Pacific Ocean. Language and tattoo patterns suggest that the original Hawaiians likely arrived from the Marquesas – almost two thousand miles to the south. Hawaiian oral tradition describes a second wave of immigration from Tahiti sometime around 1000 AD, when a more religious and feudal order of Polynesians took over the Islands. The inter-island voyaging epics, however, cease in Hawai‘i around 1300 AD for reasons unknown. As generations passed, stories of distant lands became mythical and the only lands they knew shrunk within the Hawaiian archipelago. Yet Hawaiian civilization blossomed during this period of complete isolation, growing into a complex and refined ancient culture. By the time Cook arrived in Kaua‘i, archeologist Patrick Vinton Kirch argues, Hawaiian civilization had

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick Vinton Kirch, *A Shark Going Inland Is My Chief: The Island Civilization of Ancient Hawai‘i* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 30.

developed into a “divine-kingship” culture, similar to those that sprung up in the Near East, Egypt, China, Mesoamerica and the Andes.<sup>15</sup>

### **Landfall – A Blending**

Cook’s edict against sex, however, unraveled once his men stepped on shore. On January 21st, the third day of Western-Hawaiian contact, Cook landed on Waimea, Kaua’i with a large party of marines to collect fresh water and trade for more provisions. Wherever Cook went, the Hawaiians would lie with their face down in the *kapu moe* (taboo of prostration) position, signifying their regard for him as a supreme being and exalted chief. Cook tried his best to emulate a sense of trade by giving away what he had, but the Islanders offered more hogs as ceremonial offerings “without regarding whether they got anything in return.”<sup>16</sup> As Cook busied himself with the examination of the watering hole and a nearby *heiau* (sacred temple), several young women, who were “exceedingly beautiful,” according to Samwell, hailed the sailors on shore and “used all their Arts to entice our people into their houses.”<sup>17</sup> Offshore on the *Discovery*, the crewmen dressed the women up as men in order to “deceive the Officers” and hustled their lovers onboard. Dr. Samwell, who had a keen eye for the amorous details of the journey, summed up the dalliances at Kaua’i: “It was known that some of those who were on shore had intercourse with the Women notwithstanding the Care that was taken to prevent it, and we learnt that some of the Women had found means to get on board the *Discovery*.”

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<sup>15</sup> Kirch, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 269.

<sup>17</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1083.



While Cook's men certainly enjoyed the "fine women" of Kaua'i, journal entries indicate a profound enthrallment with Hawaiian men. "If any of them can claim a share of beauty," Cook professed, "it was most conspicuous amongst the young men."<sup>18</sup> To Cook's men, the colorful feathered capes and helmets of the male chiefs were especially attractive and "elegant," while the tall, athletic and fiercely tattooed warriors beheld the "most striking appearance."<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant King considered all the chiefs to be "without exception, perfectly well formed."<sup>20</sup> The Hawaiian males seemed like Greek gods: sinewy, sun-kissed and stately. Surgeon William Ellis was impressed with the scrupulousness of Hawaiian hygiene; they bathed in fresh water "twice and sometimes three times a-day" and their teeth were kept "even and perfectly white."<sup>21</sup> Ellis also described how the westerners and the Hawaiians immediately bonded over a male-grooming ritual: "Most of them were very desirous of parting with their beards, which, they said, were disagreeable and troublesome, and were fond of being shaved by our people."<sup>22</sup>

The artist of the voyage, John Webber, sketched a detailed scenic view of this first landing on Kaua'i (Figure 2). The easygoing yet bustling nature of this cross-cultural encounter spreads across the panorama like a sweltering soirée. Hawaiians and westerners, with spears and muskets casually off to the side,

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<sup>18</sup> James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean Undertaken By the Command of Her Majesty For Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere, 1776–1780*, vol. 2 (London: W. and A. Strahan, 1784), 229.

<sup>19</sup> William Ellis, *An Authentic Narrative of a Voyage Performed by Captain Cook and Captain Clerke, 1776–1780*, Volume 2 (London: G; Robinson, 1784), 152.

<sup>20</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 126.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis, 150, 153.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, 150.

intermingle and converse freely around the village huts. In the background, fully clothed marines and nearly naked Hawaiians work side-by-side, rolling caskets of fresh water. In the middle of the scene, a bare-breasted Hawaiian woman boldly stands in front of an officer – she seems to be making some kind of proposition as she unfurls a *kapa* cloth in her hands.



Figure 2 – "An Inland View in Atooi [Kauai], One of the Sandwich Islands," Painting by John Webber (1778), The British Library Collection.



Figure 3 – "An Inland View in Atooi [Kauai]," by John Webber, Engraved by S. Middiman, in *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...1776-1780*, (London, 1785).

Later, when eighteenth century London book publishers reproduced Webber's sketches in print engravings, the thriving nature of this exchange was condensed into a more controlled scene, with less signs of intercultural "commingling" (Figure 3). Most notably, the naked woman was entirely removed – or rather, censored – and replaced with a male or androgynous figure. The formerly chatty officer was also transformed into a dominant and imperial figure (a redcoat), as if instructing the natives to submit to authority. A singular sailor now rolled the barrel alone without any Native help. Webber's *An Inland View, in Atooi* [Kaua'i], in its unadulterated, original form, was meant to depict the discordant yet interfused nature of the initial encounter. Yet when the sketch was brought back to England, it was deemed too provocative for the landlocked English reading public; any disquieting signs of physical contact between Europeans and Hawaiians were suppressed or removed.

For Cook's sailors, half a globe away from the confines of western propriety, the hyper-sexualized encounter in Hawai'i was hardly novel or malapropos. From the Friendly (Tonga) Islands to the Society Islands – both named by Cook for their "congenial" inhabitants – the men recreated their own versions of the romantic Polynesian odyssey where they envisioned themselves as the "Dons" of the South Seas. Ever since French explorer Louise Antoine Bougainville arrived in Matavai Bay, Tahiti in 1768 and famously named the amorous and half-naked women the "Aphrodites" of "New Cythera," the myth of the paradisiacal South Seas captivated the daydreams of European sailors. When Cook returned from his first Pacific voyage in 1771, Cook's young botanist Joseph Banks became a sensation in London and enhanced the image of the gallivanting South Seas adventurer with Polynesian tattoos, souvenirs of carved

idols and tales of tropical trysts. By the time Cook arrived in Hawai'i, the representative image of the Pacific female was solidly in place as a Homeric Siren, who beckoned from the other side of Cape Horn to tempt European men into dropping their civilized ways and "go native" into the savage unknown.

Fortunately for Cook, none of his men sought to jump ship and desert in Kaua'i (unlike earlier in the Society Islands), but plenty of damage was done after a week of continuous contact. Cook was incensed when he discovered, belatedly, that third lieutenant John Williamson, a man who had a reputation for cruelty, shot and killed a Hawaiian man during an early scouting mission. Cook was also busy handing out punishments during their stay around Kaua'i. Ship records show that a "Will Bradyley" was flogged with two-dozen lashes for engaging with women while "knowing himself to be injured with the venereal disorder."<sup>23</sup> "S. Bishop," a butcher's mate, received six lashes for "neglect of duty."<sup>24</sup> William Charlton, a midshipman on the *Resolution*, recorded three more sanctions doled out at Kaua'i: "Jno. Grant and Benjm. Syon [were] punished with 12 lashes each for absenting themselves from the boat when on Shore, and Wm. Nash with one Dozn for Disobeying orders."<sup>25</sup> As Cook had predicted, his men

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<sup>23</sup> Roberts in Beaglehole, 266 fn.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: The Remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Seas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 436.

<sup>25</sup> Charlton quoted in Oswald A. Bushnell, *The Gifts of Civilization: Germs and Genocide in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 137. Beaglehole mistakenly dates these punishments as January 25, 1779, instead of January 25, 1778 (Beaglehole, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 511 fn.). Furthermore, Beaglehole repeats Bradley's punishment twice – as if the sailor was punished a full year later on the exact same date, for the exact same infraction (Beaglehole, Vol. 3, Pt. 1, 266 fn – attributed to "Roberts"). It is a rare error by the meticulous biographer. Salmond's fascinating "flogging list" in the *Appendix* unfortunately includes Beaglehole's error (Salmond, 437). Bushnell, on the other hand, cites midshipman William Charlton's log as a

were almost impossible to keep in line once they established regular contact with the Islanders. Charles Clerke, commander of the companion ship *Discovery*, thought the threat of discipline was ineffectual against the “infernal and dissolute” crewmen who would do anything to satisfy their “present passion” even if it meant bringing “universal destruction upon the whole of the Human Species.”<sup>26</sup> Cook, however, did everything in his power to prevent uncontrolled bacchanalia.

Captain Clerke of the *Discovery* received a brief visitation from a prominent *ali'i* (chief) that offered some insight into the highly stratified nature of early Hawaiian society. The *ali'i*, identified by Clerke as “Tamahano,” ceremoniously approached the *Discovery* in a giant double canoe while ramming and smashing any other Native canoes that got in his way. The *maka'āinana*, or the Hawaiian commoners, were forced to either prostrate before the sacred chief or jump out of his way before getting their canoes scuttled to pieces. The chief's attendants carefully lifted the regent onto the *Discovery's* gangway, but they refused to let their leader proceed further onto the ship. Clerke greeted the *ali'i* in the customary Polynesian manner, by pressing foreheads and noses together – a friendly introduction that eased the Hawaiians. Yet Clerke was unprepared for the rigidity of Hawaiian society when he heartily clapped the *ali'i* on the shoulder while “laughing them out of [their] ridiculous fears.”<sup>27</sup> The horrified attendants gently lifted Clerke's hand and begged him not to touch the sacred

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primary source for the date of these punishments. Bushnell is also concerned with the exact dates when venereal diseases were introduced into Kaua'i and uses flogging records as evidence for his study.

<sup>26</sup> Clerke in Beaglehole, 576.

<sup>27</sup> Clerke in Beaglehole, 281.

chief again. The *ali'i* was *kapu* (*tabu* in Tahitian, or taboo) and revered for his divinity; casual physical conduct with the sanctified chief was strictly forbidden.<sup>28</sup> The Hawaiians thus immediately perceived the new foreigners within their own social hierarchical context that went beyond mere dumbfounded amazement. Cook may have been venerated as a divine chief, but Hawaiians had varying opinions about the social standings of the rest of the crew.

On January 25<sup>a</sup>, the *Resolution* and *Discovery* weighed anchor due to a battering Pacific storm and the ships were blown westward to the small island of Ni'ihau. After five days of attempting to sail back to Kaua'i, Cook relented and sent a watering party of twenty marines to Ni'ihau led by Lieutenant John Gore, a veteran Pacific voyager from Virginia. While the party was ashore, another storm forced the *Resolution* and *Discovery* out to sea, leaving Gore's party unattended on Ni'ihau for two days and nights.<sup>29</sup> By this point, Cook knew he had completely botched his attempts at a sterilized engagement with his new discovery: "thus the very thing happened that I had above all others wished to prevent."<sup>30</sup> According to Samwell, during the nights the men were left on Ni'ihau, a female *kupuna* [elder] named Walako'i performed extravagant rituals

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<sup>28</sup> In ancient Hawai'i, there were also differences in dialects across the archipelago. The Kaua'i dialect, for example, likely preferred "*tapu*," whereas towards the Big Island of Hawai'i, "*kapu*" was used. Thus English translations of Hawaiian words and names during the early voyaging period often confused the "*t*" and "*k*" sounds. The language has since been "systematized." The word "*kapu*" is still used regularly around the state of Hawai'i today, mostly in "no trespassing" signs, i.e. "This Area Is Kapu."

<sup>29</sup> Today, the island of Ni'ihau is privately owned and inaccessible to visitors. Hawaiian is still spoken as the first (and only) language on the island among its tiny population of a little over one hundred Native Hawaiians.

<sup>30</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 276.

“like the Thracian Priestesses of old” that involved the sacrifice of several pigs. The “Mad Woman,” as the marines named her, instructed the young women of the village to sleep with the strange foreign men. Lieutenant Williamson noticed that the women were “determined to see whether our people were men or not & us’d every means in their power...to do that”<sup>31</sup> Samwell was similarly startled by the aggressiveness of Hawaiian women who “would almost use violence to force you into their Embrace regardless whether we gave them anything or not.”<sup>32</sup> The entire experience, though hardly traumatizing for the men, seemed frenzied and strangely ritualized.

After retrieving his men from Ni’ihau, Cook departed the Hawaiian Islands on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and set his course for the northwest coast of America. The commander was curious about the other islands in the archipelago but he was grossly behind schedule; he needed the entirety of spring and summer to explore the arctic sea before it iced over. Cook hastily named the island chain the “Sandwich Islands” – one of many spots he named after his patron, the Earl of Sandwich – and shelved the incomplete charts for a later visit. Cook’s men gleaned little about Hawaiian culture during their brief two-week stay, yet they made a quick checklist based on their understanding of other Pacific Islanders, such as, Hawaiians do not practice cannibalism like the Maoris of New Zealand, yet they perform human sacrifices to sanctify temples like Tongans and Tahitians; like most Polynesian societies, the Hawaiians have a chief-commoner hierarchy and social order is maintained through a strict system of taboos, or *kapu*; the priestly *kāhuna* class also wield considerable power; the Hawaiians

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<sup>31</sup> Williamson quoted in Salmond, 385.

<sup>32</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1085.

seem engaged in inter-island warfare, etc. Moreover, the whirlwind encounter was a period of intense bodily ogling and physical contact from both sides. Inhibitions were not a factor in the brief exchange.

### **The Asexual Captain**

Native historian Kamakau saw nothing but wickedness, not mutual goodwill, during Cook's initial visit: "To these islands he bequeathed such possessions as the flea, never known on them before this day, and prostitution with its results, syphilis and other venereal diseases." The dwindling of the Hawaiian population during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, according to Kamakau, could be traced to Cook's arrival. Kamakau also recorded a more complicit and carnal Captain Cook that survived in the oral traditions of Kaua'i: "Ka'eo [high chief of Waimea, Kaua'i] gave to Captain Cook his wife's daughter Lele-mahoa-lani, who was sister to Ka-umu-ali'i, and Captain Cook gave Ka'eo gifts in exchange for Lele-mahoa-lani. When the other women noticed that the chiefess had slept with foreigners, they too slept with foreigners in order to obtain cloth, iron, and mirrors."<sup>33</sup> The veracity of this legend has been widely disputed, or simply ignored, by both western and Hawaiian scholars – there are no written records of Cook having any affairs with Island women during his voyages. In fact, Cook himself often recorded how Island women routinely derided him for his staunch asceticism.<sup>34</sup> Yet Abraham Fornander, a nineteenth century Swiss historian who comprehensively gathered the oral legends of the

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<sup>33</sup> Kamakau, 95.

<sup>34</sup> J. C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 390–391.



Islands, maintained that “during the last generation of Hawaiians it was openly said, and never contradicted, that that night *Lelemahoalani* slept with *Lono* (Cook).”<sup>35</sup>

Within the European mode of conception, however, Cook was the model of abstinence. Throughout his journeys, the stern captain continually refused offers of females from eager island chiefs who wanted to establish genealogical and political kinship with the great navigator. To his libidinous crewmen, Cook must have appeared dispassionately asexual, but not for reasons associated with “unmanliness” or impotence (after all Cook had children and a wife, Elizabeth, at home). Rather, Cook was the ultimate male embodiment of the Age of Enlightenment – cool, detached, calculating, observant, judicial and in many respects, unapproachable as a towering figure of paternalistic authority. Cook’s three voyages were in the name of science; they were investigatory explorations that employed botanists, naturalists, artists, astronomers and the latest in navigational technology. As Europe’s most eminent navigator and cartographer, Cook was the exemplar of knowledge, reason and measure. So much so, that Cook was not only known as a discoverer, but also as a “great debunker,” where he systematically dispelled long held European myths like Terra Australis (The Great Southern Continent) or the fabled Northwest Passage.

To be sure, Cook was not a moralist or prone to superstition; he refused to have the customary preacher on board his ships. As a beacon of the Enlightenment, Cook promoted a humanist view in his dealings with native populations and practiced a Rousseauian form of cultural relativism that

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<sup>35</sup> Abraham Fornander, *Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1996), 162.

espoused the “noble savage.” Yet Cook was also the European archetype of the imperial ethnographer – along with his compassionate curiosity came militant severity, at times even cruelty. If Cook was a man *of the mind*, in the Cartesian sense, then the body, for Cook, was a vehicle for shipboard discipline and native coercion – akin to the property of the British navy, at least while under his watch. Thus if the Hawaiians ever presented a woman to Captain Cook “because he was a god,” notes anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, “we can be sure he refused her—for something like the same reason.”<sup>36</sup>

What then was native historian Kamakau’s reason for portraying Cook as a sexual conqueror? As Pacific historian Caroline Ralston notes, “ancient Hawaiian philosophy vaunted sexuality.” Sexual relations were essentially the basis of Hawaiian social and political structure when Cook arrived at the Islands.<sup>37</sup> Since Cook was denoted as an entity of superior status, Hawaiian logic followed that Cook practiced the same chiefly ritual of inter-tribal alliance – that of sexual unions among the ruling class. It was customary therefore for Ka’eo, the *ali’i* of Kaua’i, to offer his daughter Lelemahoalani to Cook as a peaceful and honorary act of compact – and Hawaiian tradition expected Cook to receive her in an act of reciprocation. For chiefs, or *ali’i*, in ancient Hawaiian society were regarded as god-kings, extraordinary beings infused with strong *mana*, or divine energy. *Mana*, as a free-flowing spiritual energy, could be transferred, gathered and maintained through sex, birthright, war, human sacrifice and taboos. Thus

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<sup>36</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 3 fn.

<sup>37</sup> Caroline Ralston, “Changes in the Lives of Ordinary Women in Early Post-Contact Hawaii,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 54.

the “other women” who followed the actions of their chiefess and likewise “slept with foreigners” were engaged in what Jocelyn Linnekin identifies as *‘imi haku*, which can be roughly translated as “to seek a lord.”<sup>38</sup> *‘Imi haku* was a form of hypergamy, or marrying-up (in western terms), to raise the social status of an individual or family. In this context, Cook’s sailors represented sources of *mana* – or essentially status – for the Hawaiian women.

Although the sailors offered trinkets such as iron nails and mirrors as tokens of sexual barter, the offering of material gifts between companions was a perfectly normal function of displaying honor and status *of the giver* within Polynesian customs. “Prostitution” as a concept was simply non-existent in Hawai‘i. As Linnekin points out, Hawaiians viewed sexuality as a vehicle for pleasurable encounters, thus any material exchanges were not viewed as the “commodification of their bodies.”<sup>39</sup> However, these definitions surrounding sex and material goods – for both Hawaiians and westerners – were transforming almost immediately upon contact, and would continue to evolve well into the nineteenth century as Hawai‘i’s erotic commerce gained notoriety among randy western sailors (see *Chapter 2, 3*). As for Cook’s inability to participate in these exchanges, J.C. Beaglehole, the most eminent Cook biographer, probably offers the best insight:

He did not devote imagination, or emotion, or time to the other sex, apart from his Elizabeth, and from proposing, it is said, on Saturday nights at sea, the toast of all beautiful women. Any reputation he earned in the matter in the Pacific was, however, not so much for an habitual iron

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<sup>38</sup> Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 59.

<sup>39</sup> Linnekin, 186.

disdain as for obvious age and impotence. The passionately professional man was an idea rather beyond Polynesian conception.<sup>40</sup>

### **An Arctic Rebuke**

After departing Hawai'i, Cook and his men spent ten frigid months exploring the northwest coast of America, Alaska and the Bering Sea in a mostly disappointing excursion that was ultimately hampered by an impenetrable wall of ice that stretched from Asia to America. The seamen's journals during this portion of the journey are less lively and Cook's demeanor took on a harsher tone. The rough northern seas and treacherous American coast tested Cook's charting and navigational abilities, but the commander nevertheless "filled his men with awe," according to historian Anne Salmond, as he deftly maneuvered his ships through numerous white-knuckled death traps.<sup>41</sup> Ship provisions no longer consisted of copious island fruits and well-fed hogs; instead sailors hunted and ate walruses – "sea-horses" as they called them – but the leathery creatures were terribly bland in taste. Sickness, in the forms of scurvy, jaundice, tuberculosis and famine, plagued both ships. Cook barely had enough hands to run the decks during several points in the journey.

The northern leg of the voyage, however, was not all glum for every man. The North Americans on the journey – John Gore from Virginia, William Erwin from Pennsylvania, George Stewart from South Carolina, Simeon Woodruff and John Ledyard from Connecticut, Benjamin Whitton from Boston, John Davis

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<sup>40</sup> Beaglehole, 713. Interestingly, Lee Wallace points out that out of the thousands of pages Beaglehole documented on Cook, these were the only sentences that made any mention of Cook's sexual proclivities. What Beaglehole meant by "age and impotence" is unclear; Cook was only thirty-nine years old when he set out on his first Pacific voyage, and died rather prematurely at fifty.

<sup>41</sup> Salmond, 387.

from Nova Scotia and others – were all “plainly affected” when they stood off the northwest coast of America, somewhere around Oregon or Washington. Even though the ships docked “two thousands miles distant from the nearest part of New England,” Ledyard recalled how it “soothed a home-sick heart” to touch the same soil as their loved ones. To be sure, John Ledyard, John Gore and other North Americans on Cook’s journey were the first American-born white men to touch the west coast, long before the march of the western frontier. To add to their odd place in history, these men were also oblivious to the American Revolutionary War unfolding on the opposite coast and would learn about the conflict once they returned to England (see *Chapter 2*).

Cook’s men continued to cavort with Native American and Aleutian women during their northwestern circuit, but according to Samwell, the sailors found continental natives to be “bashful and timid” and “differed very much from the South Sea Island Girls who in general are impudent & loud.”<sup>42</sup> An unexpected run-in with Russians in Unalaska revealed some interesting cultural differences in western interactions with indigenous societies. While Cook and the leaders of the Russian expedition exchanged navigational information over charts and warming vodka, Samwell struck up a conversation with the other Russian officers about their experiences with native women. The Russians flatly denounced Samwell and showed great “disapprobation” for his “intercourse with the Indian Women.” “With a very grave Phyz,” Samwell related, “[the

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<sup>42</sup> Samwell in *Beaglehole*, pt. 2, 1095.

Russians] seemed to lament our depravity in having connections with those who they said were ‘neet Christinae,’ that is not Christian.”<sup>43</sup>

Samwell was ready to dismiss the Russians’ claim of abstinence as “impossible,” but he recalled a similar story he heard from Tahitian women about Spaniards. Curiously, the “Dons” from Spain spurned the advances of the women on the same moral grounds. Samwell viewed all of this piety as “unmanly behaviour” and counterproductive to life at sea, yet the difference in sailor conduct calls into question the lack of discipline that prevailed on Cook’s ships. The permissive shipboard culture of Cook’s expedition was perhaps unique during the age of exploration and clearly not a conduct accepted by all eighteenth century voyagers within the Pacific. To a large extent, Cook encouraged cultural immersion among his men for investigative purposes, yet the cost for this high-level of contact was sex and disease.

### **Paradise Denied**

When Cook returned with his pale and famished crew to the Hawaiian Islands in late November of 1778, the commander became uncharacteristically short-tempered and testy with his men. The *Resolution* and *Discovery* also appeared fatigued and tattered from months of northern exposure with leaking boards and creaking masts. Cook decided to wait out the winter by mapping the Hawaiian Islands and fixing his sloops before making a second attempt at seeking the Northwest Passage next spring. Cook’s home-sick men were aghast at the notion of spending another year in the frigid arctic, but for now the palm

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<sup>43</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1149.

fronds and Arcadian delights of the Islands were welcome thoughts after months of stark icescapes and frigid seas. As soon as the Islands were sighted, however, Cook laid down the law. The commander gathered his men on deck, gave a long speech about carelessness and venereal diseases and ordered all men to be examined by the surgeons. He reiterated his ban on women on the ships and read the British Navy's Articles of War – a lengthy document circumscribing shipboard behavior – from beginning to end, as if his men were greenhorns.

Cook continued to increase the tension onboard by spending the next two months sailing around the islands of Maui and Hawai'i while refusing to let his sensually deprived men go on shore. When Cook suddenly banned grog and forced the men to drink sugarcane "beer" (as an experimental remedy for scurvy), his men became enraged. The cat-o'-nine-tails, which was mostly bagged during the arctic, was let out again to discipline the "mutinous" and "turbulent crew."<sup>44</sup> Ledyard described Cook's odd turn of demeanor: "It appeared very manifest that Cook's conduct was wholly influenced by motives of interest, to which he was evidently sacrificing not only the ships, but the healths and happiness of the brave men, who were weaving the laurel that was hereafter to adorn his brows."<sup>45</sup> Cook had an entire winter to kill and was buying time to lessen onshore debauchery, plus he had his maps to complete; he found no reason to explain himself to his men.

Off the shores of Maui and Hawai'i, canoes came to meet the ships with bountiful island provisions and more seducing women performing the *hula*,

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<sup>44</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 479 fn.

<sup>45</sup> Ledyard, 69.

which Dr. Samwell once again described as “lascivious Motions and Gestures.”<sup>46</sup> Cook and his men immediately discovered the swelled genitalia of the Hawaiians and realized that their previous landing had indeed spread the “venereal,” or gonorrhea – and likely syphilis – among the Islanders. Lieutenant King expressed the condition in the crude vernacular of the day, “they had a Clap.”<sup>47</sup> The Islanders pointed to the foreigners and accused them of being the “original authors,” but King could not fathom how the disease spread from island to island within a mere ten months. Cook, however, readily conceded to the devastating evidence, “The evil I meant to prevent...had already got amongst them.”<sup>48</sup> By December 7<sup>th</sup>, Cook allowed women to come on board, since according to Ellis, “it was out of our power to leave them in a worse state than we found them, but the women could barely remain on the ships without getting seasick.”<sup>49</sup>

During Cook’s ten-month absence, the Hawaiians continued their complex inter-island rites of love and war. The most calamitous conflict involved Kalani’opu’u, a high chief on the island of Hawai’i, who was locked in a long and costly struggle to take over the island of Maui from the great warrior chief, Kahekili. According to native chronicler Kamakau, Kalani’opu’u heard about Cook’s dramatic arrival while battling Kahekili’s forces on eastern Maui: “When Moho told [Kalani’opu’u] and the other chiefs of Hawai’i the story about Captain Cook and described his ship they exclaimed, ‘That was surely Lono! He has

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<sup>46</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1151.

<sup>47</sup> King in Beaglehole, 498.

<sup>48</sup> Cook in Beaglehole, 474.

<sup>49</sup> Ellis, vol. 2, 76.



come back from Kahiki.”<sup>50</sup> Cook’s identity as the returning ‘aumakua [ancestor-deity] Lono, from the mythical distant land of Kahiki [Tahiti], was already established when the *Resolution* and *Discovery* made their second appearance at the Islands.

In addition to the outlandish ships, there were several reasons for the Cook-as-Lono theory – at least in the manner conceived and espoused by the *kāhuna* class.<sup>51</sup> First, Cook appeared twice during the *Makahiki* season, the annual winter harvest and fertility festival honoring Lono. Second, the awe-inspiring fluttering masts on Cook’s ships were almost identical to the *Makahiki* idol, or the *akua loa*. Native Hawaiian historian David Malo describes the *akua loa* as a wooden “cross piece” which hung a white rectangular *kapa* cloth “down in one

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<sup>50</sup> Kamakau, 97.

<sup>51</sup> The question of whether the Hawaiians thought Captain Cook was a Hawaiian god (or not) caused one of the most heated debates in Pacific studies in recent years – that of Marshall Sahlins of University of Chicago versus Gannath Obeyesekere of Princeton. The nuances of the debate are complex, but the basic argument boils down to the differences in Western interpretations (and misinterpretations) of native culture. Sahlins sees enough historical evidence to confirm that Hawaiians indeed viewed Cook as Lono, while Obeyesekere argues that the majority of this “evidence” was created during the postmortem “apotheosis of Captain Cook” when Europeans propped the navigator up as a sublime figure. Although Obeyesekere raises important issues in non-native scholastic interpretations of native traditions, his attack against Sahlins contorts the actual events surrounding Cook’s arrival at the Islands. Essentially, Sahlins built his career as an anthropologist and historian of the Hawaiian Islands, and demonstrated that Obeyesekere – though a native of Sri Lanka with keen indigenous perspectives on colonization – has only a cursory understanding of Native Hawaiian history. Most, if not all, Pacific historians agree that in 1778 and 1779, Hawaiians treated Cook, at least initially, as an ‘aumakua, or an ancestor-deity manifested as a high-ranking person. However, I prefer Anne Salmond’s more nuanced view of dynamic tribal politics – that there was debate between the *kahuna* and warrior classes in Kealakekua as to Cook’s real identity and this may have contributed to the navigator’s fatal end. See Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (The University of Chicago Press, 1985); Gannath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton University Press, 1992); Marshall Sahlins, *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

piece to a length greater than the pole” (Figure 4).<sup>52</sup> The mast-like pole was carried by a *kahuna* who led a religious procession on a circuit around the island, “in such a direction as to keep the interior of the island to the right,” Malo notes. Third, the plodding, clockwise course of Cook’s ships around the islands of Maui and Hawai’i almost mirrored the *Makahiki* procession that took place on land. Fourth, and probably the most contested reason among the warrior class, *Makahiki* was a time of peace – no battles were fought during the festivities – and Cook’s crew seemed benign, festive, generous and even fertile. While Cook slowly tacked off the coast of Maui, both Kahekili (the Maui chief) and Kalani’opu’u (the Hawai’i chief) visited the ships separately. But when it became clear Cook intended to make landfall somewhere on the island of Hawai’i, Kalani’opu’u sent word ahead to his people to prepare for Lono’s arrival. By receiving Cook-Lono properly, Kalani’opu’u hoped to gain an invaluable ally.

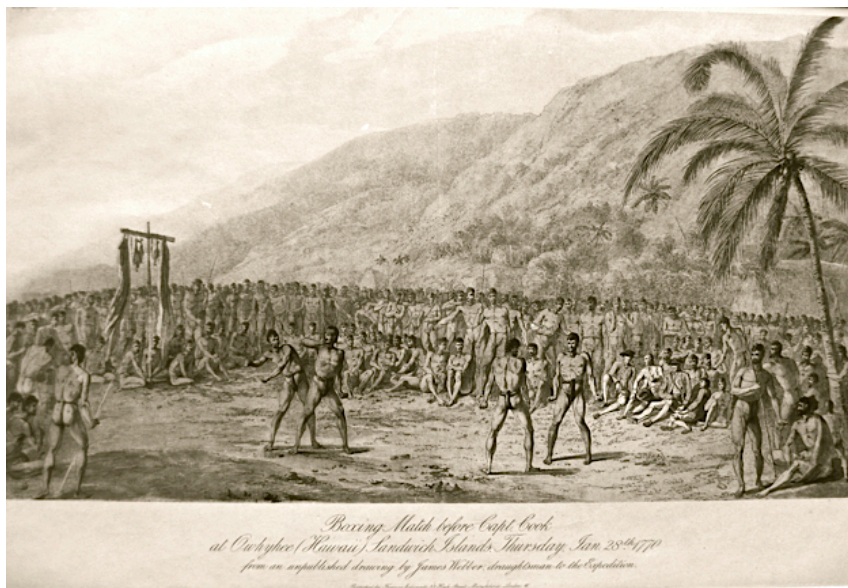


Figure 4 – “Boxing Match Before Capt. Cook at Owhyhee (Hawaii), Sandwich Islands, Thursday, Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1779,” by John Webber. The *Makahiki* idol, the *akua loa*, can be seen on the left with its crossbar and streamers. The *Makahiki* season was a festive occasion with fun and games, including boxing.

<sup>52</sup> Malo, 144.

## Second Landing

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1779, master William Bligh (later, captain of the ill-fated *HMS Bounty*) came back from a sounding expedition and reported a suitable landing spot in Kealakekua Bay off the large island of Hawai'i.<sup>53</sup> As the *Resolution* and *Discovery* rounded towards the bayside village, a throng of Hawaiians gathered to greet Cook and his men. The reception was unlike any Cook had ever seen, "I have nowhere in this Sea seen such a number of people assembled at one place, besides those in the Canoes all the Shore of the bay was covered with people and hundreds were swimming about the Ships like shoals of fish." Corporal Ledyard looked beyond the shoreline and saw even more crowds: "the beach, the surrounding rocks, the tops of houses, the branches of trees and the adjacent hills were all covered." Lieutenant King estimated about ten thousand inhabitants surrounding the two ships, while Ledyard thought it was closer to fifteen thousand.<sup>54</sup> The *Discovery* almost heeled over at one point when hundreds of people clung to the side. Among the firmly secular writings of Cook's men, the overwhelming scene of humanity provoked a rare moment of Protestant New England humility within Ledyard:

God of creation these are thy doings, these are our brethren and our sisters, the works of thy hands, and thou art not without a witness even here where for ages and perhaps since the beginning it has been hid from us, and though the circumstance may be beyond our comprehension let it not lessen the belief in the fact.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Captain William Bligh's famous Tahiti adventures and mutiny by his own crew (led by young Fletcher Christian) in 1789 is a classic story that influenced the paradigm of the South Sea sexual utopia in European thought and Hollywood extravaganzas. See Caroline Alexander, *The Bounty, The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> King in Beaglehole, 503. Ledyard, 67.

<sup>55</sup> Ledyard, 69. Ledyard was raised as a Congregationalist in Connecticut.

Ledyard essentially coined a trope that would be repeated by western visitors to Hawai'i for the next century, a literary process Elvi Whittaker calls "Genesis in oceanic form."<sup>56</sup> As a culture "obsessed with origins," Whittaker notes, westerners gave immense significance to their arrivals in their writings. These first-landing narratives invariably contain descriptions of enthralled natives gathering along the shoreline while canoes ceremoniously shower newcomers with hearty *aloha* and fresh provisions. And like Ledyard's prose, Hawaiians were often portrayed as a people who lacked any "history" prior to the arrival of a proper "witness" from a literate land. More than forty years later, Protestant missionaries – many from Ledyard's home state of Connecticut – took this oceanic Genesis to heart and emerged on the shores of Hawai'i to forge a new Christian beginning (see *Chapter 3*).

While Ledyard pondered the mysterious ways God populated the earth, the *kāhuna* wasted no time in greeting their 'aumakua, Lono. Koa'a, a high priest of the bay, led Cook and his retinue off the *Resolution* and into Hikiau temple, a walled-in courtyard with a broad lava stone platform, atop of which stood small shrine-like huts, tall wooden idols and the skulls of sacrificed Maui warriors. Within this sanctified *heiau*, known as Hikiau, Cook was fully venerated as a superior being with offerings of pigs and long-winded prayers (Figure 5). King, who sat next to Cook during the elaborate ritual, heard a continual reference to "the word *Erono* [Lono]"<sup>57</sup> as Cook silently accepted their devotions. What Cook

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<sup>56</sup> Elvi Whittaker, *The Mainland Haole: The White Experience in Hawaii* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>57</sup> King in Beaglehole, 506.

thought about this entire episode is a complete mystery, for his daily journal ends with Koa'a leading him into Hikiau temple.<sup>58</sup>



Figure 5 – “An Offering before Capt. Cook, in the Sandwich Islands,” by John Webber, Engraved by J. K. Sherwin, in *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...1776–1780*, (London, 1785).

Naturally, the sailors during this time busied themselves with the affections of Island “sweethearts,” as Dr. Samwell called the women, while boldly flouting shipboard restrictions. Cook and his scientific team were granted permission by the *kāhuna* to set up an encampment within the vicinity of the

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<sup>58</sup> Many theories have been put forth as to why Cook’s journal ends here. The most commonly accepted theory is that the British Admiralty nixed the last two weeks of Cook’s log before publishing the official journals. Cook was unusually cantankerous during this period; one of his last entries was a diatribe against the Admiralty for fitting his ships with substandard riggings. Perhaps it was not the ideal way to memorialize the great navigator. However, there is no evidence for Cook’s “secret logs.” Another more romanticized notion is that Cook “went native” like Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and relished his role as an island demigod.

*heiau*, away from the pressing crowds. The priests laid down a *kapu* in the area by posting white *Makahiki* idols and Cook ordered sentries to guard the camp day and night. Ledyard described jealousy among the seamen, depending on where each person was stationed around the bay: "The people at the tents complained that according to orders they were secluded from the society of the fair, while the people on board were not."<sup>59</sup> Order quickly broke down, however, as officers snuck off to "neutral ground" for brief liaisons with Islander women who refused to enter *kapu* territory. Soon, with "jealous love, and the sleepless eyes of anxiety," Ledyard wrote, the lower ranking soldiers and sailors left their posts to join the spree. The *Makahiki* poles were eventually removed, the *kapu* was lifted and everyone gained access to the tents. The Islanders fell at ease with their visitors and consequently, theft became a major annoyance for Cook's crew. Yet the lovemaking continued and the males bonded physically over wrestling contests, boxing matches, firearms instructions and likely more shaving.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, a *kapu* was placed on the bay for the arrival of chief Kalani'opu'u, who had been away on Maui strategizing for next season's battle against Kahekili. Not a single canoe came out to the ships; Samwell expressed the disappointment of the sailors, "We had no Girls or a single person on board today."<sup>60</sup> During the week of the high chief's absence, two imposing men stood out to Cook's crew as carrying significant authority over the inhabitants of Kealakekua: Palea and Kana'ina. Palea, for example, came aboard the *Resolution* and *Discovery* early every morning to clear the ships of any Hawaiian girls who stayed the night so Cook's men could get on with their morning duties. Kana'ina,

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<sup>59</sup> Ledyard, 72.

<sup>60</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1166.

meanwhile, often used force on his own people – sometimes in ways the white men found excessive – to prevent the theft of iron nails and other materials from the ships. Palea and Kana'ina were the *ali'i*, or sub-chiefs, under Kalani'opu'u, the *ali'i nui*, or supreme chief, and their business was to enforce order around Kealakekua.

The ship journals are filled with adoration for these two young men. Surgeon Ellis, thought the men were “pleasing” and “possessed of great good nature,” while Lieutenant King described them as “men of strong and well-proportioned bodies, and of countenances remarkably pleasing.”<sup>61</sup> King was particularly drawn to Kana'ina: “Kaneena [Kana'ina] especially, whose portrait Mr. Webber has drawn, was one of the finest men I ever saw. He was about six feet high, had regular and expressive features, with lively, dark eyes; his carriage was easy, firm, and graceful” (Figure 6).<sup>62</sup> Yet King was not just taken by Kana'ina's impressive physique, he was also enchanted by his mind:

He was very inquisitive in our customs and manners; asked after our King; the nature of our government; our numbers; the method of building our ships; our houses; the produce of our country; whether we had wars; with whom; and on what occasions; and in what manner they were carried on; who was our God; and many other questions of the same nature, which indicated an understanding of great comprehension.<sup>63</sup>

King and Kana'ina exchanged names in the Tahitian tradition of *taio*, or intimate friends. King was now “Kaneena,” while Kana'ina called himself “Tinny” – their best approximations for their new names. Although Hawaiians regularly adopted new names – Koa'a, for example, adopted the name, “Brittanee” (Britain) – the Society Islands tradition of name-exchange was unknown in the

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<sup>61</sup> Ellis, vol. 2, 88. King in Beaglehole, 504.

<sup>62</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 4.

<sup>63</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 131.



Hawaiian Islands. Thus it was likely King who solicited Kana'ina to perform this solemn Tahitian male-to-male ritual. Cook's men were not only "going native," to use the South Sea expression, but inculcating their own ineffable meanings into adopted native practices. In curious ways, Cook's men were also transporting digested Polynesian culture onto other Polynesians along their journey. For the young Lieutenant King, Kana'ina provoked such intense and multi-layered sentiments that only an exotic custom was apt in expressing those feelings.



Figure 6 – "A Man of the Sandwich Islands, with his Helmet," or "Portrait of Kaneena [Kana'ina]," by John Webber, Engraved by J. K. Sherwin, in *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...1776–1780*, (London, 1785). Kana'ina is shown wearing the feathered cape and helmet of the *ali'i* rank.



## “Curious” Customs

When Kalani’opu’u returned to Kealakekua Bay, however, Cook’s men learned another fact about Palea and Kana’ina that drew mixed reactions from the crew: the sub-chiefs were also *aikāne*, or male lovers, of chief Kalani’opu’u.<sup>64</sup> “Their business,” Dr. Samwell explained, “is to commit the Sin of Onan upon the old King.” This “curious custom” the doctor learned, was “an office that is esteemed honorable among them.” The Hawaiians, on the other hand, thought it was curious that westerners did not practice the same honorary (and pleasurable) custom, for according to Samwell, “they have frequently asked us on seeing a handsome young fellow if he was not an Ikany [*aikāne*] to some of us.”<sup>65</sup>

The “handsome fellow” that drew the most interest from the Hawaiian elites was none other than Lieutenant King, Kana’ina’s *taio*. King, as it turned out, was also highly regarded among Cook’s crew. Midshipman James Trevenen, for example, described King as “one of the politest, genteelest, and best-bred men in the world.”<sup>66</sup> Samwell also gushed on the topic of King: “I never in my life knew a warmer friend or worthier man than he is. I admire him altogether so much that...I can hardly refrain from talking of him.” Chief Kalani’opu’u and the *kahuna* priest, Koa’a, must have witnessed the same irresistible charisma emanating from King when they asked the lieutenant to live in Hawai’i and accept the honorary position of *aikāne*. According to King, “I had proposals by our friends to elope, and they promised to hide me in the hills till the Ships were

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<sup>64</sup> *Aikāne* is derived from *ai* and *kāne*. *Ai* meaning “to have sex with” or “to lie with,” and *kāne*, meaning “man” or “male.”

<sup>65</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1171.

<sup>66</sup> Trevenen & Samwell in Beaglehole, lxxvii, Lxxvii fn.

gone, and to make me a great man." Cook stepped in to make a "positive refusal" and promised Kalani'opu'u that he would consider leaving King behind during his next visit. For the time being, King was relieved that he escaped the fate of "a Curious play thing."<sup>67</sup>

Lee Wallace suggests that there was a "debonair" attitude, a degree of Enlightenment era coolness aboard Cook's ships when it came to native male intimacy, or male-on-male intimacy in general. Certainly the journals of Cook, King and Samwell reflect what Wallace calls a "proto-ethnographic" stance of nonchalance when it comes to describing the sexually amorphous customs of the Pacific.<sup>68</sup> However, the crew of the *Resolution* and *Discovery* were hardly unanimous in their assured approaches toward "strange" sexual encounters. Others on board, like surgeon Ellis, saw nothing but debauched excess in Hawaiian eroticism: "There are no people in the world who indulge themselves more in their sensual appetites than these; in fact, they carry it to a most scandalous and shameful degree, and in a matter not proper to be mentioned."<sup>69</sup> Corporal Ledyard, the New Englander with Calvinist roots, expressed revulsion and moral panic:

It is a disagreeable circumstance to the historian that truth obliges him to inform the world of a custom among them contrary to nature and odious to the delicate mind. The custom alluded to is that of sodomy, which is prevalent if not universal among the chiefs. They are extremely fond of them [*aikāne*] and by a shocking inversion of the laws of nature, they bestow all those affections upon them that were intended for the other sex. We had no right to attack or ever to disapprove of customs in general that differed from our own, yet this one so apparently infringed and

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<sup>67</sup> King in Beaglehole, 518-519.

<sup>68</sup> Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 46-47.

<sup>69</sup> Ellis, vol. 2, 153.

insulted the first and strongest dictate of nature, and we had...so strong a prejudice against it, that the first instance we saw of it we condemned a man fully reprobated.<sup>70</sup>

The other journals do not mention any concerted vocal condemnation against the chief and his *aikāne*, but Ledyard did not hesitate in making a clear distinction – sodomy was not tolerated among Cook's men and they were strongly "prejudice against it." Or were they?

Sodomy was unquestionably a hanging naval offense during Cook's time. When Cook first sighted Maui and unfurled the "revised" 1757 Royal Navy Articles of War, he almost certainly read Article XXIX: "If any person in the fleet shall commit the unnatural and detestable sin of buggery and sodomy with man or beast, he shall be punished with death by the sentence of a court martial."<sup>71</sup> Yet nobody was ever put to death in Cook's three voyages over buggery or sodomy. Furthermore, if Cook's men were regularly flouting his restrictions against women with half-hearted attempts at concealment, a truly sequestered homoerotic affair seems entirely plausible. Wallace notes that the Articles of War "rely on detection for enforcement, not suspicion."<sup>72</sup> Thus a sailor must be "caught in the act" for a court martial to take place; mere suspicion of homoeroticism was not grounds for naval punishment.

Thus what troubled Cook's men was the brazen and public display of male-on-male intimacy by the chiefly class. For the Hawaiians, there was no sexual shame or stigma, and they never bothered to conceal it. One evening, for

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<sup>70</sup> Ledyard, 89–90. I truncated this passage, as Ledyard's writing style can be very long-winded and repetitive.

<sup>71</sup> David Steel, *The Ship-Master's Assistant and Owner's Manual* (London: Navigation Warehouse, 1795), 164.

<sup>72</sup> Wallace, 53.

example, a young Kamehameha, Kalani'opu'u's nephew (and later the great king of all the Hawaiian Islands), came aboard the *Discovery* to spend the night and brought his entourage, including a "Young Man of whom he seems very fond." Samwell relates that everyone was already acquainted with the "detestable part of [Kamehameha's] character" when he came aboard, since he was "not in the least anxious to conceal" his homoerotic behavior.<sup>73</sup> What Samwell and the crew found "detestable" in Kamehameha was not necessarily his sexual proclivity, but his brazen and shameless display of the "unmentionable" act. Essentially, the crew viewed Kamehameha's sexual behavior as a mere "part" of his "character," a part that ought to be concealed away from view.

Furthermore, the wanton permissiveness of the "unmentionable" *act* was not what perplexed Cook's men as much as the way Hawaiians demarcated *aikāne* as a social and political *identity*. "We afterward met with several others of the same denomination," King wrote, "but whether it be an office, or some degree of affinity, we could never learn with certainty."<sup>74</sup> Homosexuality as a social category, or rather the homosexual/bisexual as an identity, simply did not exist in the western lexicon of the eighteenth century; sodomy and buggery, to be specific, were linked to behavior (i.e. maliciousness, lustfulness, impropriety, etc.). That such a behavior was linked to an esteemed political office was an entirely alien concept to Europeans.

Wallace, however, argues that the European encounter with the Pacific was largely responsible for "the opening of a representational space from

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<sup>73</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1190.

<sup>74</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 3 fn.

whence some hundred years later the modern homosexual would emerge.”<sup>75</sup> While Cook and his men certainly exposed many enigmatic Polynesian sexual practices in their journals, these “Pacific texts” from early explorers actually caused high levels of anxiety within the western world. Unlike Wallace’s assertion that a sexual “opening” emerged for westerners, the end result in the Pacific was a deliberate attempt to shrink that “representational space.” Westerners eventually moved to shut it all down. The quick entry of the British and American missionary enterprises into the Pacific, for one, essentially stifled these ambiguous sexual categories (and descriptions) and sought to eliminate them in a systematic manner (see *Chapter 3*).

Ledyard again serves as the precursor to the paradoxical view later New England missionaries held about Hawaiians – that Islanders were people “of nature” but their morals were “contrary to nature.” Ledyard made light of the homoerotic controversy, in his elliptical style, by applauding the heterosexual conquests of Cook’s men:

Our officers indeed did not insult the chiefs by any means, but our soldiers and tars to vindicate their own wonderful modesty, and at the same time oblige the insulted women, and recommend themselves to their favors became severe arbitrators, and the most valorous defenders and supporters of their own tenets.<sup>76</sup>

Essentially, Ledyard interpreted the actions of the sailors – partially in jest and in some respects, seriously – as “righting a wrong,” or more specifically, sexually satisfying the neglected Island women, whose male counterparts

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<sup>75</sup> Wallace, 54. Unfortunately, Wallace never explains what happened during the hundred-year span, nor does she explain the nature of the emergence of the “modern homosexual.” Her certitude in this notion is striking, given that her work relies on decoding and “reading between the lines” of texts that may, or may not, be homoerotic in nature.

<sup>76</sup> Ledyard, 90.

engaged in “unnatural” acts. In reality, the role of *aikāne* only existed in *aliʻi*, or chiefly, circles and Cook’s men were enjoying the company of *makaʻāinana*, or commoner, women. In reality, the actual “valor” was displayed by the young Hawaiian women, who came to know more about the foreigners than any other Islanders through their regular shipboard visits. Although the colonization of Hawaiʻi would not begin in earnest until the nineteenth century, Ledyard’s quip about westerners neutralizing, or “naturalizing,” appalling indigenous practices would become the prime rhetoric and cornerstone of the colonizing effort.

### **Fatal Error**

After two weeks in Kealahou, signs were clear that Cook’s men overstayed their welcome. King felt the heat of embarrassment increase when Kalaniʻopuʻu and his retinue began to pester him about a departure date. “It was ridiculous enough to see them stroking the side, and patting the bellies of the sailors,” King confided, “and telling them...that it was time for them to go.”<sup>77</sup> The “meager” sailors were now fat with “hearty appetites” of food and sex, and the ships were overloaded with fresh provisions. The Hawaiians also began to inquire whether the ships “came from some country where provisions had failed,” and the lack of foreign women onboard “puzzled them exceedingly.”<sup>78</sup> Had all the women perished in their country as well?

Intercultural activities were constant during their two-week stay, almost to a fatiguing level. The Hawaiians held more boxing and wrestling matches, while Cook put on displays of fireworks and firearms on the beach. The

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<sup>77</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 26.

<sup>78</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 26.

Hawaiians entertained the sailors with *hula* dancing, drumming and chanting. The spectacle of surfing, Hawai'i's most famous invention, made Cook's men pale with nausea. It seemed like pure "Horror and Destruction" as they witnessed tiny children ride giant waves that even "the hardiest of our seamen trembled to face."<sup>79</sup> Also during their stay, an old sailor, William Watman, died of a stroke – the first white man to die in Hawai'i – and was buried at the *heiau* with the kind permission from the *kāhuna* priests, who took part in the odd mingled ceremony. Cook continued to visit the sacred *heiau* as Lono. And though he showed grace, he also imposed heavily on the natives. He had some Hawaiians flogged for diving and pulling iron nails from the bottom of the ships, even though, as Samwell noted, the sailors themselves pulled "as many on the inside...to give to the Girls."<sup>80</sup> Cook also ordered his men to dismantle a wooden railing surrounding the *heiau* for firewood for his ships, a move that many of his men saw as sacrilegious and disrespectful to the natives. Throughout all these events, Cook's men endlessly consumed stockpiles of fruits, hogs, fish, fowl, taro, sugarcane, coconuts and fresh water. The situation was plainly obvious to everyone: it was time to go.

The *Resolution* and *Discovery* departed Kealakekua Bay on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1779, to the great wailings of "*Auwe!*" Of all the interactions Cook's sailors had with Islanders, there was nothing more affecting than the Polynesian farewell. *Aloha*, after all, means hello, goodbye and love – one and the same. King was the last to leave the beach, but he was in no hurry to depart. "It was, indeed, not

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<sup>79</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1165.

<sup>80</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1164.

without difficulty, I was able to quit them,” King wrote whimsically.<sup>81</sup> Another season in the cold arctic stretched before the crew, and then possibly home, if their captain would allow it.

Three days out from Kealakekua, a strong storm snapped the foremast of the *Discovery* and sprung a leak in the hull. The *Discovery* was too damaged to continue at sea. Clearly, Cook chose the wrong time to set sail; the waves were relentless for days and the men even recovered several Hawaiians, expert sailors themselves, who were blown out to sea. Cook considered stopping at O’ahu or Maui for repairs, but he knew Kealakekua Bay was the most suitable for his ships, plus he was pressed for time. He decided to turn around – Cook’s most famous and fatal error.

When the *Resolution* and *Discovery* returned to Kealakekua on February 11<sup>th</sup>, the bay was empty and not one person could be seen standing on shore. King, who basked in so much *aloha* only a few days prior, described the awkward homecoming, “This in some measure hurt our Vanity, as we expected them to flock about us, and to be rejoiced at our return.” Kalani’opu’u eventually lifted the *kapu* on the bay and trade was slowly reestablished. The concourse with women was also restored, “but not in such numbers as before,” notes Kamakau.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, thieving increased in higher numbers. Not just satisfied with iron nails, the native pilferers aimed to steal the blacksmith tongs so they could shape their own iron tools. Cook flogged one Hawaiian with forty lashes – far exceeded the maximum standard of two dozen – to set an example against

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<sup>81</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 29.

<sup>82</sup> Kamakau, 101.



such an affront.<sup>83</sup> Cook, who almost never physically punished natives in his previous voyages, was completely unhinged. He ordered the marines to guard everything on shore – the camp, the mast repairs and the watering party – with muskets brandished and ready. “Our former friendship was at an end,” Ledyard lamented.

On the morning of February 14<sup>th</sup>, Cook learned that his large cutter vessel was stolen off a buoy the night before, a bold transgression that made him rage against the natives. Cook decided to use a tactic that seemed to work in previous hostile situations he encountered: kidnap the tribal leader and hold him hostage until the natives gave in. The livid commander and his marines stomped onshore and rudely woke chief Kalani’opu’u at his abode. The waking of a dreaming *ali’i* was *kapu* thus Kalani’opu’u was extremely confused.<sup>84</sup> A great mass of Hawaiians gathered on shore as Cook led the sacred chief towards the waiting dinghies. Kalani’opu’u’s warriors were alarmed by the suspicious activity and stopped the chief from going further, telling him to stay put.

The details surrounding the next chaotic moments vary in each journal with varying degrees of reliability. Ultimately, tensions boiled over as Hawaiians drew their newly fashioned iron daggers and Cook and his men fired their muskets. Cook attempted to signal the marines offshore in their dinghies, but he was overwhelmed by the mob. After the brief-but-explosive altercation, four marines and over twenty Hawaiians were dead, and Cook’s lifeless body was

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<sup>83</sup> Edgar in Beaglehole, 528 fn.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, E. W. Haertig and Catherine A. Lee, *Nana I Ke Kumu: Look to the Source*, vol. 1 (Honolulu: The Queen Lili’uokalani Children’s Center, 1972), 193. It was believed that the “spirit” traveled during dreaming. A premature awakening of a person could cause the spirit to “wander.”

facedown in the shallow water.<sup>85</sup> The Hawaiians instantly cleared out from the shore and the marines rushed back to their ships, leaving their captain's corpse behind on the craggy lava outcropping. The young men "cried out with tears in their eyes," Dr. Samwell wrote, "that they had lost their Father!"<sup>86</sup> Lieutenant King later learned that his "unfortunate friend" Kana'ina, or "Tinny," also perished during the fracas.<sup>87</sup> The losses were insurmountable on both sides.

The Hawaiians later in the day picked up Cook's body, stripped his garments and dismembered his corpse. The *kāhuna* then proceeded to ritualistically burn and sear the flesh off several body parts, and distributed these sacred talismans of the defeated captain to various *ali'i* throughout the district. Chief Kalani'opu'u was said to be hiding in the upland lava caves. Koa'a, or "Britanee," the *kahuna* of Hikiau temple, was sympathetic to the foreign men of Lono and paddled out to the *Resolution* to deliver some of Cook's remains. "We were extremely affected and disgusted," wrote Ledyard, "when the [*kahuna*] produced...a part of Cook's thigh wrapped up in a clean cloth."<sup>88</sup> The shocked and livid seamen demanded the rest of the body from the frightened *kahuna*. Over the next few days, the apologetic *kahuna* gathered what he could of Cook's remains and delivered them to the ships, including the captain's hands, legs, a

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<sup>85</sup> All the journals have varying accounts of the scuffle that killed Cook. It is almost like a textual panorama of a singular event. For centuries, historians have tried to reconstruct a "play-by-play" account using the journals – i.e. who shot/stabbed first, who killed who, how many shots were fired, how many stab wounds Cook received, where the other marines were positioned and so on. The reality is that it was sudden, confusing and emotionally charged for everyone involved. The end result was Cook's death, which none of the sailors could truly make sense of.

<sup>86</sup> Samwell in *Beaglehole*, Pt. 2, 1200.

<sup>87</sup> King in *Cook-King*, vol. 3, 131.

<sup>88</sup> Ledyard, 102.

part of his skull and some clothing. Even though the *kahuna* took great pains to secretly deliver the remains, his heartfelt gesture only made things worse. The sailors were seething and demanded Captain Clerke, who was now in charge of the *Resolution* (Lt. Gore the *Discovery*), to order a ransacking of the village – which he granted. The men burned down the village of Kealakekua and fired muskets and canons, killing more Hawaiians onshore in an uncontrolled rampage. Heads of Hawaiians were also decapitated and displayed on the *Resolution* to match the “barbarity” of Cook’s dismembered corpse. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1779, the foreigners, who fully exposed themselves as mere savage mortals, left Kealakekua after interring their captain’s remains in the bay.

### **Maitai Girls**

The most peculiar part of this story, and one that is rarely highlighted in the mainstream history of Captain Cook’s “discovery,” is throughout this brutal episode, the congress between the sailors and the Island women never ceased. Cook’s death simply overshadows the entire narrative and the women do not fit neatly into the adversarial presentation. Yet from Cook’s death to the razing of the village, Hawaiian women continued to visit and stay aboard the *Resolution* and *Discovery* on their own accord. The accounts of these women are curious and striking; these Hawaiian women exhibited signs of transgression against their own people and culture. During the night of the rampage, for example, King observed the following:

It is very extraordinary that, amidst all these disturbances, the women of the island, who were on board, never offered to leave us, nor discovered the smallest apprehensions either for themselves or their friends ashore. So entirely unconcerned did they appear, that some of them, who were on

deck when the town was in flames, seemed to admire the sight, and frequently cried out, that it was *maitai*, or very fine.<sup>89</sup>

Dr. Samwell concurred and thought the women displayed little signs of anxiety aboard the ships, even though the crew was “at open war with their Countrymen.”<sup>90</sup> The “Maitai Girls,” about seven of them altogether, chose to leave Kealakekua Bay and travel with the expedition; they wanted an adventure all the way to England but the crew would only allow passage to one of the other Hawaiian Islands.<sup>91</sup>

As the *Resolution* and *Discovery* traveled northwest up the Hawaiian archipelago, the women acted as guides, pointing out various villages and the names of their chiefs, while putting on regular *hula* exhibitions on the ships’ decks. The ships made a few watering stops and met several canoe parties along the way, including off the islands of Moloka’i, Lāna’i, Kaho’olawe and Maui. Wherever the ships stopped, the Maitai Girls spread the news of Cook’s death and the events at Kealakekua Bay to the local villagers. The ebullient women were proving too much for the crew who were still lamenting the loss of their great commander and feared such stories would undermine their authority over natives, particularly when it came to bartering for provisions. “They would willingly have accompanied us further, but at last we came to think that they had

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<sup>89</sup> King in Cook-King, vol. 3, 77. “*Maita’i*” in Tahitian, or “*maika’i*” in Hawaiian, means very fine, or good – it is also a “very fine” tropical cocktail.

<sup>90</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1215.

<sup>91</sup> Sahlins and Obeyesekere spar heavily over the nature of these women and the contextual meaning of “*maitai*.” The ugly tit-for-tat argument degenerates into the actual number of women onboard to whether the women admired a “sight” or a “fight” due to printing errors. The somewhat professionally vindictive nature of these arguments – by both parties – is not worth reiterating here.

spread our Misfortune far enough,” huffed Samwell.<sup>92</sup> The Maitai Girls were let off at O’ahu on February 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Female Dissent**

Almost all the women in Kaua’i and Kealahou who visited Cook’s ships, not just the Maitai Girls, were committing egregious *kapu* violations handed down by the village elite. The offense had nothing to do with their sexual relations; there was no stigma attached to sex in the western sense of adultery, prostitution or promiscuity. Instead, the women broke the ancient Hawaiian *kapu* against eating communally with men and consuming “sacred” foods that were only meant for males, such as bananas, pork, turtles, certain pelagic fish, coconuts and poi (taro paste). “The women were not averse to eating with us,” surgeon Ellis noted, “and would frequently indulge themselves with pork, plantains, and coconuts when secure from being seen by [the Hawaiian men].”<sup>93</sup> King reported that a young woman received a “terrible beating” by the *ali’i* for violating the eating taboo while she was aboard Cook’s ships.<sup>94</sup> Yet the women continued to covertly eat taboo foods in the company of western men and at times even broke taboo restrictions set on the bay by visiting the ships in the middle of the night.<sup>95</sup>

Linnekin argues that the *maka’āinana* (commoner) women found in the foreign men “a wedge” to use against Hawaiian men, and possibly the ruling

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<sup>92</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1222.

<sup>93</sup> Ellis, vol. 2, 169.

<sup>94</sup> King in King-Cook, vol. 3, 130.

<sup>95</sup> Samwell in Beaglehole, pt. 2, 1171.

class.<sup>96</sup> The westerners were fascinated with the hard-nosed demeanor of *wāhine*, or Islander women, for to them, it seemed that these women were defying the demure prototype of the European lady (even though Hawaiians had never met a foreign woman). Like their European counterparts, however, Hawaiian women were concerned with social status and a good living. The women saw the sudden appearance of strange foreign visitors as an opportunity to possibly upend their stultifying social traditions, at least even temporarily. One way was to acquire European goods – objects that the *ali'i* also desired. Another was to involve foreign males as coconspirators in the breaking of male-female eating taboos. The most opportune outcome was a successful *'imi haku*, “to seek a lord,” and the production of progeny containing foreign *mana*, in hopes to elevate their family and genealogical line to a chiefly status.

The final destination in the Hawaiian Island chain for Clerke and his men were the island pair of Kaua'i and Ni'ihau, the same two islands the *Resolution* and *Discovery* left thirteen months earlier before their arctic excursion. Many old friends came aboard to make their re-acquaintances including Tamahano the supremely taboo *ali'i* at Kaua'i, and Walako'i the “Mad Woman” from Ni'ihau – who brought her husband who was “mad as well,” according to Samwell. The final and most peculiar ceremony occurred just before the ships left the Islands. Several women from Kaua'i rowed out to the departing ships and directed a Hawaiian man, in a most solemn manner, to deposit the umbilical cords of their

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<sup>96</sup> Linnekin, 21.

babies within the cracks of the ships. Samwell felt that “the Women seemed to have the chief hand in this mystic affair.”<sup>97</sup>

In Kamakau’s estimation, these were the umbilical cords of “the ‘*opala haole* [foreign/ white trash] born to the women.”<sup>98</sup> Yet Kamakau’s disdainful language assumes that these half-Hawaiian-half-white (also referred to as *hapa-haole*) children were unwanted by these women. According to Mary Kawena Pukui, a revered linguist and scholar in everyday traditional Hawaiian practices, the proper disposal of the umbilical cord, or *piko*, was of the utmost concern for Hawaiians of all ranks. For example, Pukui asserts that traditionally, “if a rat found and ate the cord, the baby would have a thievish nature of a rat.”<sup>99</sup> A naval cord tossed into the sea and fed to a tiger shark, on the other hand, would instill the child with the power and shrewdness of a shark, who were considered ‘*aumakua*, or manifestations of ancestor gods. The umbilical cords stuffed into the ships were obviously meant to arrive in “Britanee,” that strange land where Cook was born. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1779, the ships pulled away from Kaua’i and, according to Hawaiian legend, “sailed into the blue and disappeared.”<sup>100</sup>

### **The Naked Mob**

The news of Cook’s death on Hawai’i did not reach England for another eleven months until a letter from Captain Clerke arrived at the Admiralty Office via overland delivery from Kamchatka, Russia. The January 11, 1780 edition of *The London Gazette* broke the “melancholy” news to the public: “The celebrated

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<sup>97</sup> Samwell in *Beaglehole*, pt. 2, 1225.

<sup>98</sup> Kamakau, 101.

<sup>99</sup> Pukui, vol. 1, 183.

<sup>100</sup> Kamakau, 103.

Captain Cook, late commander of [the *Resolution*] with Four of his private Mariners, having been killed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February last at the Island of O'why'he, One of a Group of new discovered Islands, in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Degree North Latitude, in an Affray with a numerous and tumultuous Body of the Natives."<sup>101</sup> This image of Native Hawaiians as a "tumultuous Body," or a singular mob, of bare-skinned natives was a lasting impression in the western world.

Over the next several decades, numerous artists depicted renditions of the iconic scene known as, "The Death of Captain Cook." Many were based on official *Resolution* artist John Webber's famous work created sometime between 1779 and 1781, and first published as a standalone engraving in 1785.<sup>102</sup> Webber's work depicts a valiant Captain Cook instructing his men to cease fire as a mob of Hawaiians, led by a dagger-wielding chief, descends on the unsuspecting commander (Figure 7).<sup>103</sup> Other early artists also showed Cook in various stages of battle, including John Cleveley the Younger's 1784 work where an aggravated Cook wields his rifle like a club at a row of indistinct and blobby natives (Figure 8). Or another engraving published on November 20, 1784, attributed to "D. P. Dodd & others who were on the spot," where a defeated Cook is being dragged facedown across the sand by an angry crowd (Figure 9).

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<sup>101</sup> The London Gazette, "January 11, 1780," quoted in *Hawaiian National Bibliography 1780–1900, 1780–1830*, vol. 1, David W. Forbes ed. (University of Hawaii Press: 1999), 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Hawaiian National Bibliography*, 92.

<sup>103</sup> Rod Edmond, *Representing the Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32–39.



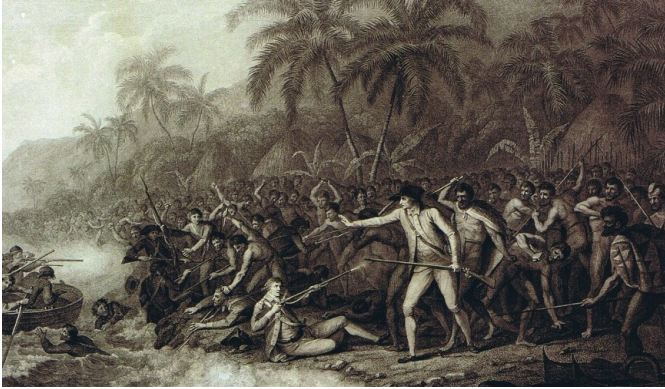


Figure 7 – Close-up of “The Death of Captain Cook,” by John Webber, Engraved by F. Bartolozzi, (London, 1785).



Figure 8 - Close-up of “Death of Captain Cook,” by John Cleveley the Younger (1784).



Figure 9 – “The Death of Captain James Cook,” by D. P. Dodd and “others who were on the spot,” in *Captain Cook’s Voyage*, (London, 1784).

Modern scholarship has largely focused on the various poses of Captain Cook and whether the artists were presenting a humane, aggressive or conquered figure within an imperial context.<sup>104</sup> Yet the vivid horror of this fatal imagery for eighteenth century viewers was the chaotic, dark and savage mass of Hawaiians ransacking, by sheer numbers, an icon of civilization. The various interpretations all emphasize the puniness of European firearms and dinghies against the native horde, as the ships – avatars of British power – are far off the scene. The terror for western viewers was not the moment Cook was killed, but the implications of what happened after – when his limp body was swallowed up by a naked mob, then cut up, filleted and distributed around the Island. For all Cook’s fretting about bodily contact, his end came in a brutally physical manner. The eighteenth century artists essentially preserved the final “snapshot” moment when Cook’s body, dead or alive, was still intact and in pristine physical condition – a white beacon in a mob of dark bodies.

### **Aftermath**

The Hawaiian Islands were isolated from foreign contact for another seven years until French explorer La Perouse made a quick stop on the south point of Maui (today called La Perouse Bay) in 1786. The small fishing village on the arid, lava-strewn shore was wholly disappointing to the French commander with its lack of provisions and fresh water. Some women made propositions to the French crewmen, but they found “their persons far from seducing.”

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<sup>104</sup> In 2004, the “aggressive” Cook painting (1784) by John Cleveley the Younger was discovered at an auction sale, forcing scholars to re-examine the “passive” Cook narrative depicted in eighteenth century art.

According to La Perouse, there was pervasive evidence that “syphilis had committed ravages on the greater number” of the population.<sup>105</sup> Some of the symptoms may also have been gonorrhea, but eighteenth century medicine had trouble discerning between the two. Some of the crewmen witnessed children with the affliction and they conjectured that it was transmitted from breastfeeding. La Perouse only remained a few hours on Maui and left lamenting the “evils” left behind by “modern navigators.”<sup>106</sup> The French expedition later mysteriously disappeared somewhere in the Pacific, never to be heard from again.<sup>107</sup>

Other early foreign visitors were mostly ships of British registry commanded by veterans of Cook’s voyages, including Nathaniel Portlock on the *King George* and George Dixon on *Queen Charlotte*, both making stops at the Islands in 1787 and 1788. During his short stays, Portlock learned about the “total change in their government. Taheeterre [Kahekili]...is the only surviving monarch we left among the islands at that period.”<sup>108</sup> The old chief Kalani’opu’u died soon after Cook’s visit, while his nephew Kamehameha, who was “only an

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<sup>105</sup> Jean-François de Galaup, comte de La Perouse, *The Voyage of La Perouse Round the World, 1785–1788*, M. L. A. Milet Mureau trans. (London: John Stockdale, 1798), 98.

<sup>106</sup> La Perouse did not know whether to blame Cook, since he also believed that the Spanish might have discovered the Islands first. Nevertheless, he blamed Cook for rendering “its consequences more terrible.”

<sup>107</sup> In 1826, an Irish captain, Peter Dillon, visited the coral reef islands of Vanikoro and acquired a sword from the natives and determined that it belonged to La Perouse. Other ship remains were found and local stories confirmed that La Perouse and his men shipwrecked in Vanikoro sometime in 1788.

<sup>108</sup> Nathaniel Portlock, *A Voyage Round the World* (London: John Stockdale, 1789), 78.

inferior chief,” quickly rose to power as the *ali'i nui*, or sovereign ruler, for the entire island of Hawai'i.

The most influential Cook veteran to visit the Islands was George Vancouver, who made three stops between 1792 and 1794 while intermittently charting the Northwest coast of America (where the city of Vancouver today bears his name). Although the British had some commercial trade interests, their main impetus for these voyages was imperial in nature. Vancouver was particularly involved in inter-island diplomacy, urging the *ali'i* to quell their warfare against each other. He was also highly concerned with the spread of western weaponry as Island chiefs sought to acquire guns, cannons and ships from visiting foreigners – both through trade and violent means. Vancouver was the first to leave cattle on the Islands, a gift that was both a blessing and a curse on the people and the environment.<sup>109</sup> The captain attempted to bring the Hawaiian Islands under British “protection,” but Kamehameha and other Hawaiian chiefs did not understand its full political implications and only accepted Vancouver’s overtures in informal terms.

Although the British influence on the Sandwich Islands was significant during the immediate aftermath of Captain Cook, a wave of “Boston men” soon gathered force and spilled into the Pacific by the 1790s. To the Hawaiians, these new Yankee sailors seemed more alien than the British – they had no king or any notable national creed, they were only interested in profits, or “business.” These independent-minded seamen followed one ideology: “there was no God on this

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<sup>109</sup> It is said that the descendants of Vancouver’s cows still graze on the Islands today.



side of the Cape Horn.”<sup>110</sup> To a large extent, the British continued to operate in the Pacific under the specter of Captain Cook, which gave them recognition among Islanders, but the association also came with imperial “baggage.” The Yankee captains, on the other hand, operated mostly as independent agents with a fair degree of flexibility, which sometimes led to unchecked recklessness and even cruelty. Historian Ralph Kuykendall outlines the cumulative effect of this early foreign contact on the Islanders:

Unfortunately, none of the foreigners who came to Hawaii in the early period, or the missionaries who followed soon after, had any adequate understanding or appreciation of the native culture or considered it, or any part of it, worth preserving. None of them had the knowledge or the training that would have fitted them to help the natives find a new way of life based upon the old culture but reconciled with the new. The strange new ideas and practices broke the force of the old *kapus*, weakened the relationship between the common people and the *ali'i* (their leaders from time immemorial), and set the Hawaiians adrift on a competitive sea whose winds and currents baffled them for many years.<sup>111</sup>

Kuykendall’s claim that *none* of the foreigners had *any* appreciation of Native Hawaiian culture is slightly exaggerated (which he even demonstrates in his own historical narrative), yet his description of the accelerated breakdown of the old Hawaiian social order is sadly accurate. Many Hawaiians saw their lives transform into an endless race to “catch up” with the outside world.

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<sup>110</sup> Fornander, 163.

<sup>111</sup> Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Volume I: 1778-1854, Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 12.

## CHAPTER 2

### BOSTON CAPTAINS, CABIN BOYS AND BEACHCOMBERS, 1790-1819

#### A Homecoming

Corporal John Ledyard returned to England in October of 1780 from a nearly four-and-a-half year journey with the crew of the *Resolution* and *Discovery*. Still enlisted as a British soldier, Ledyard was immediately shipped out to North America to fight in the waning American Revolutionary War. Under great anxiety with the prospect of attacking his “native country,” Ledyard defected off Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and made his way to his mother’s house in Long Island, New York – a reunion that took his mother by surprise.<sup>1</sup> He was saddened to learn that the Ledyard family in Connecticut suffered many casualties during the War.<sup>2</sup> Ledyard hunkered down in the winter of 1782 in Hartford, Connecticut and penned *A Journal of Captain Cook’s Last Voyage*, which was later published in Hartford in the summer of 1783.

Ledyard was one of many aspiring authors who travelled on Cook’s final journey. There was money to be made in publishing a first-hand account of the fatal voyage of the world’s most celebrated navigator. When the *Resolution* and *Discovery* returned to England, however, the British Admiralty – led by the Earl of Sandwich – confiscated all shipboard journals and discouraged the publishing of any “unofficial” accounts. Many of Cook’s more literate and crafty passengers,

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<sup>1</sup> Or more accurately, Ledyard requested his superiors for shore leave and never returned. His mother did not recognize him at first, due to his weathered and worn appearance. He must have looked piratical by this point.

<sup>2</sup> Edward G. Gray, *The Making of John Ledyard: Empire and Ambition in the Early American Traveler* (Yale University Press, 2007), 100.

however, reconstructed their accounts through personal letters and back-up secondary notes stashed away during the journey. An anonymous account of the voyage surfaced in London in 1781 (scholars later identified it as the work of second lieutenant John Rickman), while surgeon William Ellis' double-volume account was published in London the following year.<sup>3</sup> Plagiarism was also rampant among the chroniclers of the journey during their mad-dash to publish. Ledyard, for example, borrowed heavily from Rickman's "anonymous" work when reconstructing the arctic portions of the voyage. The official publication sanctioned by the Admiralty, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* by James Cook and James King, was not published until 1784.

Western readers were naturally fascinated by these "plain and unaffected" accounts of "unspoiled" native life, but the eyewitness testimonies of Cook's violent death provoked the most curiosity. Ledyard's writings, however, differed from the other mostly conventional sea journals in that Ledyard made speculations about the possibility for western trade and commerce within the Pacific. After Cook was killed, the *Resolution* and *Discovery* completed a second stint in the arctic, and then stopped in Canton (present day Guangdong, China) before heading home. At Canton, the crew learned that they could unload their earlier-acquired American sea otter and beaver pelts for an "astonishing profit." Ledyard explained that "skins which did not cost the purchaser sixpence sterling [in Northwest America] sold in China for 100 dollars."<sup>4</sup> Despite the hostility Cook encountered, Ledyard felt that the Sandwich Islanders were generally

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<sup>3</sup> Canadian naval historian Frederic W. Howay cracked the Rickman puzzle in 1921.

<sup>4</sup> John Ledyard, *The Last Voyage of Captain Cook: The Collected Writings of John Ledyard*, ed. James Zug (Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2005), 46.

friendly and that their Islands would be an ideal reprovisioning station for the long crossings over the Pacific Ocean.

Ledyard himself attempted to organize an expedition for his proposed Pacific fur-trading venture, but he was met with little interest – the notion of sailing halfway around the world in order to *acquire* trade items for another far-off destination seemed like a harebrained scheme to many investors. Ledyard was livid when he learned that Nathaniel Portlock and George Dixon, both who served under Cook with Ledyard, found the means to gain captaincies for follow-up expeditions into the Pacific in 1785: “they are the worst people in the world to follow in commerce or colonization among an uncivilized people.”<sup>5</sup> Ledyard’s jealousy stemmed from both personal and patriotic reasons; he grew to resent the imperialist style of the British Navy and hoped America would make headway in the Pacific. The legendary Revolutionary War captain, John Paul Jones, expressed interest in Ledyard’s plan, but he backed out at the last minute, foiling Ledyard’s plan to beat Portlock and Dixon to the punch. Unable to make any headway, Ledyard was ultimately forced to “inter the hobby” and he chose to pursue his other dream – trekking around the globe on foot.

Meanwhile, Joseph Barrell, a prominent Boston financier, read Ledyard’s account and his Pacific fur-trading scheme and decided to fund an expedition together with other Boston merchants (including the architect, Charles Bullfinch) as a sort of financial experiment. The wealthy Boston men outfitted the *Columbia Rediviva* and the *Lady Washington*, captained by John Kendrick and Robert Gray, to serve as America’s first official expedition into the Pacific Ocean. Many “firsts”

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<sup>5</sup> Ledyard, 121.



were established during these voyages including the first circumnavigation of the globe by an American ship, the first western ship to discover and sail into the Columbia River (named after the ship), and the first American expedition to visit the Hawaiian Islands and bring back Hawaiians to the United States. Indeed, the launching of the *Columbia* and *Lady Washington* was the “official” beginning of a long and intertwined relationship between New England harbors and the Hawaiian Islands.

### **From Chief to Cabin Boy**

The first Polynesian on written record to ever set foot in North America was a young Hawaiian from the island of Ni‘ihau named Atu. Atu – who went by several names including Jack Atu, Attoo, Ottoo and Atoe – arrived in Boston aboard the *Columbia Rediviva* on August 9, 1790 to great public interest. “We are told,” a Boston newspaper reported, “that one of the natives of the island of Owhyhee [Hawai‘i], arrived in the *Columbia*.”<sup>6</sup> The *Columbia* had just completed a circumnavigation of the globe, a first for the young nation, and the American press extolled the ship’s commander, Robert Gray, as America’s own Magellan. The crew’s original mission – to collect furs from the Pacific Northwest and sell them for a hefty profit in Canton – was not as lucrative as Barrell, Bulfinch and other Boston financiers had planned, but the pioneering venture opened the door to full-fledged American commerce in the Pacific.<sup>7</sup> Despite the financial

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<sup>6</sup> “Boston, Aug. 11,” in *The American Museum*, Volume 8, July to December, 1790.

<sup>7</sup> Captain Kendrick and Captain Gray switched ships mid-journey, for reasons unknown. The two ships were separated at Nootka Sound, and Gray took on the lead ship *Columbia* to Hawai‘i, Canton and back to Boston. Meanwhile, Kendrick kept

disappointment, however, the *Columbia's* sudden homecoming after three years at sea was unexpected and the city erupted into a spontaneous celebration that seemed to last for days. Amidst the hubbub, all attention seemed to revolve around the young Hawaiian.

The August 1790 issue of *The Massachusetts Magazine* reported that Atu was seen in public wearing “the war dress of his own country.”<sup>8</sup> A young John Quincy Adams, who had just started his law practice in Boston, described the “principal topic of conversation” around town in a letter to his mother, Abigail Adams, dated August 14, 1790:

The people of this vessel have brought home a number of curiosities similar to those that you have at the Ashton Lever’s Museum. They have likewise brought a native of the Sandwich Islands, who bound himself as a servant to one of the passengers. He was paraded, up and down our Streets yesterday, in the dress of his Country; and as he speaks our Language has been conversed with by many Gentlemen in this Town.<sup>9</sup>

The sudden turn of fortune for Atu can only be imagined. Once a mere greenhorn aboard a cramped fur-trading vessel in the Pacific, he was transformed into an overnight sensation once he arrived in Boston. Adams’ letter suggests that Atu was “paraded” around town as an object of curiosity, yet the young Hawaiian may also have engaged in notable social exchanges with the “Gentlemen” of Boston, perhaps using the crass sailor’s vernacular he picked up at sea. The sailors of the *Columbia* also donated various “curiosities” to the

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sailing on the *Washington* and in some sense, went rogue and never returned. It was another blow to the financiers.

<sup>8</sup> “Boston, August,” *The Massachusetts Magazine*, August, 1790.

<sup>9</sup> “John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, August 14, 1790,” in *The Adams Papers: Adams Family Correspondence, January 1790 to December 1793*, Vol. 9, The Massachusetts Historical Society ed. (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 2009), 90-91.

museum at Harvard, including “military weapons, domestic utensils, fishing-tackle, musical instruments, dresses, ornaments and idols from the Sandwich Islands discovered by Captain Cook.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, all this excitement coming from the Sandwich Islands, the curators at Harvard concurred, was “highly gratifying for the curious, who love to trace the operations of nature, and observe the progress of human ingenuity and industry, in every part of the world.”<sup>11</sup>

Over time, the story of Atu’s march through Boston as America’s first “noble island savage” would become more stately and flamboyant with each retelling. Nineteenth century antiquarians inflated Atu’s status to a Hawaiian “crown prince” or “chief” and fawned over his imagined Polynesian physique. On the fiftieth anniversary of *Columbia’s* voyage, the *Cincinnati Post* described Atu as “an Apollo in personal symmetry and beauty...dressed in a helmet of the ancient Roman forms covered with small feathers of the most beautiful plumage, which glittered in the sun.”<sup>12</sup> Atu’s original “war dress” was likely the *makini* (or *ikaika*), the Hawaiian gourd helmet worn by the warrior class. Yet as Americans became more familiar with the highly intricate and prized feathered helmets (*mahiole*) and cloaks (*‘ahu ‘ula*) of the *ali‘i*, Atu came to be imagined as a guest of distinguished rank – a Hawaiian ambassador to the young America.

By 1892, on the hundredth anniversary of the *Columbia* voyage, a writer for the *New England Magazine* fantasized a “fine-looking youth” in his “helmet of gay feathers...and an exquisite cloak of the same yellow and scarlet plumage” linking “arm in arm” with Captain Gray as they capered off together to

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<sup>10</sup> “Donation of Curiosities,” in *The Universal Asylum and Columbia Magazine* (1790–1792), September 1790, 202.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Sandwich Islands,” in *Cincinnati Post*, January 13, 1838.

Governor John Hancock's mansion for a "fitting" reception. Atu was thus remembered in local Boston history as Captain Gray's intimate friend and celebrated passenger aboard the *Columbia*.

Yet obscured from the public eye was the ignoble manner in which Robert Gray treated Atu once they boarded the *Columbia* and left Boston for their second voyage.<sup>13</sup> Atu was originally listed as a standard "Seaman" when he first joined the ship in Ni'ihau in November of 1789, but in October of 1790, when the ship sailed out of Boston, he was reduced to a lowly "Cabin Boy." In June of 1791, the crestfallen Atu attempted to jump ship and "go among the natives," according to ship clerk John Hoskins, while the *Columbia* anchored along the west coast of Vancouver Island. An incensed Captain Gray employed a common Pacific Ocean tactic popularized by Captain Cook to deal with "native insurrections" – he kidnapped a local Nootka chief and demanded the return of Atu. When Atu was returned, the commander flogged the Hawaiian in front of his crew and the Nootka chief "as an example," Hoskins notes, "to deter others." However, on a second visit to Vancouver Island, Atu alerted Gray about a conspiracy by Nootka chiefs to attack the *Columbia* and thus the Hawaiian regained some standing among the crew.

In October of 1792, the *Columbia* arrived at Ni'ihau to bring Atu home. Seventeen-year-old John Boit, fifth mate, expressed the typical horny sailor trope of Hawaiian landings seen in many sea logs of the period. "Many Canoes alongside containing beautiful *Women*. Plenty of Hogs and Fowls...The Men were fine stately looking fellows, and the Women quite handsome. They were all

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<sup>13</sup> Captain Gray and the *Columbia* discovered and sailed into the Columbia River during this second voyage.

in a state of Nature, except a small covering around the Middle. Not many of Columbia's crew prov'd to be *Josephs*."<sup>14</sup> Like many visitors, Boit found the Islanders "to be the happiest people in the world. Indeed there was something in them so frank and cheerful that you could not help feeling preposses'd in their favour."<sup>15</sup> To every young western sailor, the Hawaiian Islands were akin to The Garden of Earthly Delights – the grand payoff for months of grueling maritime toil.

Yet Atu was not happy to come home. According to Boit, "our Lad refused to go on shore" even though his "Father and other relations" came out in "vast many canoes" to welcome him home. The reunion seemed "affectionate" but Atu stayed put.<sup>16</sup> Captain Gray acquiesced to Atu's wishes and did not push him to go ashore. Atu thus remained on the *Columbia* and continued with Gray to Canton, but from there his name disappears from subsequent historical records and his ultimate fate is unknown. Like many Hawaiians who were exposed to western ways, the idea of returning home caused conflicting feelings. Furthermore, conditions on the Islands were changing drastically with foreign contact and increased tension between Island chiefs, most notably Kamehameha of Hawai'i and all who stood in his way. For those who went to sea, their villages were often unrecognizable or simply abandoned when they returned years later. For Atu, Ni'ihau likely appeared too parochial compared to the bustling

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<sup>14</sup> John Boit, "Boit's Log," in *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast, 1787–1793*, ed. Frederic W. Howay (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1941), 418.

<sup>15</sup> Boit, 419.

<sup>16</sup> Boit, 418.

international bazaar in Canton and the grand parade in Boston, where he was celebrated as the representative of all the Sandwich Islands.

### **Indentured Friend**

The Boston press, as it turns out, was so enamored by the idea of Atu as an enchanting, lone dignitary that the papers made a crucial omission: there were actually two Hawaiians who stepped off the *Columbia* at Boston in 1790. Ship logs from Joseph Ingraham, second mate of the *Columbia*, names another young islander from Ni'ihau named Opai – variously known as Opye, Opie and Kalehua. According to Ingraham (the officer), Opai also attracted “great notice” during his stay in Boston and came away “impressed with the most favourable ideas of our nation.”<sup>17</sup> The reporters of the day likely confused one Hawaiian for the other during their various public appearances. When John Quincy Adams referred to a Hawaiian who “bound himself as a servant,” he was likely referring to Opai, since Ingraham took the youth under his watch as soon as the *Columbia* left the island of Ni'ihau. Although Opai never enjoyed the same kind of distinctions from the press that Atu received, Opai's voyage out of Boston was far less dramatic than Atu's contorted ordeal.

Ingraham, a Boston native and esteemed prisoner of war during the Revolution, was promoted to captain of the brig *Hope* and departed with Opai in September of 1790, about two weeks prior to when Atu left Boston on the *Columbia*. Ingraham's logbook shows a more intimate portrait of early American-

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *Joseph Ingraham's Journal of the Brigantine HOPE on a Voyage to Northwest Coast of North America 1790-92*, Mark D. Kamplanoff ed. (Barre: Imprint Society, 1971), 76.

Hawaiian relations (Figure 10). “Although I took Opye [Opai] as a servant, I always treated him more like a friend,”<sup>18</sup> Ingraham admits. Furthermore, in Ingraham’s eyes, the feeling was mutual: “I could no doubt that Opye’s friendship for me was sincere.”<sup>19</sup> Like Lieutenant King and Kana’ina before, Ingraham and Opai performed a name-exchange – a practice that became more common between Hawaiians and foreigners – and Opai proudly called himself “Jack Ingraham” for the duration of the voyage.

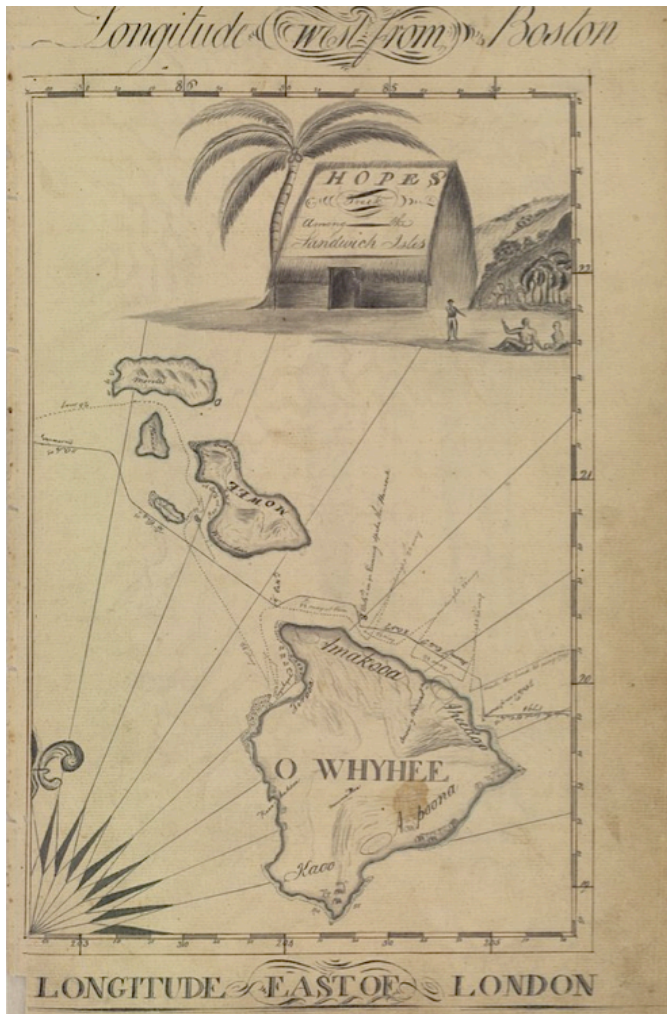


Figure 10 - A page from Boston captain Joseph Ingraham’s Pacific journal (1790-1792), Library of Congress. Ingraham’s incredibly tidy journal is filled with his whimsical pencil drawings of native landscapes.

<sup>18</sup> Ingraham, 76.

<sup>19</sup> Ingraham, 70.

Despite the mutual intimacy, however, Ingraham struggled to make sense of his friend's behavior once they returned to the Hawaiian Islands in May of 1791. For one, Opai seemed to have forgotten his native tongue and spoke to everyone in a "jargon unintelligible to everyone but himself."<sup>20</sup> After twenty months with Americans, Opai had developed an early form of "pidgin," a mixed multiethnic lingo that would become a staple across the Islands. Unlike Atu, however, Opai was overjoyed when the *Hope* brought him home. Ingraham tried unsuccessfully to convince Opai to remain aboard and continue the journey. The young Hawaiian displayed a "strikingly affectionate" reunion with his old friends that "put to blush" the Boston captain: "To enlarge on this subject might be viewed as strained efforts of the head, which I by all means wish to avoid and, therefore let it rest to the conceptions of my friends, as I am sure the conceptions...beggar all description."<sup>21</sup>

The highly emotional reunion clearly involved a display of physical intimacy that Ingraham viewed as unnatural – and ineffable – to the western mind. Ingraham learned that two of Opai's friends were *ali'i*, suggesting that Opai was a "favorite" in some capacity. Opai's friends asked if they could spend the night aboard the ship, to which Ingraham agreed. The *Hope* towed the visitors' double canoe throughout the night as Opai regaled his friends with dazzling tales of Canton, Boston and other great collections of people, far beyond the horizon. Ingraham left Opai in Hawai'i with a certificate espousing his "good

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<sup>20</sup> Ingraham, 67.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ingraham, *The Log of the Brig Hope: Called The Hope's Track Among the Sandwich Islands, May 20 – Oct. 12, 1791*, Hawaiian Historical Society Reprints No. 3 (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 1918), 6. The transcription in this version includes "strained efforts *of the head*" which is not included in the 1971 publication.



character,” a common practice by western captains to inform other foreigners of an Islander’s “reliability.”

Ingraham never explicitly described the nature of his relationship with Opai. Ebenezer Dorr, the supercargo of the *Hope*, however, notoriously despised Ingraham and took every moment in his log to disparage the captain. On May 25, 1791, Dorr wrote about Opai’s departure and offered his candid thoughts on the cabin boy’s relationship with the captain: “He parted from the Captain with much regret. It must be equally so with the Captn., who by the loss of this boy loses the only playmate and pimp he could depend on, of whom it was supposed he made much use for that little purpose.”<sup>22</sup> Dorr described Ingraham as a hopeless drunkard and hedonist that nearly “ruined the voyage” on numerous occasions, including one time off the Falkland Islands when the captain had to be detained inside his cabin due to a rum-fueled hysteria.<sup>23</sup> Ingraham never mentioned his second mate Dorr in his writings; instead he saved all his descriptive powers for Opai, as if the Hawaiian was the only passenger on his voyage.

More than a year later in 1792, Ingraham was surprised to meet Opai at Nootka Sound and learned that his old friend was traveling with George Vancouver. Opai was delighted to reunite with his old captain and begged him take him back on the *Hope*. Ingraham was “quite agreeable” to the request, but Vancouver refused to part with the young Hawaiian.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Opai said he was treated well on the British ship and Ingraham saw no reason to

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<sup>22</sup> Dorr quoted in Kaplanoff in Ingraham, 76 fn.

<sup>23</sup> Dorr quoted in Kaplanoff in Ingraham, xxiii.

<sup>24</sup> Ingraham, 233.

complicate the favorable arrangement. The Bostonian and his endearing Hawaiian friend who adopted his name parted ways for the last time on the cold and wet North American coast.

### **Globetrotting Kānaka**

When British and American ships, lured by the fur trade, entered into the Pacific in the wake of Captain Cook at the close of the eighteenth century, young Hawaiian men were regularly recruited off the Islands as deckhands. Initially, Hawaiians replaced western sailors who jumped ship at the warm and inviting Islands – some of who went onto become full-time “beachcombers” that integrated themselves into native society. Hawaiian men proved to be valuable sailors who were at home in the seas and their excellent swimming skills had a variety of uses, such as repairing hulls underwater and dislodging stuck anchors. Many Hawaiians were also left on the Northwest coast of America to set up permanent fur trading posts, or “factories,” among Native American tribes. Captain Jonathan Thorn of the *Tonquin*, for example, took on twelve Hawaiians in 1811 to set up a Columbia River venture funded by the New York multi-millionaire John Jacob Astor. The writer Washington Irving, who was commissioned to chronicle Astor’s Northwestern fur fortunes in *Astoria* (1836), describes a typical Islander recruitment process and compensation arrangement:

The partners now urged to recruit their forces from the natives of this island. They declared they had never seen watermen equal to them, even among the voyageurs of the Northwest; and, indeed, they are remarkable for their skill in managing their light craft, and can swim and dive like waterfowl. The partners were inclined, therefore, to take thirty or forty with them to Columbia, to be employed in the service of the company. The captain, however, objected that there was not room in his vessel for the accommodation of such a number. Twelve, only, were therefore enlisted for the company, and as many more for the service ship. The

former engaged to serve for the term of three years, during which they were to be fed and clothed; and at the expiration of the time were to receive one hundred dollars in merchandise.<sup>25</sup>

On this occasion, however, only two men, John Anderson and Edward Aymes, deserted in Hawai'i for the beachcomber lifestyle, leaving Captain Thorn with a major surplus of crewmen to feed.<sup>26</sup>

While most seafaring Hawaiians engaged in hard deckhand labor, the more "genteel" and attractive young Islanders were often enlisted as personal "cabin boys" for Boston captains. The cabin boy essentially functioned as a naval version of the indentured servant, a person who performed menial tasks for the daily needs of the captain. Atu naturally despised the position, but many American captains like Jack Ingraham valued the mentoring nature of the relationship and sought to find the most appealing Island boys for the job.

These laboring Hawaiian men were collectively called "Kanakas," by western shipmen, a word derived from the colloquial Hawaiian term *kanaka*, meaning person or man. Yet when uttered by foreigners, "kanaka" took on a pejorative tone, something akin to a brown-skinned, disposable grunt. Unlike Atu and Opai, the identities of most Hawaiians travelling on foreign ships were obscured by silly names given to them in muster rolls such as James Mowee (Maui), Johnny Owyhee (Hawai'i), Kanaka Bob, Andrew Jackson, Ben Franklin

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<sup>25</sup> Washington Irving, *Astoria: or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1868), 113.

<sup>26</sup> Gabriel Franchere, *A Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America*, Milo Milton Quaife ed. (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, 1954), 33, 50–51. Edward Aymes actually attempted to come back aboard the ship after thinking it through, but an enraged Captain Thorn "seized" the deserter and "threw him overboard," according to voyage recorder Franchere. Such was the haphazard ways in which white men ended up on the Islands.

or Friday.<sup>27</sup> Along the same lines, many Euroamerican captains rarely considered the differences between Polynesians, often mistaking Tahitians for Hawaiians, Marquesans for Tahitians, and so on. Some of the more inhumane captains viewed *kānaka* as another negotiable commodity in the growing provisions-based market on the Islands, along with food, water and Island girls.

Shipboard pay was terribly low, but for most Hawaiians it was an occupation. Atu, for example, earned one pound and ten shillings per month aboard the *Columbia*, the lowest wage in the crew.<sup>28</sup> *Kānaka* were not slaves and rarely taken from the Islands against their will in a nefarious practice known as “blackbirding.” Rather, young Hawaiian men sought adventure and to see other countries, to see the origins of all these great ships. The sudden opening up of the Pacific with western ships also stirred Hawaiians to see other Polynesian islands – like those heard in oral legends, like *Kahiki* (Tahiti). Even more, voyaging allowed Hawaiians to reconnect to their ancestors, to those great navigators of the past who sailed vast distances and populated far off islands. Most Hawaiians had an agreement with foreign captains to be returned to the Islands in a year. Given the seasonal nature of the fur trade and its triangular route between Northwest America, Hawai’i and Canton, the agreement was fairly easy to maintain for Boston ships. When the ships returned, some Hawaiians got off and

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<sup>27</sup> David A. Chappell, *Double Ghosts: Oceanic Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 105; Jean Barman and McIntyre Watson, *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 40; Briton Cooper Busch, “What Whaling Will Never Do For Me”: *The American Whaleman in the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 46.

<sup>28</sup> Howay, *Colombia*, 150. A few other seamen earned the same monthly wage as Atu, but all of them received additional advances and stipends except Atu.

vowed never to step foot in a cramped and militaristic ship again, while others like Atu, chose to journey further to foreign lands.

Despite the many nameless young Hawaiians who took to the sea, the native men who appeared in the journals of the more literate captains were often central figures in their Pacific travel narratives. Kaina, or Tianna, known as the “prince of Atooi” (Kaua’i), for example, figured prominently in the journal of British captain John Meares who took the high-ranking chief to Canton in 1787, where the Chinese called the tall and impressive Hawaiian “The Great Stranger” (Figure 11).<sup>29</sup> So captivating was Kaiana’s story that many foreign captains who read Meares’ account requested for the famous chief upon their arrival at the Islands. Certainly, increased contact aboard the ships contributed to this, but many westerners – like Meares, Ingraham, Boit and others – became “prepossessed” with the “frank and open” demeanor of Islanders and the incredible value they placed on male-oriented friendships.



Figure 11 – “Tianna [Kaiana], A Prince of Atooi, One of the Sandwich Islands,” unknown artist, in John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789* (London, 1790).

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<sup>29</sup> John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, From China to the North West Coast of America* (London: Logographic Press, 1790).

To a large extent, Islander women were mentioned less in ship journals compared to the days of Captain Cook. No longer did the hypersexuality of Island women seem novel or excessive to western sailors; instead, the women were associated with the growing sex-trade in the Islands, at least within westerners' conceptions of "prostitution." Consequently, as Ralston notes, the women no longer sought status and influence, but "their apparent willingness to be involved in the trade was sustained by their desire for Western goods and...their open attitudes to sexuality."<sup>30</sup> Like Boit's passing remark on the "beautiful *Women*" who came out in canoes, ship journals in the post-Cook era often mentioned women alongside other items of trade such as "hogs and fowls." Wallace points out that the mainstream historical representation of Western contact with the Pacific is replete with the "heterosexual presumption" of libidinous male sailors and promiscuous Island women.<sup>31</sup> Yet the early writings of Pacific voyagers clearly expressed a range of complex emotions over Hawaiian men. While many of the writings were "ethnographic" and detached in nature, a number of captains freely expressed feelings of intimacy, anxiety and even unabashed lust over Hawaiian males.

### Seeking Boys

If there was one New England captain that made no scruples about his desire for young Hawaiian men, it was Captain Amasa Delano of Duxbury,

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<sup>30</sup> Caroline Ralston, "Changes in the Lives of Ordinary Women in Early Post-Contact Hawaii," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 58.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 19.

Massachusetts. In December 1801 Delano, on the *Perseverance*, sailed into the Hawaiian Islands – then called the Sandwich Islands – with the intent to “take one of their boys.” The Yankee sealskin trader perused the native villages along Kawaihae Bay until a young man caught his eye. Delano gushed as he described the enrapturing encounter in his memoir:

I observed a remarkably likely youth, of about twenty one years of age...his appearance prepossessed me very much in his favour. His behaviour was dignified, comely, and sprightly, his body, limbs, and features handsome; in his address and conversation he was governed by the strictest propriety, but his speech was accompanied with that native modesty which ever accompanies good sense. As he seemed remarkably attentive to me, I was induced to inquire who he was, and was informed by George McClay that he was the natural son of the king. I was pleased with his appearance and took notice of him.<sup>32</sup>

The young native called himself “Alexander Stewart,” after an English captain he met and admired. Native records, however, indicate that Alexander was not a son of Kamehameha, the great *Mō‘i* (King) of the Hawaiian Islands, and that McClay, a foreigner living on the island, misinformed Delano.<sup>33</sup> The young lad was likely one of the many “favorites,” or *aikāne*, of Kamehameha. Delano soon received word from Kamehameha that he could have the lad, including any other young man on the island “in a similar situation.” Yet Delano had to

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<sup>32</sup> Amasa Delano, *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in The Northern and Southern Hemispheres* (Boston: E.G. House, 1817), 391–392. Captain Amasa Delano appears as a character in Herman Melville’s story, “Benito Cerano” (1855) about the *Perseverance*’s encounter with a slave rebellion aboard a Spanish merchant vessel. Melville based his story around the actual events portrayed in Delano’s 1817 journal. Amasa Delano is also a noted ancestor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas G. Thrum, “Was There a Lost Son of Kamehameha?” in *Twenty Fourth Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society for the Year 1915* (Honolulu: Paradise of the Pacific Press, 1916), 44–51.

proceed with caution, since “should the king take notice any one of them more than any other it would naturally create jealousy.”<sup>34</sup>

Over the course of two hours, more than one hundred young men paraded in front of Delano for his “approbation” but he could not settle on another boy he liked. Frustrated and disappointed by the carnal procession, the weary New Englander took intermission at the abode of the king’s wives, where he laid eyes on a boy who was busily fanning one of the women *ali’i* with a tassel of long feathers. The female chief, recognizing the captain’s interest in her servant, announced without hesitation that Delano could take the boy. From that moment, Delano proudly relates, the boy he named “Billy” never left his side for “one minute after.” By the time Delano weighed anchor for Canton, he had acquired a total of five Native Hawaiians, all as cabin boys.

At Canton, the Hawaiians were showing signs of smallpox so Delano had them inoculated with “kine-pox.” Although the boys recovered, the captain discharged them in China since his fur profits came in low and he could not afford to take them back on a return passage. Alexander Stewart went under the guardianship of an English captain and the last Delano heard about his Hawaiian lad, a “gentleman of consequence” was “giving him an education” somewhere in England. When Delano returned to the Hawaiian Islands in 1806 without Stewart, Kamehameha received the captain “coolly” for not returning his favorite subject.<sup>35</sup> Delano’s remarks about the fate of Billy, however, sheds some insight into the remarkable lives of some of these early globetrotting Hawaiians:

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<sup>34</sup> Delano, 391.

<sup>35</sup> Delano, 391.



To the boy I gave the name of *Bill*, and brought him with me to Boston, where his merits were duly appreciated, and he was generally known, together with my treatment towards him; and it will not be necessary to make further mention of that subject. He performed on the Boston stage several times, in the tragedy of Capt. Cook, and was much admired by the audience and the publick in general. He afterwards returned to his native land with me; but not wishing to remain there, he went to Canton in the Pilgrim, where he was paid off, and I have heard nothing of him since.<sup>36</sup>

Billy appeared in the Boston theater performance for *The Death of Captain Cook (La Morte du Capitaine Cook): A Grand-Serious Pantomimic Ballet* (1789) by Jean François Arnold, a popular song and dance routine that played all across Europe and North America during the dawn of the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> The Federal Street Theater in Boston had a regular showing of the ballet in their program as early as 1796.<sup>38</sup> Billy likely played the part of “Etoué,” the fictional nefarious Hawaiian warrior who stabs and kills the grandiosely humane Captain Cook before the final dance and curtain call. For the early landlocked Americans at home hearing about the Hawaiian Islands for the first time, the Islanders seemed savage and fierce, but paradoxically friendly and hospitable. The chiefs also seemed stately, composed and even aristocratic, but simultaneously cruel and despotic. The main theme of the *Grand-Serious Pantomimic Ballet*, however, was the taboo love between Emai, a girl of chiefly class, and Oki, a male commoner. The western actors performed tales of romance, taboos, sacrifice and death in front of Edenic backdrops, while the occasional cameo by a Hawaiian lent an air of authenticity to the wildly inaccurate cultural depictions on stage (Figure 12).

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<sup>36</sup> Delano, 394.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven: Yale University, 1985), 118.

<sup>38</sup> John Alden “A Season in Federal Street: J. B. Williamson and the Boston Theater, 1796-1797” in *American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Proceedings*, volume 65, part 1, 1955, 54.



Figure 12 – “Mr. Fisher as Tereebou [Kalani’opu’u], King of the Island of Owhyhee, in *Death of Captain Cook*” by A. Courcell, in *Creed’s New Theatrical Portraits* (London, September 21, 1818). A theater card from a London production of *Death of Captain Cook* in 1818; Mr. Fisher’s absurd leopard-skin robe illustrates the lack of cultural accuracy in depicting Hawaiians.

## Mass Massacre

Americans were not immune to incidences of violence and in fact, perpetuated some of the worst atrocities on the Islands. One of the first reports to come back to Boston from the early fur trading expeditions described what came to be known as the “Olowalu Massacre,” a gruesome story of bloodbath that can still be heard on the island of Maui today. On November 30, 1791, the Boston newspaper *Columbian Centinel* printed a letter from an anonymous sailor describing an episode of “viciousness and savagery that has no equal in Hawaiian history” committed by Vermont resident Captain Simon Metcalfe on the brig *Eleanora* and his son, Captain Thomas Metcalfe, of the *Fair Americana*.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> “Particulars of what happened on board the Snow Elinora, while at the Sandwich Islands,” *Columbian Centinel*, November 30, 1791, quoted in *Hawaiian National Bibliography*, 167-168. The same letter can also be found in *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle For the Year MDCCXCII*, volume 62, part 1, Sylvanus Urban ed. (London: John Nichols, 1792), 317–320. The page headings are erroneously titled, “Transactions of the American Snow Elinora at Otaheite.”

The father and son duo, one of the first fur trading ventures out of New York, were separated at Nootka due to an altercation with a competing Spanish fleet (the “Nootka Crisis”).<sup>40</sup> The *Eleanora* sailed for the Hawaiian Islands – a predetermined meeting spot in case they separated – where she traded off Ma’alea and then at Olowalu, Maui from January until March 1790. In a classic Captain Cook scenario, the cutter of the ship was stolen, but this time in an act of cold-blooded murder, the Hawaiian culprits killed the sailor who was sleeping inside the small boat and “the next night,” according to the unnamed crewmember, “burnt him for a sacrifice to their Gods.”

Spurred by a fit of revenge, Metcalfe devised a wicked scheme to punish as many Islanders as possible. The *Eleanora* anchored near the shore of Olowalu and the crew signaled a desire to trade with the Natives by dangling objects on the starboard side of the ship. Metcalfe waited until as many canoes and swimmers gathered around his ship as possible, then ordered his cannons to drop and fire on the Hawaiians at close range. “To attempt to describe the horrible scene that ensued,” the sailor lamented, “is too much for my pen.” Yet he continued, “The water alongside continued of a crimson colour for at least ten minutes; some were sinking, others lying half out of their canoes, without arms or legs; while others lay in their canoes weltering in their blood.” More than a hundred Hawaiian men, women and children were killed and as many were seriously wounded and died soon after. So graphic and brutal was the incident

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<sup>40</sup> Nootka Crisis – the Northwest coast of America became an international hot spot in the summer of 1789 as the Kingdom of Spain sought to establish a fur trade monopoly over British and American interests. The *Columbia Rediviva* and *Lady Washington* were also nearly embroiled in the crisis.

that Hawaiians remembered it in oral tradition as *Kalolopahu*, or “The Spilled Brains.”<sup>41</sup>

On March 30, 1792, the editor in London’s *The Gentleman’s Magazine* sneered sarcastically at this account of “American humanity” in the South Seas and encouraged English readers to “exult in being a native of Great Britain” and take pride in the stellar “conduct of Captain Cook and Bligh.”<sup>42</sup> However, the Metcalfes were actually operating a joint American-British maritime fur venture, but no nation wanted responsibility for their actions after the ruthless massacre. Ironically, around the same date as the Olowalu Massacre, halfway around the globe, the monumental Boston Massacre (March, 5, 1790) took place between American civilians and British soldiers – resulting in only five deaths.

The younger Thomas Metcalfe on the *Fair Americana*, meanwhile, arrived at the island of Hawai’i, unbeknownst to his father who was fuming on the other side of the island. A local Hawai’i chief, who was “roped” and humiliated a few weeks earlier by the elder Metcalfe, vowed to avenge his *ali’i* pride by attacking any American ship nearby. Together with his warriors, the chief ransacked the *Fair Americana* and killed everyone aboard, including Captain Thomas Metcalfe, but spared an Englishman named, Isaac Davies. The chief gave the sloop and its weapons to Kamehameha as a sign of victory and respect. The elder Metcalfe, oblivious to his son’s death, sent John Young ashore to scout and gather some intelligence, but Kamehameha kidnapped and kept the boatswain onshore. The prickly captain gave up and departed for China, while Kamehameha gained two

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<sup>41</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961), 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 317.

valuable foreign advisors, western guns and ships to add to his growing arsenal, or rather, to his increasing *mana*.<sup>43</sup>

Up until the close of the eighteenth century, inter-island warfare was a constant danger around the Hawaiian Islands as Kamehameha gained dominion over the archipelago. The two ragtag English sailors, Young and Davies, became Kamehameha's prime confidants in all foreign matters, including in the use of foreign weaponry. Young was given the name Olohana, while Davies came to be called 'Aikake. The king gave the two men multiple Hawaiian wives, large parcels of land and the title of *ali'i*, along with all the benefits associated with the title. John Young figured prominently in the journals of visiting captains as Young took on the role of an official foreign liaison, often advising visiting American and European captains on Hawaiian political protocol and the general state of security around the Islands. The mariner community in Boston was well aware of the potential dangers in Hawai'i. When Ingraham took Opai home on the *Hope* in 1791, for example, he carried these instructions from his Boston partner Thomas Perkins: "Touch at Sandwich Islands for vegetables, but absolutely forbid you letting go of your anchor at any of them. Be always prepared for attack and forbid many boats around you at once."<sup>44</sup>

Ingraham heard about Metcalfe and the *Fair Americana*'s fate from an American beachcomber named "Ridler" and Opai had bouts of anxiety about the intentions of his fellow countrymen as the *Hope* made its way around the

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<sup>43</sup> Simon Metcalfe continued his tirade-filled journey until Native Americans on the Northwest coast of America killed him in 1794. Metcalfe's ship was overrun and captured in the same manner as his son's *Fair Americana* in Hawai'i.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Perkins quoted in Ingraham, xiv.

Islands.<sup>45</sup> Ingraham's paranoia grew when Kamehameha came aboard the *Hope* and acted suspiciously, including "winking to the men in the canoes" and whispering in the captain's ears about his various plans.<sup>46</sup> A stranded American on the island of Hawai'i also begged Ingraham for a passage home, saying that he was forced into battles by an inferior chief on the threat of being "sacrificed to their gods."<sup>47</sup> Clearly not every foreigner enjoyed the same royal treatment as Young and Davis.

When Ingraham parted with Opai, he regretted teaching his friend English since chiefs like Kamehameha would make Opai "subservient to their wicked purposes."<sup>48</sup> Ingraham gave his final thought on Opai at the very end of his Pacific journal: "I believe [Opai] would never willingly injure me, but I doubt not he would lose the remembrance of my kindness by joining to attack any other American vessel, and perhaps the fear of offending the chiefs would preponderate against even me."<sup>49</sup> To many sojourners on the Hawaiian Islands during this period, the joys of intimacy were just as potent as the dread of death.

Unprovoked attacks occurred frequently on both sides, such as when Kahekili's fearsome split-body tattooed *Pahupu* warriors ambushed, killed and sacrificed astronomer William Gooch and lieutenant Richard Hergest of Vancouver's supply ship *Daedalus* on O'ahu in 1792. Sometimes even buffoonery caused tragedy, such as when Captain Kendrick – more than seven years out of Boston and by this time sailing as a rogue on the *Lady Washington* – was killed off

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<sup>45</sup> Ingraham, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Ingraham 75–77.

<sup>47</sup> Ingraham, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Ingraham, 84.

<sup>49</sup> Ingraham, 246.

O'ahu in 1794 by celebratory cannon fire from the British crew of the *Jackal*, who were letting out their huzzahs after helping an Island chief to victory in an inter-island skirmish. A few weeks later, the same chief killed everyone aboard the *Jackal* in a sinister backstabbing plot to hijack British ships. If death did not occur on the Islands, it could very well happen on the Northwest Coast of America, where the elder Captain Metcalfe met his end in a scuffle with Native Americans. Nobody was safe on the oceanic frontier of the Pacific during the 1790s.

### **Ephemeral Contact, Amorphous Place**

Yet as the eighteenth century came to a close, the Euroamerican encounter with the Pacific – the “beach crossing” relationship – was shifting from the plodding exploratory ethic of the Enlightenment era to one of brisk Yankee capitalist trade. The Hawaiians recognized that these early Boston men were not imperialists at heart like the other strangers from Britain. In many ways, the upper echelons of the *ali'i* class strongly identified with the monarchical politics of the English, while the sub-chiefs and the larger *maka'āinana* population felt a kinship with the autonomous spirit of the Americans. Kamehameha, for example, was eager for any news regarding King George and hoped to one day build a king-to-king relationship. The Americans, however, were mostly interested in producing profits. Dening interprets the mind of the typical Boston trader plying the Hawaiian waters:

His relationship with the islanders has no future unless he is hoping to return to the same place safely. What he does to endanger others who follow him is the others' risk. His trade is a thing of the moment. *Caveat emptor* is his cry to the natives totally ignorant of what it is they must beware of...He won't be there to fix any imbalance. Out here on the beach,

there is no one to police his conscience. His immorality has no cost, to him at least.<sup>50</sup>

Even for sailors such as Ingraham and Delano, their contacts with the Islands were mostly touch-and-go – a mere segment in their lengthy Pacific memoirs. Atu, Opai, Billy and the many anonymous *kānaka* sailors who appeared in these early Pacific journals were ultimately “curiosities” for the amusement of armchair South Sea romantics and other Pacific-going sea captains. Many of these Boston captains were already celebrated as Revolutionary war heroes within their maritime communities; their adventures in the Pacific only added to their stature as worldly men. Essentially, no matter how far they traveled, most New England captains needed to return home in order to be glorified.

The early Yankee fur traders took cues from Captain Cook; they followed his charts, read his journals and tried their own hand at “ethnographic” writing. The more their sea journals brimmed with island exotica, the more epic and romantic their voyages came across to readers. In 1798, for example, Ebenezer Townsend, a fur trader from New Haven, Connecticut, painted the Hawaiian Islands as a bizarre world of incongruity and paradoxes:

[The women] that are young and handsome, have the same power over the men that they have in countries more civilized. The foreigners, when no vessels are here, more generally dress like the natives. There was an Italian [man who] came on board of us, and being much tattooed, I should not have noticed but he was an Indian, unless told to the contrary. I noticed one Indian who always eats with the women, contrary to the uniform custom. Mr. [John] Young told me...that such men were

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<sup>50</sup> Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 237.



completely incorporated into the society of the females, and were, no more than they, allowed to go into the [eating] houses of the men.<sup>51</sup>

Townsend's Hawai'i was a soupy terrain without any discernable boundaries – women wielding power over men, naked and tattooed Europeans going full native and the acceptance of transgender identities, or *mahu*, by Hawaiian society. Like many sailors touching at the Islands, Townsend attempted to immerse himself into the limen, no matter how briefly or awkwardly. The fur trader, for example, received a tattoo of a double canoe on his leg that “swelled considerably” and prevented him from walking for several days.<sup>52</sup> The good natured New Haven mariner even stripped down to his skivvies and swam in the sea together with over two hundred Natives: “they laughed very heartily, at seeing my white shoulders among their dark ones; any of the children would outswim me.”<sup>53</sup> Sailors came to lose themselves in the hazy idyll of the Islands, storing memories of paradise before setting out again for months upon the lonely seas.

In 1811, a company of sailors on one of Astor's fur vessels barely made it back in time to Honolulu for their departure. The officers found the seamen “half-seas over” in Island revelry: “we discovered the party descending a hill near a village, each with a lass under his arm, their hats decorated with flowers, ribbons, and handkerchiefs, and a fifer and fiddler at their head, playing away

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<sup>51</sup> Ebenezer Townsend, *Extracts From The Diary of Ebenezer Townsend, Jr., Supercargo of the Sealing Ship Neptune*, Hawaiian Historical Society Reprints No. 4, (Honolulu: Hawaiian Historical Society, 1921), 25-26.

<sup>52</sup> Townsend, 30.

<sup>53</sup> Townsend, 9.

merrily.”<sup>54</sup> Much like today, westerners saw their visitations on the Islands as an occasion for skylarking and celebration, a place to forget the harsh realities of a “civilized” life filled with obligations. The perfect climate, abundant produce and breathtaking landscapes certainly contributed to the allure of the Islands, but ultimately it was the hospitality of the Islanders that left an indelible impression on Americans.

Today, the “Aloha Spirit” is often used as a tourism motto to connote the welcoming character of the “Aloha State,” yet as Bushnell notes, *aloha* always existed among the people, “under many other guises, from the beginning.”<sup>55</sup> Foreigners were continually amazed by the kindness and generosity of Hawaiians. Almost every sea journal written by foreigners during this period contains reflections on the paradoxes of “civilization” and “progress” and their impact on “happiness.” Vancouver, for example, regaled the generosity of Hawaiians as “seldom equaled by the most civilized nations in Europe,” while Townsend was convinced that Hawaiians were inherently “very happy people.”<sup>56</sup> William Shaler, commander of the Boston brig *Lelia Byrd*, was also full of admiration for the Islanders when he arrived in 1804: “they are brave, generous, humane, and affectionate; they are possessed of great sensibility, and will go any lengths to serve those they think their friends.”<sup>57</sup> For the many sailors who came in contact with Hawaiians, the kindness they experienced was literally

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<sup>54</sup> Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, Volume 1, (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 52.

<sup>55</sup> Oswald A. Bushnell, *The Gifts of Civilization: Germs and Genocide in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), 260.

<sup>56</sup> George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World*, Volume 5 (London: John Stockdale, 1801), 35; Townsend, 26.

<sup>57</sup> William Shaler, “Journal of a Voyage Between China and the North-Western Coast of America Made in 1804,” *American Register* 3, no. 1 (1808): 167.

“disarming” and made them question the principles of their own western upbringings. Hawai‘i was not only amorphous, but also incredibly amorous.

### **Kamehameha the Great**

Westerners also struggled to understand the relationship between the *maka‘āinana* (commoners) and the *ali‘i* (chiefs). Captain Shaler expressed the typical foreign bewilderment towards Hawaiian politics: “Their government is a strange mixture of despotism, aristocracy and liberty.”<sup>58</sup> Yet Shaler understood that all these raw stories coming from the Hawaiian Islands caused considerable anxiety with the people at home in the United States. Was it safe for Americans to go there? Was it wise to invest in shipping ventures that passed through the Islands? Could Hawaiians become “civilized,” or do they need “civilizing” at all? When Shaler returned to America, he wrote to the editor of the New York Public Advisor in the summer of 1807 to clear up some ill-held notions about the Islands. “The Sandwich Islands have long occupied a considerable place in our commercial chart,” Shaler wrote, and Americans had the right to enquire about the “public safety” of the Islands, especially after a “vessel belonging to this port [Metcalf’s *Fair Americana*] was cut off, and the captain and crew were barbarously murdered.”<sup>59</sup> Shaler assured American readers that the rise of Kamehameha as the sovereign of the Islands brought great stability and safety to foreign interests: “The honest and noble disposition of *Tamaihamaiha*

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<sup>58</sup> Shaler, 168-169.

<sup>59</sup> William Shaler, “From the N. Y. Public Advertiser: Sandwich Islands,” in *The American Gleaner and Virginia Magazine (1807–1807)*, Volume 1, Issue 14 (August 1, 1807), 214.

[Kamehameha] and the good order and subordination of his people appear to great advantage...I am happy thus in rendering him my public testimony."

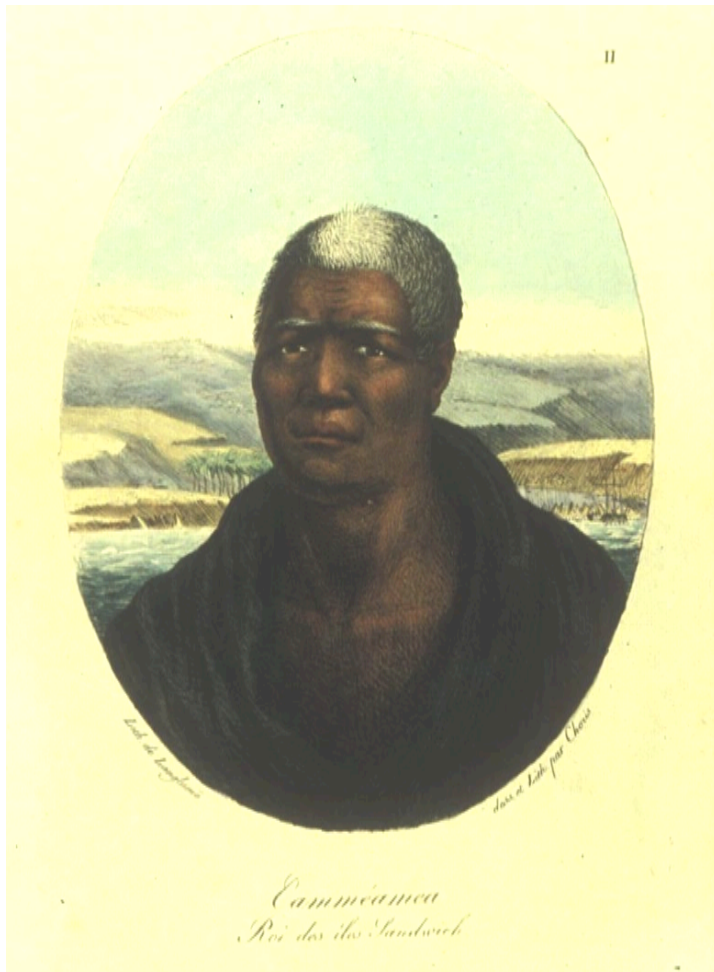


Figure 13 – "Tammeamea, Roi des îles Sandwich [Kamehameha, King of the Sandwich Islands]" drawing by Louis Choris, Engraved by Langlumé, in *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1822). Louis Choris visited Hawai'i in 1816 as the official artist on the Russian vessel *Rurik* captained by Otto Von Kotzebue.

By the close of the eighteenth century, Kamehameha held control over most of the Hawaiian archipelago; only the island of Kaua'i (and its small neighbor Ni'ihau) remained out of his grasp. The outbursts of violence diminished as Kamehameha brought stability and a spirit of optimism, even in the face of tremendous change. The Hawaiian people hailed Kamehameha as a brilliant warrior and political strategist, while visitors recognized him as a savvy

diplomat who knew how to drive a “hard bargain” with foreigners. No other chief anywhere else in the Pacific deftly straddled the old and the new worlds like Kamehameha the Great – only Kaumuali‘i, the chief of Kaua‘i, dared to oppose him. Up until Kamehameha’s death in 1819, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i experienced a golden age, where the Hawaiian people, though suddenly exposed to western ways, were able to dictate the path of their newly recognized nation while simultaneously resisting certain elements of foreign intrusion.

By the early 1800s, the economy of the Islands also moved beyond mere provisions and cheap labor when Euroamerican traders discovered a strong demand in China for Hawaiian sandalwood, or *‘iliaha*. Kamehameha immediately monopolized the sandalwood trade. Although the *maka‘āinana* (commoners) still retained a portion of their profits in supplying foreign ships, all sandalwood negotiations had to go through Kamehameha directly. When foreigners spoke of the “despotic” nature of Hawaiian society, they were mostly referring to the grueling conditions of the Native sandalwood collectors who often worked for little or no compensation except to glorify the king. Several Hawaiians died of hypothermia and exhaustion as they dragged logs through the cold and soggy mountains without any protective clothing. Not one inch of wood was to be spared, thus the loggers were also forced to dig up the remaining roots from the ground. As more American ships carried the sandalwood away to China to be crafted into incense and woodwork, the more Kamehameha’s storehouses grew with weapons, ships, European dining ware, Chinese silks, New England furniture, Spanish gold coins and other global symbols of accumulated wealth.

In 1779, Lieutenant King described the young Kamehameha as “the Most Savage looking” person he ever saw in the entire Pacific.<sup>60</sup> By the early 1800s, however, westerners regarded the aging Kamehameha as a sagacious and dynamic leader and often compared him to Napoleon or Solomon. Townsend, who witnessed a middle-aged Kamehameha in his mid-forties, described the king as “a large athletic man, well-proportioned, perhaps a little over six feet.”<sup>61</sup> Like Lieutenant King twenty years earlier, the fur trader was intimidated by Kamehameha’s “forbidding countenance, at first view” but recognized “a keen, penetrating eye” that belied the ruler’s coarser features. Indeed for many westerners, Kamehameha was the ultimate personification of the “noble savage” – that paradoxical figure of ancient “natural” wisdom and calculating brutality. Foreign captains were impressed with the ruler’s deft diplomatic skills, but they also trembled knowing that Kamehameha slaughtered countless men in hand-to-hand combat and sacrificed his enemies in grizzly temple rituals to Kukailimoku, the god of war and conquest. Yet Vancouver, who knew the king as the young nephew of Kalani’opu’u during his first visit with Cook, saw a significant change in Kamehameha fourteen years later: “I was agreeably surprised in finding that his riper years had softened that stern ferocity which his younger days had exhibited, and had changed his general deportment to an address characteristic of an open, cheerful and sensible mind; combined with great generosity, and goodness of disposition.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> James King in *The Journals of Captain James Cook: The Voyage of the Resolution and Discovery, 1776-1780*, volume 3, part 1, ed. J. C. Beaglehole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 512-513 fn.

<sup>61</sup> Townsend, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Vancouver, vol. 3, 203.

Up until Kamehameha's death in 1819, the Hawaiians held great control over their relations with foreigners. The Islands were also building a national identity as the high chief united the archipelago and faced towards the outside world. Although some European captains had notions of hoisting flags on the Islands in the name of imperial domain, Kamehameha quickly understood that the visitors to the Islands only held a limited amount of authority in the countries of their origin. The Americans, who later dominated the provisions and sandalwood trade, were a motley bunch of marine entrepreneurs that had little interest in overseas politics – unless free trade was affected. The Napoleonic Wars drew many English and French ships out of the Pacific at the turn of the eighteenth century, and later, the War of 1812 also stifled American trade in the Pacific. During this period Kamehameha was able to establish his sovereignty and prestige within the Pacific, while the white men's most powerful ships were wrapped up with the turmoil in the Atlantic. The death of the great Pacific chief in 1819, however, sent the Hawaiians into a state of uncertainty and paved the way for American dominance of the Islands.

### **Haole Residents**

The genius of Kamehameha was his ability to assimilate foreigners into his close circle of advisors while maintaining his supreme authority. Certainly, most of the men who chose to remain on the Islands were not exemplars of western society. Hawaiian historian Bushnell, for example, sees nothing amiable in their character: "Ninety-nine percent of the sailors who came to Hawai'i in

those times were rough, ignorant, filthy, and mean, if not actually vicious.”<sup>63</sup> Yet Kamehameha was somehow able to weed out the idle beachcombers from the industrious entrepreneurs. These were the men who truly navigated the limen, the men who remained on the cross-cultural beach while others sailed back home to western civilization. However, most *haole* (foreigners) during those days were not literate men and did not bother to write about their lives among the Islanders. And even if they did write at one time, they deliberately left the skill behind and adopted an entirely different way of life. Like outside impressions of Hawaiians, any clue as to the beachcomber’s life only comes through in other seamen’s journals.

In 1850, Reverend Henry T. Cheever, a missionary from Hallowell, Maine who roamed the Pacific on the whaling ship *Commodore Preble*, took a hiking tour from Kailua-Kona to Kealahou Bay, the site of Cook’s death. Along the harsh lava strewn path, Cheever was surprised to meet a fellow Mainer who had been living on the Island for almost forty years. The old salt, Cheever learned, “was discharged here from a ship in 1811, and entered into the service of Kamehameha, who gave him his lands.”<sup>64</sup> Cheever was impressed with the man’s “extensively cultivated” coffee plantation – likely one of the first “Kona coffee” beans to be produced on the Island.

The man from Maine was perhaps discharged from one of the vessels of John Jacob Astor’s vessels, which were passing regularly through the Islands from 1809-1811, but he most likely came from one of the many unrecorded ships that

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<sup>63</sup> Bushnell, 192.

<sup>64</sup> Henry T. Cheever, *Life in the Sandwich Islands: or The Heart of the Pacific, As It Was and Is* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 16.



sauntered through the Pacific during that period. As an honorary *haole ali'i* (white/foreigner chief) under Kamehameha, like Young (Olohana) and Davies ('Aikake), the man not only received land, but also Hawaiian wives. Cheever noted that the old Mainer worked alongside a "son-in-law," perhaps a Native Hawaiian married to one of the old man's half-white-half-Hawaiian daughters. Like many white men that settled on the Islands during the early period, the old Mainer likely went by a Hawaiian name and his past identity was completely washed away by decades of island living.

Yet the unnamed man from Maine was a hermit even by early beachcomber standards; his northern New England fortitude may have equipped him for a life of self-sufficiency on the sparsely populated Kona coast. Most foreigners, or *haole* as Islanders called white men, amassed around the bustling port of Honolulu on the island of O'ahu by the start of the nineteenth century. "Honolulu exists," O. A. Bushnell notes, "because foreigners created it."<sup>65</sup> The dry "dust bowl" was never a favorite location for the Hawaiian chiefs. Apart from surfing the gentle rolling swells of Waikīkī, there was little reason to frequent Honolulu, or the village of *Kou* as it was known in ancient times. Bushnell paints an unflattering picture of the foreign enclave during its early "Wild West" days: "Honolulu, where most haoles gathered, was sordid and foul, with grogshops and brothels aplenty but not a thing to stir the mind or uplift the spirit."<sup>66</sup> In many ways, Honolulu was no different than any other port town of the early nineteenth century, where sea-weary sailors stumbled around and poured their measly earnings into shady establishments of ill repute. In a curious

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<sup>65</sup> Bushnell, 163.

<sup>66</sup> Bushnell, 264.

division of vices, however, in Honolulu the white men ran the alcohol business (escapees from the Botany Bay colony introduced distillation to the Islands) while the Hawaiians retained all the material profits from female prostitution.

Native historian John Papa 'Ōi, who was born in 1800 and spent his childhood around Honolulu, recalled how local Hawaiians initially did not associate prostitution with indecency: "They did not think that such associations were wrong, for there was no education in those days. The husbands and parents, not knowing that it would bring trouble, permitted such association with foreign men because of a desire for clothing, mirrors, scissors, knives, iron hoops from which to fashion fishhooks, and nails."<sup>67</sup> For the *maka'āinana* class, however, the avenues in which to engage in foreign trade were limited as Kamehameha, the local *ali'i* chiefs and resident foreigners began to control all transactions around the ports. The old island society ties between the *ali'i* and the *maka'āinana* began to erode when material gains became a new mark of social status. Meanwhile, the population of the Hawaiian people drastically declined from the time of Cook as western diseases flowed freely into the Islands via the increasingly polluted harbor town of Honolulu. Kamehameha hesitantly moved his court to Honolulu in the early 1800s to be closer to the bustle of foreign trade, but in his later years, the king preferred to remain on the "Big Island" of Hawai'i, far from the harbor town that came to be known as "The Cesspit of the Pacific."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> John Papa 'Ōi, *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, Mary Kawena Pukui trans. (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1959), 87.

<sup>68</sup> Bushnell, 182.

## Death of the King, Rise of the Queen

The death of Kamehameha in 1819 was undeniably a major turning point in Hawaiian history. In a sense, the great chief was a symbolic connection to the mythical past for the Hawaiian people. He is the last chief in Hawaiian oral tradition to be endowed with legends of supernatural acts and superhuman feats. Before his death, Kamehameha also managed to broker a peaceful allegiance with Kaumuali'i and brought Kaua'i under the new Hawaiian nation – the later years of the great warrior's legacy was thus marked with sagacious diplomacy. Kamehameha also distinguished himself through Hawaiian religious rituals. By all historical accounts, he was a “serious” practitioner of the *kapu* (taboo) system and built, restored and consecrated several *luakini heiau* (sacrificial temples) during his reign. In Hawaiian terms, he was a master of accruing and maintaining *mana* – for himself and for all the Hawaiian people.

The old chief spent his final days in the quiet Kailua-Kona district, fishing on the days his body would allow. In the spring of 1819, the chief became bedridden and it was obvious his last days were upon him. In hopes of a recovery, the attendants feverishly moved the sick king back and forth between the “sleeping house” and the “eating house,” a strict taboo that had to be maintained even in near-death. On May 8, 1819, Kamehameha died at the age of eighty-three years old, surrounded by his immediate court, including John Young. Kamehameha's most trusted advisor, Hoapili, took the bones of the deceased chief and hid them in a secret cave according to ancient tradition, lest a

chief's enemy find the bones and desecrate them. According to Kamakau, "The morning star alone knows where Kamehameha's bones are guarded."<sup>69</sup>

The mourning process of ancient Hawaiians can only be described as extreme from a western point of view. For one, self-mutilation was a common expression of loss. These included the cutting of the forehead with sharks' teeth (common for women), the knocking out of the front teeth by punching each other in the mouth (common for men), the removal of fingers or any other permanent disfiguration. Kamehameha himself, for example, lacked his front teeth and had numerous scars from past funerary rites for his closest allies. Other mourning practices also included open fornication, or orgies, and women were allowed to eat freely with men and consume any foods. All the while, tremendous wailing and bitter weeping was the norm. Essentially, when a great chief died all his *kapu* (taboos) died along with him, thus all order and prohibitions were temporarily lifted. The Hawaiian funeral ritual was a truly amorphous space that no westerner could understand.

Self-sacrifice (or suicide) was also accepted as a form of showing respect, but Kamehameha prohibited such practices since he wanted his best chiefs to surround his son and successor, Liholiho.<sup>70</sup> Liholiho, who named himself Kamehameha II, was only in his early twenties at the time of his father's death and highly inexperienced as a leader. Ka'ahumanu, Kamehameha's "favorite" out of his twenty-one wives, immediately positioned herself as the most powerful figure within Hawaiian nobility (Figure 14). Liholiho's mother, Keopuolani, also commanded tremendous respect, but she did not possess the

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<sup>69</sup> Kamakau, 215.

<sup>70</sup> Instead, several hundred dogs were rounded up and sacrificed.

same political savvy as Ka'ahumanu, who frequently stood alongside and consulted Kamehameha in all of his dealings with foreigners and other island chiefs. In a move that took the young and impressionable Liholiho by surprise, Ka'ahumanu announced, "We two shall share the rule over the land."<sup>71</sup> The council of chiefs agreed and granted Ka'ahumanu the title of *Kuhina Nui*, or Supreme Regent.<sup>72</sup> Liholiho's role was thus more of a symbolic or ritualistic king, while Ka'ahumanu and her highly revered first-cousin, "Billy Pitt" Kalanimoku, took over all state affairs.<sup>73</sup>



Figure 14 – “Reine Cahoumanou [Queen Ka'ahumanu],” drawing by Louis Choris (1816), Engraved by Langlumé, in *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1822).

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<sup>71</sup> Kamakau, 220.

<sup>72</sup> Ka'ahumanu was the first chief to hold the title of *Kuhina Nui*, a position she essentially created herself.

<sup>73</sup> Kalanimoku is sometimes spelled “Kalaimoku.” Foreigners called the chief – who was one of Kamehameha's most trusted advisors – “Billy Pitt” since his political role resembled that of William Pitt, the then prime minister of Britain. Foreigners understood Ka'ahumanu's role as the “dowager queen.”

Ka'ahumanu's first significant act as the leader of the Islands was to abolish the ancient male-female eating taboo that prohibited both sexes from eating together and to lift all food restrictions forced on women. The establishment of the *'ai noa*, or free eating edict, essentially toppled the entire *kapu* system. The consequences of this act were so great that Liholiho wavered for days before joining Ka'ahumanu at the table. It is said that the young king drifted offshore in a canoe for days, while drinking himself into a stupor before facing the inevitable ceremony. Several conservative *ali'i* and almost all the *kāhuna* were adamantly opposed to the suggested change, but Ka'ahumanu claimed that she possessed the true will of Kamehameha, her late husband. In a somber ceremony reminiscent of the Last Supper, Liholiho excused himself from the "men's table" and sat down in an empty spot next to the two powerful women, his mother Keopuolani and his co-ruler Ka'ahumanu. The young king proceeded to eat "voraciously" as the guests stood up and shouted that the eating taboo had been broken. After the meal, Liholiho ordered all the *heiau* (temples) and religious idols to be destroyed throughout the Islands.

Although the *'ai noa* ceremony may have seemed like a radical move, the breaking of the *kapu* system was a long time coming. Women were already violating the eating taboo as soon as Cook arrived and continued to break traditions aboard foreign ships. The taboos became impossible to enforce. Along the same lines, Hawaiians noticed right away that foreigners never suffered the ramifications of breaking *kapu* – the white men did as they pleased without any divine punishments or death sentences from chiefs. The old ways were clearly incompatible with the new ways. For Ka'ahumanu's purposes, the easing of the *kapu* system allowed her to perform political functions without any archaic

gender restrictions – she could now engage in dialogue with male chiefs at the “men’s table.”

However, as history repeatedly shows, ancient religious customs and habits never disappear overnight. Plenty of rural villages continued to praise their gods or simply hid their sacred idols in lava caves. Offerings were still made to Pele, the Volcano Goddess, dances were still performed to praise Laka, the Goddess of Hula and local *kāhuna* continued to practice their ancient arts of healing by channeling their personal gods. Yet by the 1800s, some of the more menacing aspects of Hawaiian rituals were mostly non-existent such as the strangulation death sentences for *kapu* violators and the sacrifice of fallen enemies at temples. To some degree, the *maka’āinana* class already resisted these grizzly elements of Hawaiian nobility long before Cook’s arrival, but as foreign trade increased across the islands, the chiefs also preferred to increase their wealth in expense of warfare. The accruing of *mana* came to be associated with the amassing of material wealth. What remained were mostly the pleasurable elements of Hawaiian life such as surfing, sailing, hula, chants, old stories and open sexual relations.

Unquestionably, the proliferation of disease and death among the Hawaiian people also led to doubts about the efficacy of the *kapu* system. Hawaiians no longer felt the protection of their *mana* as their loved ones succumbed to typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis, measles, smallpox and other diseases brought by *haole* ships and *haole* farm animals. The actual population of Hawaiians during this period is a hot topic with Pacific scholars. When Lieutenant King arrived with Cook in 1778, the resident intellect of the voyage

estimated the population to be about 400,000 people.<sup>74</sup> Later scholars have conservatively estimated the population to be about 300,000 during Cook's visit, but most modern scholars agree that King's methodology in calculating the population was impressively rational and reasoned.<sup>75</sup> A little over forty years after Cook, American missionaries conducted a loose "head count" around the Islands and estimated that the population of the Hawaiian people had halved to just over 140,000 people.<sup>76</sup> Another factor that also threatened the consistency of the *kapu* system was the growing number of mixed race children that were being born in communities across the Islands.

The abolition of the *kapu* system occurred while the first pioneer band of New England missionaries were at sea making their way to the Islands. When the Calvinist Protestants arrived in 1820, they interpreted the death of Kamehameha and abolishment of the old religious system as Divine Providence. Much like their Puritan forbearers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony two hundred years earlier, they saw Providence as clearing the way for their entry into a hostile "heathen" world. A few months before the missionaries arrived, New

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<sup>74</sup> James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean Undertaken By the Command of Her Majesty For Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere, 1776–1780*, vol. 3 (London: W. and A. Strahan, 1784), 129.

<sup>75</sup> Romanzo Adams, *Interracial Marriage in Hawaii: A Study of the Mutually Conditioned Process of Acculturation and Amalgamation*, (Mont Clair: Patterson Smith, 1969), 1–2; Patrick Vinton Kirch, *A Shark Going Inland Is My Chief: The Island Civilization of Ancient Hawai'i* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 158.

<sup>76</sup> Adams, 3. In the 2010 U.S. Census, 1.2 million Americans identified as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHPI); out of this group, 527,077 people identified as Native Hawaiian. This number has been rising steadily since the "Hawaiian Renaissance" of the 1960s with the resurgence of Native Hawaiian cultural awareness and identity. The majority of today's Hawaiian descendants have a diverse background with a wide combination of different ethnic ancestry. "Native Hawaiian" is thus understood as a cultural identity.



England whalers from Nantucket and New Bedford also arrived in the Islands for the first time after discovering a lucrative whaling spot off the Sea of Japan. As the 1820s came around, Hawaiians were exposed to a new set of New Englanders quite different from the mercantile-minded Boston fur and sandalwood traders.

## CHAPTER 3

### PIETY IN THE PACIFIC, 1820 – 1840

Mrs. Convers (the second sister) said that she had not any religion, and she did not mean to pretend any; that she had ways enough to spend her money without sending it to Owyhee or the Foreign School.

- Catherine Maria Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale* (1822)

The good mother inquired, anxiously, “if Orleans wasn’t an awful wicked place,” saying, “that it seemed to her most equal to going to the Sandwich Islands, or anywhere among the heathen.”

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852)

#### **A Prince in New England**

In the summer of 1816, Reverend Jedidiah Morse – the “father of American geography” and minister of the Congregational church in Charlestown (across Boston) – went looking for a Hawaiian prince who was rumored to be living in destitute conditions somewhere around the Boston Navy Yard (in Charleston). The “prince” was George Prince Kaumuali’i (“Tamoree”), son of Kaumuali’i, the high chief of Kaua’i who refused to cede his island to Kamehameha the Great. The newly founded American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), in which Morse played a vital role, was gathering a group of “promising” young Hawaiians in the New England region as part of a grand plan to create a “school for heathen youth” and send them as Christian missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands. Earlier in May, one of the most dedicated Hawaiian students, Henry ‘Opukaha’ia, or Obookiah as he was known then, received a letter from an old friend from his old sailing days, a Hawaiian sailor named Benjamin Carhooa who claimed to have seen the prince:

Dear Henry Obookiah, I embrace this blessed hour to write a few lines...I have the pleasure seen the young prince, at Charleston...I examine him who he was, he answer the king son of [Kaua'i], I ask him if he remember his father name, he said his father name [Kaumuali'i] but he hath forgot his tongue entirely, he been absent 9 years, been school at (Pittsburg and Worcester) and he can read very well, and writing Cypher, etc. I think this is the very young man [you have] been looking for...he is about 18 years old good looking light hair.<sup>1</sup>

Morse located George who was “ragged, dirty, and in want” and procured his release from the shipyard. The reverend and Mrs. Morse took the young Hawaiian into their home that summer. George, who had spent his life almost entirely at sea, must have been overwhelmed by the Morse’s cozy home in Charleston, where the reverend spent hours in his study, poring over colorful maps and fabulous globes. The Hawaiian and the reverend developed a special bond over the short summer. In later years, George often wrote to Dr. Morse in times of trouble, seeking advise from somebody he considered as a genuine father figure.

In September of 1816, Morse felt George was ready to join the other Hawaiian students and took him to New Haven, Connecticut to meet Reverend Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College, fellow Congregational minister and ABCFM member. Morse and George attended the Yale commencement exercises of 1816 and watched Dr. Dwight “go through the exercises of the day in his best manner.”<sup>2</sup> For Morse, who earned his divinity degree from Yale in 1786, his annual trip to the Yale commencement ceremony was his most cherished activity

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<sup>1</sup> American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *A Narrative of Five Youth from the Sandwich Islands, Now Receiving an Education in This Country* (New York: J. Seymour, 1816), 32–33.

<sup>2</sup> Jedidiah Morse quoted in Anne Harding Spoehr, “George Prince Tamoree: Heir Apparent of Kaua’i and Ni’ihau,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, no. 15 (1981): 34.

– little did Morse know that this would be Dwight’s last congratulatory speech before his old friend died six months later. After the day’s activities, Morse and Dwight sat down to discuss the logistics of getting all the Hawaiian boys together, while a “very kind” Mrs. Dwight looked after George, “clothing him and giving him his food.”

The other four Hawaiian students, including Henry ‘Opukaha’ia, were boarding in various rural Congregational communities in Connecticut while the ABCFM decided where to build the “heathen school.” Meanwhile, the ABCFM published a tract pamphlet entitled, *A Narrative of Five Youth from the Sandwich Islands, Now Receiving an Education in This Country* (1816), to publicize and raise funds for the proposed institution. The pamphlet gave brief biographical details of the Hawaiian youths. All of them had similar stories of being brought to America during their adolescent or teenage years to act as servants in the homes of New England captains or to pursue naval careers on the tumultuous seas. The most prominent stories were that of ‘Opukaha’ia, the most pious and “star” pupil of the group, and George Kaumuali’i, the supposed heir to the island kingdom of Kaua’i.

The tract presented ‘Opukaha’ia as the model heathen-to-Christian convert who overcame meager beginnings. Orphaned at an early age by an inter-island war, ‘Opukaha’ia went to live with his uncle in Kealakekua (near Captain Cook’s site of death) and trained to become a *kahuna*. He later boarded an American ship along with another future student, Thomas Hopu (“Hopoo”), and became the servant of a “Captain Brintnall” in New Haven, Connecticut. In an almost Dickensian scene, the tract describes how ‘Opukaha’ia was found weeping on the front steps of Yale University and “on being asked the cause of

his tears, he replied, that nobody gave him learning.”<sup>3</sup> The young lad proved to be an eager student under the care of Yale president Timothy Dwight and his students: “The Gospel doctrines he received and understood with wonderful avidity and correctness.”<sup>4</sup> ‘Opukaha’ia also excelled in the intellectual pursuits of “English Grammar, Geography, and Arithmetic.” Thus the young Hawaiian purportedly volunteered for a life of Christian piety and learned with great enthusiasm.

While ‘Opukaha’ia’s tale was meant to serve as a testament to the willingness and alacrity of these young Hawaiian men in receiving Christian instruction, George’s background was played up as one of heroic patriotism, where the princely warrior fought alongside American soldiers in the great naval battles of the War of 1812. From receiving a bayonet wound off the coast of Maine during the famous clash between the *USS Enterprise* and the *HMS Boxer* to his stint on the *USS Guerriere* frigate and its engagement with an Algerian frigate, the pamphlet painted George as an unheralded war hero. Later studies by Catherine Stauder on the ship muster rolls, however, revealed that George actually served on the *Enterprise* and *Guerriere* during peacetime periods after the famous battles.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, George’s pedigree as the son of a Hawaiian king

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<sup>3</sup> *Five Youth*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Five Youth*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Catherine Stauder, “George, Prince of Hawaii,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, no. 6 (1972): 28-44. Stauder compared the dates of George’s story and muster rolls of both the *Enterprise* and *Guerriere* and conclusively determined that the ABCFM – or the 18-year-old George himself – greatly exaggerated George’s role in the navy. The capture of the *HMS Boxer* off the coast of Maine occurred in September of 1813, yet the name “George Prince” as “landsman” does not appear on the muster roll of the *Enterprise* until June of 1815, when the ship was docked for refitting. Similarly, he appears in the muster roll as “landsman” while the *Guerriere* was laid up for repairs

gave the ABCFM great hope in increased public exposure for their cause and perhaps King Kaumuali'i would be open to Christian missionaries if they arrived at his Island with his son. Unaware of the political situation of the Islands, the pamphlet proclaimed, "This young prince then is at present the heir apparent to the dominion of all the Sandwich Islands."<sup>6</sup> Such were the lofty expectations behind George Prince Kaumuali'i.

*A Narrative of Five Youth* also served as an exposition for the writing abilities of the Hawaiians, as a demonstration of the effectiveness of Christian education upon the heathen. Several personal letters written by the Hawaiians were included; many of them "thank you notes" to various host families in Connecticut that boarded the Hawaiians. More importantly, however, the letters were testaments to the spiritual "improvements" of the young Hawaiians, such as when nineteen-year-old William Kanui ("Tennooe") chastised his heathen past: "Now my dear friend you may read this letter, whom you hope will be a herald of salvation to some of those poor heathen who are sitting in the region and shadow of death; who are perishing for want of the blessings, which through the goodness of God you and I enjoy."<sup>7</sup> The message was clear: Hawaiians were ideal candidates for Christian conversion.

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at the Boston Navy Yard from November 1815 to September 1816. George was essentially a dockworker.

<sup>6</sup> *Five Youth*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> *Five Youth*, 27.

## Foreign School

*A Narrative of Five Youth* garnered enough interest and funds within the Congregational Protestant community to establish the Foreign Mission School, or the “Indian School” as it was informally called, in Cornwall, Connecticut. The local townspeople donated an old abandoned schoolhouse and classes commenced in May 1817. In addition to the original five Hawaiians, two youths from India, one Canadian Indian, two more Hawaiians and two white Americans (studying to be missionaries) made up the entire first class.<sup>8</sup> The highly rural setting was meant to keep the sea-minded youth far from the influences of domineering captains and the dens of iniquity surrounding the harbors. Here in Cornwall, where the residents still lived and adhered to the old Puritan ways of New England life, the young men would learn the codes of gentility, an appreciation for rigid academics and a Biblical fear of God. Those students who demonstrated the most academic promise and exhibited genuine levels religious piety, would perhaps one day return to their homelands as converted missionaries and deliver the Gospel to their own people.

The reason for all this fuss over a few Hawaiians wandering around the docks of New England was laid out in the pamphlet for all donors to ponder:

When they arrive here, strangers to all around them, unacquainted with our language; with the manners and customs, the arts and employments of civilized life; destitute of property and of friends, they often embrace the first opportunity to return to their native country. Or if they remain, it is only to become more wicked, and consequently more miserable in this and the future world. As their minds are entirely uncultivated, they have no fixed principles by which to regulate their conduct. Being, frequently neglected by pious and respectable people, and left to the influence of

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<sup>8</sup> Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and The Pagan World: The First Half Century of The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810–1860* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 1968), 91.

their evil propensities; they wander from place to place, attach themselves to the vilest class of society; become familiar with their abominable practices, and thus too often come to an untimely end. Should they survive, and a future time return to their native land, they corrupt their fellow countrymen, prejudice their minds against Christianity, and thus become obstacles in the way of spreading the Gospel.<sup>9</sup>

This passage towards the end of the pamphlet was the ABCFM's philosophical view of Hawaiians in a nutshell: that Hawaiians fell mindlessly towards "evil propensities" without the proper direction of "pious" people. Furthermore, those Hawaiian sailors who remain became familiar with the "vilest" of American society and became "more wicked." Should the double-tainted Hawaiians survive and manage to return home to the Islands, they were sure to bring ruination to their own "uncultivated" culture. In the final analysis, sending missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands was an urgent matter, for "Christianity and civilization," the pamphlet concluded, "go hand in hand."<sup>10</sup>

### **New England Moral Declension**

The origin of the ABCFM is a complex story steeped within the turbulent conditions of American Protestantism after the Revolutionary War.<sup>11</sup> Towards the close of the eighteenth century, the Congregational church came to represent orthodox Protestant values based on old New England Puritan roots.

Congregationalists identified with the writings of old Calvinist leaders of the old

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<sup>9</sup> *Five Youth*, 42–43.

<sup>10</sup> *Five Youth*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> The bulk of ABCFM's history henceforth is based and sourced from the following works: John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists & Foreign Missions, 1800–1830* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 4–24; William R. Hutchison; *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62–90; Phillips, 1–31.



Massachusetts Bay Colony such as Cotton Mather and John Winthrop. By the mid-eighteenth century, the rural tracts of Connecticut came to represent the heart of the Congregational Church, producing some of its most fiery leaders and stern educators such as Jedidiah Morse (“father of American geography”), Noah Webster (“father of the dictionary”), Lyman Beecher (father of Harriet Beecher Stowe), Timothy Dwight (president of Yale) and others of conservative New England bent. These men were also the most celebrated graduates of Yale College, the heart of Congregational orthodoxy and intellectualism.

By the start of the nineteenth century, several new religious and social forces in New England threatened the dominance of the old Calvinist institution, or the “Standing Order.” The “capture” of Harvard College in 1805 by the election of Henry Ware, a Unitarian preacher, to the Hollis Chair of Divinity caused tremendous alarm among the staunch Trinitarian-based Congregationalists – an incident that came to be known as the “Unitarian Controversy.” Morse and Beecher were relentless critics of the Unitarian movement, a “backsliding” phenomenon they perceived as socially liberal and further promoted what they detested the most – the modern Revolutionary notion of the separation of church and state. Many Americans were no longer required to “register” with a local church and the funding for parishes through local means dried up significantly. Along the same lines, a new spirit of individualism in industry and mercantilism drew many self-made entrepreneurs to cities with growing factories and ports toward global destinations. Compulsory support for local churches was dwindling in every community. Reverend Morse, for example, went on a preaching tour around rural New England and found several empty churches in what seemed to be ghost towns

(he stood and preached in them anyway). All of modern society, essentially, was falling apart according to New England traditionalists – from the splitting of families to the blatant desecrations of the Sabbath.

To counter the Unitarian tide that was permeating in “liberal” hot spots such as Boston, the Congregationalists established the Andover Theological Seminary in Newton, Massachusetts in 1807 and erected the Park Street Church in Boston in 1810. The Andover school served as a training ground for Congregational clergymen – and later missionaries – and was essentially the first “graduate” school in America; many of its first professors were defectors from Harvard during the Unitarian takeover. The Park Street Church functioned as the bastion of Congregational conservatism in the bustling and increasingly secular city of Boston. In 1826, Lyman Beecher’s son, Edward Beecher, was appointed pastor and guardian of this sacred urban outpost of New England Calvinism. Along with these new buildings for old institutions came calls for increased piety and “right actions” among New England Protestants.

According to Joseph Conforti, Congregational leaders were pivotal figures in forming a New England flavored “exceptionalism” that espoused “New England’s cultural homogeneity but also the distinctiveness of its civic landscape.”<sup>12</sup> Morse, Dwight, Webster and other republican-leaning Christians were the moral voices of New England’s Federalist Party and vehemently opposed to the rise of southern Democrats such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and later Andrew Jackson. As “sons of the New England interior,”

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations in Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 95.

Conforti notes, the “graduates of Yale were steeped in regional history, attached to a Puritanized republicanism, and determined to protect clerical authority as part of a larger deferential praxis that reconciled order and liberty.”<sup>13</sup> At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, the old Standing Order felt threatened not only from the Democratic south, but also from their Unitarian neighbors.

Moreover, the strict Calvinists struggled to find legitimacy in the thriving secular activities of modern industry and global mercantilism. The Congregational church eventually turned to overseas missionary work as a renewed platform to exude moral authority and inspire New England charity. The Sandwich Islands Mission was the most successful and widely recognized of these New England spiritual endeavors conducted overseas during the nineteenth century.

### **Missionary Romance**

The urge to go overseas and spread the Gospel to heathen nations can be called a youth movement of sorts within the Congregational community. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, several northeast college students were swept up with the emotions of The Second Great Awakening, a rousing Protestant revival movement that scorched across much of western New England and particularly upstate New York – an area that came to be known as the “burned-over district.” At its theological core, The Second Great Awakening was a fervent reform movement to “correct” the evils of society before Judgment Day, or more specifically, before the Second Coming of Christ. While the millenarian overtones pervaded many sermons in the early years of the

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<sup>13</sup> Conforti, 110.

movement, the young mostly middle- to upper-middle class rural New Englanders were drawn by the more practical and “activist” elements of social reform.

Among romantic-minded divinity scholars in institutions such as Yale, Williams, Bowdoin and Dartmouth, the revival came in the shapes of “secret” clubs, meetings and “societies” that would meet in dormitories and nearby farmhouses as eager students wrestled with ideas on how to help the needy, weak and destitute. The extent and degree to which the Second Great Awakening penetrated college campuses in America is hard to ascertain, yet as Paul Burlin notes, the revival movement “provided the basic theological or spiritual milieu for any student who had religious interest.”<sup>14</sup> One such student was Samuel J. Mills, son of a Congregational minister from Torrington, Connecticut, who came to be known as the “father of foreign mission work in Christian America.”<sup>15</sup>

As a revered figure, the life of Mills is mixed with half-truths and half-legends, but he is best known for the Haystack Monument which stands in the campus of Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, today. On this spot in August 1806, it is said, Mills and four other Williams College students held one of their regular prayer meetings when they were suddenly drenched by a passing thunderstorm. The students took shelter in a nearby haystack, and while waiting out the storm, they began to ponder about the state of heathen souls in places like Asia, Middle East and other strange places that dotted their

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<sup>14</sup> Paul T. Burlin, *Imperial Maine and Hawai'i: Interpretive Essays in the History of Nineteenth-Century American Expansion* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>15</sup> John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. VI (New York: Harper Brothers, 1894), 275.

geography textbooks. How will the Christ-less be saved and granted eternal life without any knowledge of the Gospel? How will the Kingdom of God be realized if Christians do not actively do their part and dispel ignorance in the world? As the storm cleared, Mills made a pact with his wide-eyed “Brethren” and, as one mission historian wrote, “proposed sending the gospel to light up the darkness of that heathen land.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1809, Mills met seventeen-year-old Henry ‘Opukaha’ia in New Haven while trying to recruit Yale students into his “Brethren” fraternity: “His manners are simple; he does not appear to be vicious in any respect, and he has great thirst for knowledge. In his simple manner of expressing himself, he says, *The people in Owyhee very bad – they pray to gods made of wood.*”<sup>17</sup> The encounter with the young Hawaiian instilled a strong sense of religious duty in Mills. In an impassioned letter to an old classmate, Mills expressed his religious dilemma:

What does this mean? Brother Hall, do you understand it? Shall he be sent back unsupported, to attempt to reclaim his countrymen? Shall we not consider these southern islands a proper place for the establishment of a mission? ... We ought not to look merely to the heathen on our own continent, but to direct our attention where we may, to human appearance, do the most good, and where the difficulties are the least.<sup>18</sup>

Mills later took his missionary zeal and his new “protégé,” ‘Opukaha’ia, to Andover in 1810 and petitioned prominent clergymen such as Samuel Worcester, Jedidiah Morse and Edward D. Griffin (then head pastor of Park Street Church) to consider the cause for Christian missionary work in foreign lands. In 1810, the

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas C. Richards, *Samuel J. Mills: Missionary Pathfinder, Pioneer and Promoter* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1906), 30.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel J. Mills quoted in Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of Rev. Samuel J. Mills, Late Missionary to the South Western Section of the United States* (New York: New York Evangelical Missionary Society, 1820), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Mills in Spring, 50.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), or the American Board as it was called in short form, was established in Boston under the banner of the Congregational church – although Presbyterians and other allied denominations also soon joined the organization.

In the beginning, the ABCFM was more of an “inquiry” into the possibility of American missionary endeavors and operated conservatively in “safe” global arenas. Mills, for example, ended up doing most of his missionary labors in the Mississippi valley among Native Americans. The ABCFM’s initial overseas efforts operated mainly as subsidiary support teams to the London Missionary Society (LMS) in British-controlled regions like British India and East Asia. This was the most logical progression since the missionary stations of the British LMS inspired the early American zeal for missionary work. However, the first joint American-British missions to India and Ceylon in 1812 were greatly hindered by the War of 1812 and the agents of the East India Company also generally opposed Christian missionary activity around India.<sup>19</sup> Attempts to convert the Cherokees in Tennessee and the Choctaws in Mississippi also proved unfruitful, and in many ways, the efforts on home soil lacked the sensational quality of an overseas endeavor.

The hope for a distinctly American overseas missionary endeavor, therefore, rested on the cultivation of the Hawaiians in the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall. Another challenge for the American Board was to retain the interest and charitable spirit of the Christian public. The *Panoplist*, a periodical that started under Dr. Morse as a publication against Unitarianism in 1805,

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<sup>19</sup> Phillips, 32–56.

quickly became a missionary newsletter and even changed its name to the *Missionary Herald* by 1821. The *Panoplist / Missionary Herald* became a widely read publication in New England and its contents were regularly duplicated in local newspapers to inform readers on the progress of the Christian missions, as well as on the strange customs of foreign lands. The publication was also the main vehicle to elicit charitable donations from the church-going public for missionary causes. Historian John Andrew emphasizes that most solicitations for donations from the ABCFM were largely aimed at churchgoing women, since “only religion offered women an outlet for their energies and talents” in the highly restrictive social structure of conservative rural New England. In many ways, the ABCFM was the first to set up the well-oiled machine of public philanthropy in the long tradition of American charitable organizations.

### **A New England Mission**

The sudden death of Henry ‘Opukaha’ia from typhus fever in February 17, 1818, was a turning point for the ABCFM that prompted a renewed focus on realizing the Sandwich Islands Mission. The American Board wasted little time after the tragedy and published a tract the same year entitled, *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*, by Reverend Edwin Dwight; the memoirs also included a sermon by Lyman Beecher delivered on the day of ‘Opukaha’ia’s funeral. ‘Opukaha’ia’s moving deathbed scene tugged at the hearts of churchgoers and Sunday school children. Surrounded by Samuel Mills, Thomas Hopoo and others of the Cornwall school, ‘Opukaha’ia died with an angelic expression: “The spirit had departed – but a smile, such as none present had ever beheld – an expression of

the final triumph of his soul, remained upon his countenance.”<sup>20</sup> Reverend Beecher’s eulogy summed up the sense of missed opportunity: “If the churches of New-England, knowing the purpose of God concerning Obookiah, had chartered a ship and sent it to Owhyhee, on purpose to bring him to Christ, and fit him for heaven; it would have been a cheap purchase of blessedness to man, and glory to God.”<sup>21</sup> The death of the school’s most celebrated pupil should have been an insurmountable loss, but instead, the tragedy turned into a steady flow of sympathetic donations all across New England. By 1819, the American Board was ready to establish its own overseas venture into the Sandwich Islands.

Donations were often gathered during a special church session called “the monthly concert,” when local ministers would praise the progress of various missions and beseech the congregation to open their hearts to charity for the souls of the heathen. Every month, a donation list was published in the *Panoplist*, and later the *Missionary Herald*, where the names of proud and charitable citizens were printed for entire communities to see. On these lists were also various societies and clubs, reformist organizations that were in vogue during the day, such as “The Foreign Mission Society” in Portland, Maine, “The Females for Mission Society” in New Haven, Connecticut, and the “The Society for Educating the Heathen” in Topsfield, Massachusetts. Donations were also not limited to money; gold and jewelry were accepted, as well as everyday materials such as writing materials and books. Several schoolchildren also engaged in pledge

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<sup>20</sup> Edwin W. Dwight, *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah: A Native of Owyhee and a Member of the Foreign Mission School* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1830), 119.

<sup>21</sup> Beecher in *Henry Obookiah*, 123.



drives “for heathen children” with daring feats of “committing Scripture to memory” and “abstaining from sugar.”<sup>22</sup>

John Andrew argues that the “genius” of the ABCFM was in creating a public zest for foreign missionary work, a cause that shifted attention away from the “petty denominational rivalries” at home.<sup>23</sup> The Sandwich Islands represented a Christian undertaking of universal proportions, a chance for New England Protestantism to step out onto the global stage. The advocates of the mission, Andrew points out, “believed they had found a cause that could demonstrate the verities of the old virtues while at the same time embrace the new.”<sup>24</sup> The Board’s lofty intent was to, in Andrew’s words, “re-create a seventeenth-century New England Christian commonwealth in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>25</sup> On the Sandwich Islands, New England can establish a Pacific outpost of Christian civilization to battle heathenism and remind Americans at home about the powers of their Anglo-Puritan heritage. Samuel Worcester, the Secretary of the ABCFM, extolled Hawai’i as the ideal venue for New England missionaries to step out of the shadows of the London Missionary Society and make their own mark: “The Sandwich Islands are a larger and richer field for Christian charity and Christian hope; containing a population equal to one third

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<sup>22</sup> ABCFM, “Donations to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions from July 16<sup>th</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup>,” in *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 15 (Boston: ABCFM, 1819), 209–212.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew, 80.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew, 116.

of New-England, kindly disposed, desirous of civilization, and of excellent mental endowments; the climate salubrious, and the soil exuberantly fertile.”<sup>26</sup>

### **To Seek a Bride**

With increased public support, the venture grew larger than initially planned. The operation was no longer about sending a lone native convert back to his homeland; the new, loftier goal was to establish a full-scale religious and “civilizing” institution on the Islands. By the autumn of 1819, the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM assembled seven graduates from Yale, Andover and the Cornwall mission-training program, plus three Hawaiian converts, to serve as the Pioneer Company to the Sandwich Islands. The candidates were all volunteers to the cause, but a final rigorous review through written testimonials was conducted by the Board to confirm each candidate’s level of “character” and “Christian deportment.” Almost all of the candidates pointed to ‘Opukaha’ia’s dramatic tale as their prime inspiration for enlisting in the cause.

Thirty-year-old Hiram Bingham from Bennington, Vermont, and thirty-two-year-old Asa Thurston from Fitchburg, Massachusetts, both classmates at the Andover Theological Seminary, were ordained as the principal ministers of the mission. Bingham, who immediately became the de facto leader of the group, remembered his entry into the mission in pragmatic terms: “Visiting the Foreign Mission school, during a vacation...at Andover, and feeling a new impulse to become a pioneer in the enterprise of spreading the Gospel in that dark portion

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<sup>26</sup> Samuel Worcester, “Mission to the Sandwich Islands: The Isles Shall Wait for His Law,” in *The Panoplist and Missionary Herald: For the Year 1819*, Volume 15, (Boston: ABCFM, 1819), 430.

of the Pacific Isles, I freely offered myself to the American Board.”<sup>27</sup> Three of the assistant missionaries were in their mid-twenties: Samuel Whitney, a “mechanic,” Thomas Holman, a physician, and Samuel Ruggles, an aspiring teacher – all hailed from rural Connecticut and trained for the mission in Cornwall. The youngest assistant was nineteen-year-old Elisha Loomis from Rushville, New York, who was in charge of setting up a printing press for the mission. The oldest in the group was thirty-seven-year old Daniel Chamberlain, a farmer from Westboro, Massachusetts, who also fought in the War of 1812 and came to be referred as “Captain” by the younger men. Three Hawaiians converted to Christianity and were granted permission to return to their homeland as “helpers” to the mission: Thomas Hopu, William Kanui and John Honoli’i. George Prince Kaumuali’i failed to impress the American Board as a docile servant of the Lord and never received the rites of conversion. Nevertheless, the Board deemed it proper to send the prince back to his father in Kaua’i, thus they granted George a passage home along with the pioneer band.

To the shock of the newly appointed men, the Prudential Committee announced that all overseas missionaries were required to have a wife before departure. The Hawaiians were naturally exempt from this edict, and the elder “Captain” Chamberlain was already married with five children; the rest of the men, however, were all bachelors. The six men had a little over a month to find brides before the October departure date. Although several of the men agonized over the rule, the reasoning behind it was cut and dry for the American Board: the temptations for inappropriate relations were too great on the Polynesian

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<sup>27</sup> Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* (New York: Sherman Converse, 1847), 59.

islands. Stories circulated about failed London Missionary Society stations where single male missionaries “went native” among South Sea islanders. The American Board had little tolerance for miscegenation in Hawai‘i, but in an interesting paradox, intermarriages were encouraged for missionaries among the Cherokees and Choctaws. Jedidiah Morse, for example, extolled the virtues of mixed marriages within the Native American mission on the homeland: “let intermarriage with them become general, and the end in which the Government has in view will be attained. They would then be literally of one blood with us, be merged in the nation, and saved from extinction.”<sup>28</sup> Nobody on the Board held such assimilationist views for the Sandwich Islands, however.

Furthermore, in the eyes of the Board, the Hawaiians were wholly bereft of civilization and required proper models for domestic living. Naturally, the women of the Congregational church were the exemplars of the “dutiful” New England wife and keepers of the “Christian home.” And like many educated New England women of the day, the women had potential as educators for Sunday school and could possibly teach native women the intricacies of Christian motherhood. Fortunately for the awkward seminarian men unaccustomed to courting women, the American Board kept an informal list of potential female candidates – all of them in their twenties – who expressed interest in missionary work in the past. Still, most families balked at the idea of sending their daughters around Cape Horn, much less marrying them off to complete strangers. As Patricia Grimshaw notes, “to sew for fund raising in the

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<sup>28</sup> Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States, on Indian Affairs, Comprising a Narrative of a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 75.

mission cause was one matter, to be a central act in the drama was another.”<sup>29</sup> The young men were faced with a task that ran contrary to the courtship norms of contemporary New England. Bingham and Thurston, for example, were unable to secure their first proposals – a “Sarah S.” and a “Miss Clapp” – due to disapproving parents.<sup>30</sup>

In perhaps a sign that points to the fervor of the missionary cause, however, all six men managed to get married merely weeks prior to departure. And in perhaps a testament to the matchmaking abilities of the Board, the missionary journals – especially by the women – indicate a pleasant sense of suitability among the couples and even early signs of infatuation. Hiram Bingham married Sybil Moseley Bingham, a schoolteacher from Westfield, Massachusetts. After a month with Hiram on the ship *Thaddeus*, Sybil wrote about her growing affection for the young preacher, “O, to be what he would persuade himself I was! O, to profit by such an instructor, counselor, guide and friend!”<sup>31</sup> Halfway into their journey Hiram wrote, “I have everyday had occasion to bless God, with admiring gratitude and joy, for the comfort and aid of such a companion.”<sup>32</sup> Like all of the couples, the Bingham’s whirlwind courtship continued as they blew out to sea.

Asa Thurston eventually married Lucy Goodale Thurston from Marlborough, Massachusetts, and graduate of Bradford Academy. Years later,

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<sup>29</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>30</sup> Grimshaw, *Paths*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Sybil Bingham, November 26, 1819, *Journal of Sybil Moseley Bingham 1819–1823*, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library.

<sup>32</sup> Hiram Bingham, “Letter from the Rev. Hiram Bingham the Rev. Dr. Worcester: Brig Thaddeus,” in *The Panoplist and Missionary Herald: For the Year 1820*, Volume 16 (Boston: ABCFM, 1820), 91.

Lucy remembered their first family-arranged meeting as a shy-yet-playful occasion, “Then one by one the family dispersed, leaving two of similar aspirations, introduced at sunset as strangers, to separate at midnight as interested friends.”<sup>33</sup> The Thurstons proved to be a devout couple that famously grew old and died together on the desolate missionary station of Kailua and were fondly remembered as the “grandparents” of the Hawai‘i mission by Americans and Hawaiians alike (Figure 15).



Figure 15 – Asa Thurston and Lucy Goodale Thurston, photograph circa 1864, Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society. Asa was in his late seventies while Lucy was in her late sixties when this photo was taken.

Despite Asa’s Santa Claus-like appearance in his latter years, when he first met Lucy he was known as Yale’s most gifted athlete during his undergraduate years and “one of the best ballroom dancers in the region.”<sup>34</sup> The “angular”

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<sup>33</sup> Lucy Goodale Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston: Wife of Rev. Asa Thurston, Pioneer Missionary to the Sandwich Islands* (Ann Arbor: S. C. Andrews, 1882), 6.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew, 108.

Hiram Bingham, who was over six feet tall, was also remembered for his physical prowess as an excellent swimmer.<sup>35</sup> In many ways, these men belied the typical pallid and feeble Ichabod Crane-like image of the New England minister. The Board chose these men not only for their intellect, but also for their physical endurance in the face of a challenging voyage.

The marriages of the assistant missionaries were equally hasty, yet oddly fitting and felicitous. Samuel Ruggles found a bride in Nancy Wells Ruggles from East Windsor, Connecticut, while Dr. Holman, the physician, conveniently married Samuel's attractive older sister, Lucia Ruggles Holman. Samuel, who suffered a long bout of seasickness on the *Thaddeus*, thanked God for the pairing: "Dear girl she has been severely tried with her sick husband...I cannot forbear to mention how greatly the Lord has favored me in a companion. She is all and more than I could reasonably ask."<sup>36</sup> Samuel Whitney joined in matrimony with Mercy Partridge Whitney from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Halfway through the journey on the *Thaddeus*, Mercy pledged in her journal: "He is worthy of my sincere and lasting attachment. It shall ever be my constant study to make his life pleasant and useful. And should I be a means of lightening his cares or contributing in any measure to his happiness, I shall be doubly compensated."<sup>37</sup> The youngest Elisha Loomis found a bride in Maria Theresa Sartwell Loomis from Hartford, New York, who was three years older than the teenager.

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<sup>35</sup> Mary Zwiep, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Ruggles, December 27, 1819, *Copy of the Journal Kept From October 23, 1819 to August 4, 1820 by Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library.

<sup>37</sup> Mercy Partridge Whitney, February 2, 1820, *Journal of Mrs. Mercy Partridge Whitney, Sandwich Islands, October 24, 1819 to August 2, 1820*, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library.



“Captain” Chamberlain decided to bring his entire family to Hawai‘i including his wife, Jerusha Bernap Chamberlain, and five of his children, the oldest being twelve years old at the time. Two of the older children received some instruction at the Cornwall school, thus they had an inkling of what was ahead.

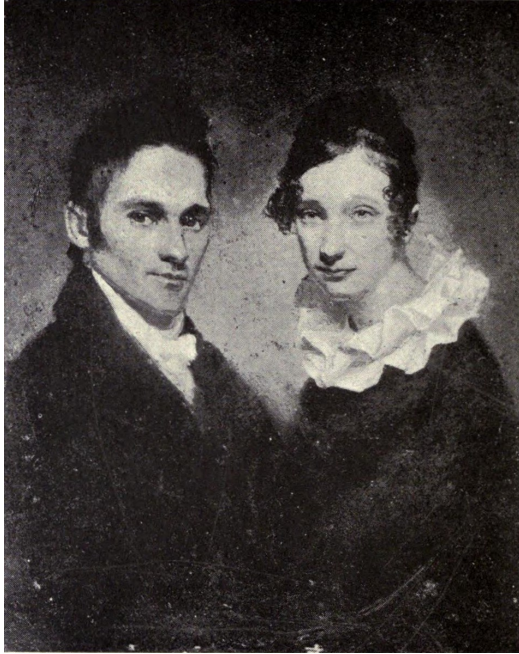


Figure 16 - Hiram and Sybil Moseley Bingham, by S. F. B. Morse (1819).

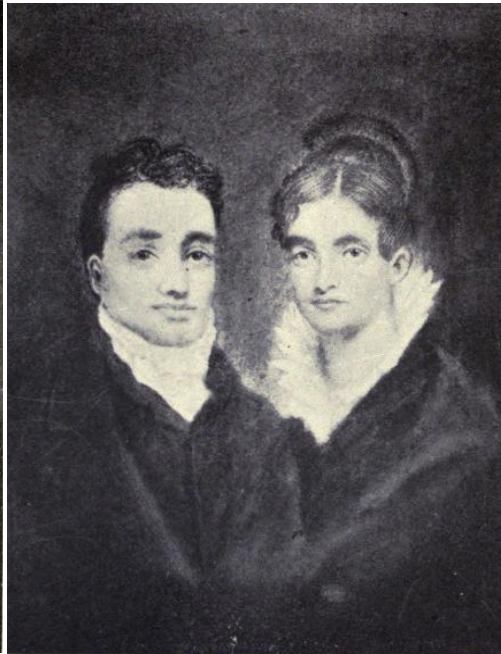


Figure 17 – Thomas and Lucia Ruggles Holman, by S. F. B. Morse (1819).



Figure 18 – Samuel and Mercy Partridge Whitney, by S. F. B. Morse, (1819).



Figure 19 – Samuel and Nancy Wells Ruggles, by S. F. B. Morse, (1819).





Figure 20 – “Four Owyhean Youths,” by S. F. B. Morse (New Haven, 1822). This print sheet featuring Thomas Hopoo [Hopu], George Tamoree [Kaumuali‘i], William Tenoee [Kanui] and John Honoree [Honoli‘i] was included in later editions of *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*.

In October 1819, when all the members of what Sybil called the “little Mission band” were finally gathered, Samuel F. B. Morse, Jedidiah’s son (and inventor of the telegraph and Morse Code), painted commemorative portraits of four of the handsomest newlyweds and four of the departing Hawaiians dressed in their best Sunday outfits (Figures 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20).<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, the younger Morse seemed impressed with the physical similarities of the couples, such as the tall faces of the Holmans, the terse lips of the Whitneys and the big round eyes of the Ruggles. Yet the most striking of these portraits, besides the primly dressed Hawaiians, is the painting of the Bingham couple.

Mission historians are often compelled to distinguish the dashing Hiram against Sybil’s homelier features, such as when Bradford Smith writes, “In appearance Sybil was no match for Hiram. Her nose was too long and it turned up at the end.”<sup>39</sup> Or Mary Zwiep’s observation: “She was not a pretty woman...Her large nose in an ordinary face does not match Hiram’s dashing and regular features.”<sup>40</sup> However, journal records show that Sybil was greatly loved by the mission family, as well as by Hawaiians, and that she had a tremendous capacity for kindness and sympathetic intelligence. The dapper Hiram Bingham, on the other hand, grew into a cantankerous and dour preacher whose name conjured the image of a choleric Puritan despot in the minds of American sea captains.

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<sup>38</sup> Samuel F. B. Morse was in demand as a portrait painter during his early years. When Morse painted the missionaries, he was on his way to Washington D.C. to paint a commissioned portrait of President James Monroe, which he completed in December of 1819. Morse likely painted the missionary portraits “free of charge” for his father and the Congregational church.

<sup>39</sup> Bradford Smith, *Yankees in Paradise: The New England Impact on Hawaii* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1956), 27.

<sup>40</sup> Zwiep, 20.

## A Hawaiian Church in Boston

Today, at the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston, a popular tourist destination on the historical Freedom Trail, a marble sign hangs outside on the brick wall by the entrance (Figure 21). The sign lists all the significant achievements of the church and the “Great Things He Hath Done” since the founding of the parish in 1809. After the erection of the church, the establishment of the “Handel & Haydn Society of Boston Founded 1815” tops the list as the church’s first notable accomplishment. For the growing church, a music society was an important step in establishing connections with the local citizenry. The next item on the list looks completely out of place on this icon of Boston architecture: “Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) Church Founded 1819.” Hawai‘i? On the Freedom Trail?



Figure 21 –  
Entrance sign on the  
Park Street  
Congregational  
Church in Boston,  
Massachusetts  
(2013).

Yet here on October 15, 1819, more than six hundred church members plus “a multitude of spectators” gathered in and around Park Street Church for the grand sendoff of the missionaries. Jedidiah Morse and other high-ranking

clergymen officially consecrated the small band of missionaries as the Sandwich Island Church. Bingham, Thurston and even Thomas Hopu addressed the crowd. The missionary newsletter was impressed that the Hawaiian's delivery "was free from any embarrassment, except what arose from his want of readiness in the use of our language."<sup>41</sup> With only a week to go before departure, friends and families of the missionaries were busy helping with organizing, packing and loading ordinary items of all kinds – the mission, after all, was expected to be a lifetime calling. The most crucial "packing" that occurred in these hurried moments, however, was the establishment of the Sandwich Island Church, long before any makeshift pulpit was set down on the Islands. The Church was conceived as an incorruptible entity, a pure idea born in New England and shipped *in toto* to the Hawaiian Islands. In addition to the stacks of donated bibles for poor heathen souls and reams of paper for feverish journal writing, the *Thaddeus* was loaded with a peculiar brand of rural New England morality that rarely left the confines of agrarian communities. To be sure, most of the young missionaries never saw the ocean before, or even Boston, and yet their five-month journey was about to commence – five months where the ocean was all there is to see.

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the *Thaddeus*, commanded by Captain Andrew Blanchard and First Mate James Hunnewell, departed Boston's Long Wharf after a tearful farewell ceremony with friends and family. The stark reality of sea life set in quickly. The normally profuse writings of the missionaries went mostly silent – the sons and daughters of inland farmers fell into a horrible bout of seasickness.

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<sup>41</sup> *Missionary Herald*, vol. 15, 527-528.

The sickness was profound, lasting almost an entire month for most of the men, women and children. Samuel Ruggles suffered the most and was bedridden for almost the entire journey. Nancy Ruggles feared that she would arrive at their destination as a young widow: “He frequently expressed to me his apprehensions of finding a watery grave before we reach Owhyhee (Hawaii) and it does seem at times as if he could not continue long.<sup>42</sup> Besides the hardened crew of the *Thaddeus*, only the war veteran Chamberlain and the four Hawaiians were able to shake off seasickness with ease. This was their first test of faith, a baptism at sea. “How would a voyage at sea teach us our continual dependence, were we not so slow to learn!” Sybil reasoned.<sup>43</sup>

### **Love and Dread in the High Seas**

The missionaries thus moved into a liminal space aboard the *Thaddeus*, a place to ponder what was ahead and what they left behind. After the party gained their sea legs and regained their appetites, the next order of business was to create a modicum of normal life – a schedule. The long days were ordered around prayer, reading, singing hymns and crude lessons in the Hawaiian language. Still, nothing seemed to lessen the unrelenting harshness of shipboard life. Nancy Ruggles complained that she felt “dull,” while others thought they suffered from “extreme stupidity,” Samuel Whitney felt he was getting “corpulent” from lack of exercise. Yet as their journals show, inside their cramped, luggage-filled quarters they also found love.

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<sup>42</sup> N. Ruggles, November 6, 1819, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>43</sup> S. Bingham, November 9, 1819, *Journal*.

Naturally, the tight conditions and trials at sea allowed for an intensified bonding. Their common faith and lofty mission also united them philosophically. One of the primary roles the men played in their relationships was that of a teacher and spiritual guide. Since the women were excluded from higher education such as the seminaries, the men were expected to expand the knowledge of their partners and better prepare them for the mission. Much of this was done in one-on-one sessions, while the women would also conduct group study sessions among themselves. Their affairs were thus built on precepts of faith, duty and mind. One of the most cherished moments for the Bingham couple, for example, was reading to each other at night. "I read to him for two hours in the Memoirs of Doctor Buchanan," Sybil wrote, "which opened a field for remarks and conversation, interesting in their nature."<sup>44</sup>

Sexual intimacy was also clearly part of the agenda on the ship – Sybil, Nancy, and Mercy Partridge were all a few weeks into their first pregnancies when they arrived in Hawai'i.<sup>45</sup> Maria Loomis gave birth to the first white child born in Hawai'i three months after they arrived. However, public displays of affection were frowned upon by these stern New Englanders, thus any act of intimacy must have occurred in unusually cramped and awkward settings. A few months after the voyage, fellow missionaries accused Thomas and Lucia Holman of "neglect of duty." Several within the group recalled with disgust how the Holmans were "practicing and justifying the most sickening familiarity in the

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<sup>44</sup> S. Bingham, November 24, 1819, *Journal*.

<sup>45</sup> The missionary party moved out of the ship and settled on land on April 4, 1819. The first children were born on the following dates: Levi Loomis – July 16, 1820 (Honolulu, O'ahu); Maria Kapule Whitney – October 19, 1820 (Waimea, Kaua'i); Sophia Moseley Bingham – Nov. 9, 1820 (Honolulu, O'ahu); Sarah Trumbull Ka'amuali'i Ruggles – Dec. 22, 1820 (Waimea, Kaua'i).

cabin and on deck” to the point where even the Hawaiian boys were offended, despite being “born in a land where indecent familiarity is fashionable.”<sup>46</sup> The Holmans’ wanton display of personal affection was considered an affront to the larger, more dignified cause of the journey. Lucia was also accused of hoarding fruits that were given to her by her family, a behavior that was viewed by others as lacking in the spirit of unity. Nevertheless, as Zwiép notes, the months on the *Thaddeus* “were a time of pleasure in religion” and youthful innocence, when the women were “like schoolgirls, reading and studying.”<sup>47</sup> They were still far away from the realities of childbearing, housecleaning, school teaching, and the more troubling encounter with the dreaded heathens.

Much of their intimacy can also perhaps be related to the dread of the unknown, like two lost souls embracing in the cold darkness, seeking comfort in human touch. When the Binghamms were married, Reverend Gallaudet praised the union of the “Christian Brother and Sister,” but also gave them a dire warning of what they were about to face together:

God in his mysterious providence may appoint you both a watery grave; or one of you, like the afflicted Newell, may be left to mourn the departure of the other to a better world, and to dress the sods of an early grave in Owhyhee. Be prepared to meet such afflictions, and, if called to endure them, may your Heavenly Father succor and sustain you. Perhaps, too, like your brethren and sisters at Otaheite, you may have to encounter innumerable trials and difficulties in the prosecution of your work from the perverseness or hatred of the very savages whom you go to enlighten and save; even the horrors of their cruel wars may yet appall your sight, and your own lives be in jeopardy from their barbarity. Possibly you may be surrounded with the thickest clouds of disappointment, and be

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<sup>46</sup> Sandra-Wagner Wright, “When Unity is Torn Asunder: The Distressing Case of Lucia and Thomas Holman,” *Pacific Studies*, Volume 15, Number 2 (June, 1992), 43.

<sup>47</sup> Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston to Samuel Worcester, May 11, 1820, Missionary Letters, Hawaii Mission Children’s Society Library; Zwiép, 52–53; Smith, 59–60.



removed from your labors, before one gleam of hope breaks upon your prospect to cheer and encourage you.<sup>48</sup>

The reverend may have conducted the most sobering wedding sermon in New England, but it was a reminder to the young couple that their marriage served a larger cosmological purpose – that of battling and dispelling evil.

By late February, the *Thaddeus* was long past the rough seas of Cape Horn and sailing slowly towards the equator in the calm and flat Pacific. All the journals attest that this was the most pleasant portion of the journey where everyone caught up with their health. Even poor Ruggles managed to rise and walk around the deck. As they settled into a regular routine, however, the dread of the heathen world grew more profound. A troubled Lucy Thurston asked Captain Blanchard and master Hunnewell whether they believed “there would be any danger of our lives being taken at the islands.”<sup>49</sup> The officers, who conducted business on the Islands in 1816, filled Lucy’s head with tales of “pollution and depravity” while assuring her that theft, drunkenness and rare instances of poisoning were the only *real* dangers on the Islands.<sup>50</sup> “Who is sufficient for these things?” Lucy wondered.

A series of events in March, merely weeks away from landing, “awoke” the mission as signs from God alerting them about the gravity of their endeavour. To cool off from the hot tropical sun, the men in the mission decided

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<sup>48</sup> “Mission to the Sandwich Islands,” *Christian Spectator* (1819-1828), vol. 1, no. 10 (October, 1819): 547.

<sup>49</sup> Thurston, 23–24.

<sup>50</sup> Blanchard and Hunnewell sold the brig *Bordeaux Packet* to Kamehameha and his chiefs for a haul of sandalwood in a transaction between 1816 and 1818. See Ernest S. Dodge, *New England and the South Seas*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 126–127.



to take a dip in the ocean on a slow windless morning. Unbeknownst to the men, the cook of the ship tossed a large beef bone into the water that attracted a ten-foot shark. The shark was spotted merely seconds after the men exited the water, causing tremendous shock for everyone aboard. George P. Kaumuali'i and a few officers snared the beast and dragged it onboard. "The vigorous floundering of this Leviathan made the sea broil," observed Bingham.<sup>51</sup> Sybil was equally horrified, "His frightful jaws struck terror, while my heart melted in view of God's preserving mercy."<sup>52</sup> George cut open the shark's stomach and everyone gasped in horror as the chef's bone fell out in its entirety. "How it makes the blood thrill through my veins when I think of the danger to which our friends were exposed!" a panicked Lucy wrote. The missionaries recently learned that Hawaiians worshipped sharks (*mano*) as ancestor-gods (*'aumakua*) and also heard unsubstantiated rumors about mothers tossing unwanted babies into the ocean as sacrifices. Bingham was certain that the "unusual visitor" was a wake-up call from God: "The mingled emotions of gratitude for deliverance from danger...and so effective an admonishment to be suitably on our guard, and pity for a nation so degraded as to regard this monster as a god, and confidence that he who had shut this lion's mouth, would hold in check all our enemies, and triumph over all the vanities of the heathen, cannot be easily described."<sup>53</sup>

Three days before reaching the islands, Samuel Whitney, in a bid to shed some weight, joined the *Thaddeus* crew in painting the hull when he fell overboard into the sea. The crew tossed various buoyant articles in the water.

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<sup>51</sup> H. Bingham, 67.

<sup>52</sup> S. Bingham, March 13, 1819, *Journal*.

<sup>53</sup> H. Bingham, 68.

Whitney was able to grab hold of a wooden bench. Thirty minutes later, Whitney was rescued and brought back on board, but the shark incident had everyone fearing for his life. "Never before did the mission family know how much they loved him," recalled Bingham.<sup>54</sup> Although Mercy Whitney was relieved to see her husband on deck, she saw his rescue as another sign to stay focused: "I hope this dispensation of providence may be sanctified and prove a means of exciting us to diligence in our Master's work."<sup>55</sup> On March 30<sup>th</sup>, the snow-capped summit of Mauna Kea broke over the horizon.

### **Good Women**

The missionaries were uncertain of the situation on shore and sent Hunnewell, Honoli'i and Hopu on a boat to gather some information. After three hours, the party returned with astonishing news. "With almost breathless impatience," Sybil wrote, "they leap on board and say, [Kamehameha] is dead! The government is settled in the hands of his son [Liholiho], [Kalanimoku] is principal chief, the taboo system is no more, men and women eat together! The idol gods are burned!"<sup>56</sup> Like the Mayflower Pilgrims of 1620 who saw the "cleared land" of Massachusetts as a sign of God's Providence, the missionaries of 1820 similarly interpreted the fall of Hawaiian religion as a path cleared by God for the introduction of Christianity. "How surprising!" Mercy excitedly wrote, "that what we expected was a labor of years, God has accomplished

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<sup>54</sup> H. Bingham, 68.

<sup>55</sup> M. Whitney, March 27, 1819, *Journal (1819-1820)*.

<sup>56</sup> S. Bingham, March 30, 1820, *Journal*.

before our arrival.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the “hand of God” may have set the stage, Bingham warned, but unless the mission “speedily impressed” Christianity upon the people, the islanders were sure to “relapse into idolatry.”<sup>58</sup>

As the *Thaddeus* approached the shoreline of the island of Hawai‘i, native traders rowed up in their canoes to the ship in the customary manner. The Hawaiians, who were used to the quick bartering action of arriving foreign ships, must have been perplexed by the reaction of these new foreigners. Bingham summed up the reaction of the missionaries who were standing on the deck and taking in their first-contact moment: “the appearance of destitution, degradation, and barbarism, among the chattering, and almost naked savages, whose heads and feet, and much of their sunburnt swarthy skins, were bare, and appalling. Some of our number, with gushing tears, turned away from the spectacle.”<sup>59</sup> Sybil was disturbed by the lack of clothing, “They have nothing but a narrow strip, which they term a marrow [*malo*], tied around them.”<sup>60</sup>

Lucy, however, was sitting alone in her cabin in deep thought when a Hawaiian man canoed up to her window and handed her a banana. Lucy could only find a crumbled biscuit but passed it through the window in exchange. “*Wahine maika‘i*,” (good woman) the man called out. Lucy, in her scant knowledge of the Hawaiian language could only muster a short mimicking reply, “*Wahine!*” (Woman!). Lucy marveled how after sailing eighteen thousand miles from Boston, in that brief exchange, she came face-to-face with a “child of nature” alone by herself. That first-contact moment, she later recalled, gave her a

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<sup>57</sup> M. Whitney, March 31, 1820, *Journal* (1819–1820).

<sup>58</sup> H. Bingham, 70.

<sup>59</sup> H. Bingham, 81.

<sup>60</sup> S. Bingham, March 31, 1820, *Journal*.

“strengthening touch in crossing the threshold of the nation.”<sup>61</sup> The banana-for-biscuit transaction was also the first meaningful exchange between a *haole wahine* (white woman) and a *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiian) to occur around the Islands.

However, the women in the mission were not the first *haole wāhine* to ever set eyes on the Hawaiian Islands. In 1787, Captain Charles Barkley of the *Imperial Eagle* touched at the island of Hawai‘i with his sixteen-year-old wife, Frances Barkley. The young Englishwoman “was so pleased” with a young Hawaiian woman named Winee (likely an English-given name based on *wahine*, or woman) that she took her in as a servant.<sup>62</sup> In 1819, Madame Rose de Freycinet, wife of Captain Louis de Freycinet, observed Kealahou Bay from the deck of the French ship *L’Uranie*. Interestingly, in contrast to the New England women who arrived a year later, the Madame found “the lack of clothing not so shocking” when some Hawaiians approached the ship.<sup>63</sup> Yet neither of these women actually set foot on the islands; they were both confined to the ships out of fear of the natives (although Freycinet modestly blamed it on a “headache”). Even more,

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<sup>61</sup> Thurston, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Meares, 28; Barman and Watson, 18-22. John Meares later met Winee in China and agreed to take her home along with his *ali‘i* friend Kaiana. Sadly, Winee died at sea. Winee was likely the first Native Hawaiian to ever leave the Islands.

<sup>63</sup> Madame Rose de Saulces de Freycinet quote in “Madame Freycinet in Hawaii – 1819, as it appeared in *Paradise of the Pacific*, 1936 and 1937,” Victor S. H. Houston trans., in *The Hawaii Book: Story of Our Island Paradise* (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson, 1961), 99–101. The French court was not keen on Captain Freycinet taking his wife on the exploratory expedition. Madame Freycinet dressed up as a man at the onset of the journey to avoid detection, similar to the famous Jean Baré on Bougainville’s expedition. It is quite possible that Madame Freycinet was dressed up as a male officer while observing the Hawaiians to avoid any commotion.

neither women chose to live on the Islands like the female missionaries, or the *wahine maika'i* of the *Thaddeus*.

As the *Thaddeus* sailed down the calm leeward side of the island of Hawai'i, the "prime minister" Billy Pitt Kalandimoku and two high-ranking widows of Kamehameha – Kalakua and Namahana – boarded the ship along with a retinue of attendants to welcome these odd newcomers from Boston, who did not seem like people from Boston (Figures 22 and 23). This was the first time the missionaries saw the fabled *ali'i* chiefs and their groveling servants up close. Conversely, this was the first opportunity for the chiefs to view a *haole wahine* – the counterpart of all these white men who have been washing up on the Islands for the last forty-two years. The missionaries were struck by the tremendous size of the Hawaiian royalty, particularly the female chiefs. "The Queens are monstrous women," observed Nancy Ruggles, "judged to weigh about 400 pounds each."<sup>64</sup> Lucia Holman learned that "the larger and fatter the women in Owhyhee, the better."<sup>65</sup>



Figure 22 – "Nomahanna [Namahana], Queen of the Sandwich Islands," Engraving by S. Freeman, in Otto Von Kotzebue, *A New Voyage Round the World*, 1823–1826 (London, 1830).

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<sup>64</sup> Nancy Ruggles, April 1, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>65</sup> Lucia Holman, *Journal of Lucia Ruggles Holman* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1931), 19.



Figure 23 – “Taymotou, frère de la Reine Kaahumanu [Kalanimoku, brother of Queen Ka’ahumanu],” drawing by Louis Choris (1816), Engraved by Langlumé, in *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1822).

Kalanimoku was the first-cousin of Ka’ahumanu, but many foreigners were confused about familial relations within Hawaiian royalty and thought he was her brother.

In consideration to the mission women, Thomas Hopu requested the royalty to come dressed in western clothing before boarding the *Thaddeus*. Bingham was most impressed with chief Kalanimoku, who the reverend considered to be “distinguished from almost the whole nation, by being decently clad.”<sup>66</sup> The female *ali’i*, however, proceeded to unwrap the Chinese silks and Hawaiian *tapa* cloths from their bodies and commanded their attendants to lay down mats so they could lounge around on the deck. Nancy was overwhelmed by the whole experience and felt emotionally unprepared: “half of their real wretchedness was never told me.”

One of the female chiefs, perhaps Namahana, wanted a closer look at a “picanniny” white woman and asked Lucia to sit on her lap: “She got me into her lap, and felt me from head to foot and said I must cow-cow [chow-chow]

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<sup>66</sup> Bingham, 82.

and be nooe-nooe [nui-nui], i.e., I must eat more and grow larger.”<sup>67</sup> Lucia took the combs out of her hair so the admiring female *ali'i* could view “how long it was,” then Lucia demonstrated how she “rolled it up.” Lucia, however, did not gain any positive feelings for the Hawaiians and poured her disdain into her journal: “I know not how to describe their manners, for I make use of language as indelicate and uncouth as they really appear, which I must do to give you any correct idea of their manners, you must be disgusted.”<sup>68</sup>

The female chief Kalakua correctly intuited that the *haole* women were skilled in the art of sewing so she brought aboard a length of calico cloth. Kalakua played the part of “directress,” according to Lucy, as the missionary women and female Hawaiians formed a “sewing circle” to fashion a robe for the queen.<sup>69</sup> Bingham was not pleased with the dictatorial tone of the “rude giantess,” especially when the women were so “feeble” and “voyage-worn,” but he knew that securing the favor of the chiefs was the mission’s highest priority in order to get off the ship and establish the church. For Lucy, however, the impromptu sewing lesson was her first bestowment of “new employment” to the indolent heathen. She also made sure that the new garment stretched all the way down “to the tops of the shoes,” but Kalakua’s “bare feet cropped out very prominently.” The young women continued to sew for months, long after they settled into their stations, an occupation that brought them much misery.

While the New England women and Hawaiian queens were getting acquainted with each other, Bingham requested chief Kalanimoku for permission

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<sup>67</sup> Holman, 19. Lucia heard an early example of islander pidgin (chow-chow), the blending of English, Chinese, Hawaiian and other foreign languages.

<sup>68</sup> Holman, 19–20.

<sup>69</sup> Thurston, 32–33.

to land and establish residency. Kalanimoku was friendly – he was particularly enamored with the Chamberlain children – but he told Bingham only the king was able to make decisions about land and the status of foreign residents. Over the next few days as the *Thaddeus* tacked along the shore, Bingham and the men of the mission made several visits to an indecisive King Liholiho while the women remained on the ship. Meanwhile, the female chiefs and their attendants continued to visit the ship with canoe-loads of fruits, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, pork, fresh water and other refreshments. Day and night a continual stream of Hawaiians “thick as bees” ate, drank, slept and smoked on the *Thaddeus* to the horror of rural New England sensibilities.<sup>70</sup> One night Lucy Thurston walked across the torch-lit deck “between two rows of native men in Hawaiian costume” that aroused in her a “climax of queer sensations.”<sup>71</sup> The men kept returning from shore without any news and the lack of response from the king wore heavily on the women, especially Lucia: “I have got so tired with the noise and sight of these naked creatures, that I could almost wish myself far from them as you are.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Liholiho’s Indecision**

Liholiho, the new king and heir to the Hawaiian Kingdom, was weary of the passengers aboard the *Thaddeus* and refused to let them ashore but simultaneously kept them at arm’s length (Figure 24). The young king, who was in his early twenties at the time, had plenty of foreign advisors to inform him

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<sup>70</sup> M. Whitney, April 5, 1820, *Journal (1819–1820)*.

<sup>71</sup> Thurston, 32.

<sup>72</sup> Holman, 20.



about Christian missionaries and their efforts in other Polynesian islands such as Tonga and Tahiti.<sup>73</sup> The intentions of Bingham and his band did not need to be spelled out; the issue for Liholiho was whether the Hawaiian Kingdom had any use for these strange young men who brought along their wives. Liholiho was friendly to the pleading missionaries, offering plenty of food and *aloha* hospitality, but he showed no inclination to give a response. Given the overthrow of the old religion, this was hardly the welcome the missionaries expected. Samuel Ruggles suspected that “some wicked white men” had the ear of the king.<sup>74</sup>



Figure 24 – “Tamehameha 2 [Kamehameha II, Liholiho], His Majesty The King of the Sandwich Islands,” lithograph by John Hayter, (London, 1824).

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<sup>73</sup> King Pomare II of Tahiti, for example, denounced the Polynesian god ‘Oro and converted to Christianity in 1819 through the efforts of the London Missionary Society.

<sup>74</sup> S. Ruggles, April, 5, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

According to Native historian Kamakau, two foreign advisors, John Young and John Rives, held opposing views regarding the missionaries.<sup>75</sup> Young assured Liholiho that these Christian “kahunas” practiced the same religion as the British. Although Young preferred to welcome clergymen from England, such as the LMS, he did not see any harm in allowing the American Protestants to stay for a year as a “trial period.” Rives, on the other hand, was French and believed that if any brand of Christianity were to be taught in Hawai‘i, it should be Catholicism. Another issue that concerned Liholiho was the rumors about the sexual intolerance of the missionaries. The king joked to his wives that if the missionaries gained control, he would need to choose one spouse and divorce the rest. Besides polygamy, however, the missionaries certainly opposed the chiefly practice of keeping an *aikāne*, a male-lover and trusted sub-chief.

According to Samuel Kamakau, John Rives (sometimes spelled Jean, or Jasson) was the “*aikane a i punahele na ke keiki moi Liholiho*,” or “the male-lover and favorite of the child king Liholiho.”<sup>76</sup> John Papa ‘I‘i, who lived in Liholiho’s court as a child, relates that Rives came to O‘ahu sometime around 1810 on an American ship and spoke English fluently. “He was always liked because of his youth and boyish ways,” recalls ‘I‘i, “and was considered a good associate for the young chief Liholiho, who took a liking to the newcomer.”<sup>77</sup> Rives, who was said

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<sup>75</sup> Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961), 246–247.

<sup>76</sup> S. M. Kamakau, “Ka Moolelo Hawaii,” *Ke Au Okoa*, volume 4, number 42 (February 4, 1869). I quote the original Hawaiian language passage here since the later English translations – influenced by the missionaries – inaccurately change *aikāne* (male-lover) and *punahele* (favorite) to “friend,” “intimate friend” or “bosom friend.” See Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs* (1969), 256, 330–331.

<sup>77</sup> John Papa ‘I‘i, *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, Mary Kawena Pukui trans. (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1959), 86.

to be a tiny man and acquired the epithet “Luahine” (“Old Woman”), lived under the same roof as the king and taught him some rudimentary English. The favored Frenchman received land, had two daughters and, in Kamakau’s estimation, “lived the life of a Hawaiian prince.” Liholiho and Rives had a falling out when the Frenchman took his teaching role too seriously, but the two men eventually reconciled in adulthood.

When French Captain Louis de Freycinet (and his young wife) visited Hawai’i in 1819, Rives acted as the French interpreter when a Catholic priest onboard the *L’Uranie* purportedly baptized chief Kalanimoku. The Catholic baptism of chief Kalanimoku before the arrival of the Protestant missionaries was a subject of much debate among Hawaiian historians. Kamakau believed Kalanimoku had no idea “whether what he was doing was right or wrong,” while ‘Ii wondered why Ka’ahumanu and Liholiho were not involved in such an elaborate ceremony.<sup>78</sup> To add to the conundrum, a picture was published in an 1825 illustration book for Freycinet’s voyage that showed a Hawaiian “prime minister” being solemnly baptized aboard the *L’Uranie* (Figure 25). Yet Madame Freycinet’s journal only mentions a wild party where Kalanimoku was dressed in nothing but a “dirty” shirt while the chief’s wife drank “several glasses of brandy, with an air of enjoyment.”<sup>79</sup> Whether Kalanimoku (and possibly his brother Boki) was baptized as a Catholic has never been clear, but Rives and his threat to introduce French Catholicism to the Islands became a real concern for Bingham and the Protestants. Furthermore, the Hawaiian royalty were clearly indifferent to the religion of the white man even after decades of contact.

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<sup>78</sup> Kamakau, 326; ‘Ii, 143.

<sup>79</sup> “Madame De Freycinet In Hawaii,” *The Hawaii Book*, 101.



Figure 25 – “Îles Sandwich: Baptême du Premier Ministre du Roi, A Bord De L’Uranie [Sandwich Islands: Baptism of the Prime Minister of the King, On Board the L’Uranie]” by Jacques Arago in *Voyage Autour Du Monde: Atlas Historique* (Paris, 1825).

Ultimately, Liholiho sided with John Young, the esteemed advisor to his late father, Kamehameha the Great. Some missionary wives, such as Lucia and Lucy, also braved a shore landing to convince Liholiho that their intentions were benign. A few days after a grand feast hosted by the missionaries aboard the *Thaddeus*, Liholiho finally granted residency to the mission, but only for a trial period of one year. In exchange, the missionaries must restrict their teachings to the Hawaiian elite and the half-Hawaiian-half-white children of noted foreign residents. The missionaries reasoned that the only way to influence the larger subservient populace of Hawai’i – the *maka’āinana* – was to convert the *ali’i* class,

thus this was an agreeable option. But the king also wanted to break apart the band: Dr. Holman, his wife, two mission Hawaiians and another couple will stay in Kailua-Kona, the current residence of Liholiho, and the rest of the mission can live in Honolulu, with the rest of the foreign cesspool. For Liholiho, the doctor's medical skills were the only valuable asset out of the group.

The hardy Asa and Lucy Thurston chose to remain in Kailua-Kona with the Holmans, but Lucia Holman was incensed with the decision. Kailua-Kona was covered in nothing but "lava and cinders" without any soil "large enough for a garden" and fresh water was carried on "kahnahka's [*kānaka*] shoulders" from a source "5 miles distant."<sup>80</sup> This was not what she signed up for, and Thomas, her doctor husband, felt the same way. Lucy was devastated to separate from Sybil Bingham, her new and dear friend from the long voyage. Everyone had his or her personal qualms, but a larger calling drove the missionaries to take Liholiho's offer.

### **A Homecoming and Proposition**

While the Thurstons and Holmans set up their lonely station on the Big Island and Bingham and crew explored the foreign enclave of Honolulu, the first order of business was set into motion – that of delivering George Prince Kaumuali'i back to his father on Kaua'i. Samuel Whitney and Samuel Ruggles left their wives behind in Honolulu and accompanied George to Kaua'i – another painful circumstance that tested the young missionaries. Nancy Ruggles wrote,

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<sup>80</sup> Holman, 21.

“His absence so soon rendered my situation very trying.”<sup>81</sup> The Kaumuali‘i father-son reunion was a moving event with tears shed by all parties, including the missionaries. “I know not when I have wept more freely,” confessed Samuel Ruggles.<sup>82</sup> Despite the “truly affecting” scene, George was disappointed when he realized the elder Kaumuali‘i was hardly the vaunted king that he boasted about back in Cornwall. By 1820, Kaua‘i was just a “satellite state” of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i and Kaumuali‘i was in a constant state of paranoia. Although the king of Kaua‘i agreed to a temporary truce with Kamehameha before Kamehameha’s death, he worried that Liholiho would use force on Kaua‘i to fully unite the Hawaiian kingdom.

Kaumuali‘i was desperate for foreign allies and even had a brief agreement in 1816 with a Russian company. The foreigners, unfortunately, turned out to be a shady band of miscreants that the king had to oust from his tiny island.<sup>83</sup> For Kaumuali‘i, the sudden return of his long-lost son accompanied by a pair of Americans was a sign of good fortune. The king reasoned that his American-educated son could be the diplomat of Kaua‘i with his fluent command of English while the two young Americans could serve as his foreign sub-chiefs. Kaumuali‘i boldly pronounced the two missionaries as his *aikāne*. According to Ruggles, the king was “frequently putting his nose to ours and calling us his hicahne [*aikāne*].” Ruggles interpreted the word as “friends.” Bingham, who heard the story from Ruggles, also contorted the meaning of the

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<sup>81</sup> N. Ruggles, May 20, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>82</sup> S. Ruggles, June 3, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>83</sup> See Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Volume I: 1778-1854, Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 55–60. The remains of Russian forts are still observable today at Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park in Waimea, Kaua‘i.

word, but threw in a suggestion that there was a sense of indulgence associated with the term: "The old king embraced them, and early applied the term "Aikane" (privileged friends), an honorary heathen title, *implying some privileges which they did not covet* [emphasis mine]." <sup>84</sup> The missionaries, who rarely spoke explicitly about the very acts of "indecent" behavior, feigned ignorance about the homoerotic implications of the *aikāne* sub-chief, but they also engaged in a subtle strategy to reinterpret the Hawaiian language.

Kaumuali'i naturally "expressed some surprise" when Ruggles and Whitney refused to be chief.<sup>85</sup> In fact, the two missionaries continued to puzzle the residents of Kaua'i as they toured the island, for these were white men unlike any the Hawaiians had met before. One family offered the missionaries a wife and a daughter "as a token of respect and kindness."<sup>86</sup> When Ruggles firmly refused the sexual favor, the family was confused, "all white men before say it was good, but you are not like other white men." On another occasion, Ruggles and Whitney witnessed the strange rites of a Hawaiian funeral: "Several females were seated around the dead body which lay naked on the mat, rubbing and turning it about with their hands and uttering such horrid shrieks and groans, as must have shocked the most hardened heart."<sup>87</sup> The appalled missionaries tried to get them to stop, saying that "it was not good to behave thus," but the mourning crowd ignored the odd strangers and continued to wail and stomp their feet. The apparent degradation of Kaua'i convinced Ruggles and Whitney

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<sup>84</sup> Bingham, 98.

<sup>85</sup> Ruggles, June 10, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>86</sup> Ruggles, June 8, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

<sup>87</sup> Ruggles, June 29, 1820, *Samuel and Nancy Ruggles*.

to return to Honolulu to collect their wives and establish a mission station on the island.

George Prince Kaumuali'i, who never converted to Christianity, soon fell out of favor with the mission and lived in relative seclusion with his new half-white-half-Hawaiian wife, daughter of Isaac Davies. Despite the tearful reunion with his father, George was disappointed and bitter when he realized Kaua'i was a mere "satellite state" and his father was a puppet ruler under Liholiho. By 1821, the elder Kaumuali'i was forced to marry Queen Ka'ahumanu in a political union, further diminishing George's stature as a potential heir to Kaua'i. When the elder Kaumuali'i died in 1824, George joined a rebellion in an attempt to restore his father's kingdom, but Kalanimoku's warriors swiftly routed the insurrection. According to Samuel Whitney, George was later found wandering the cold and wet mountains of Kaua'i, "without the least vestige of clothing, half intoxicated and his only weapon a joint of bamboo filled with rum."<sup>88</sup> The following year in 1825, George died of influenza. By that point, the ABCFM wanted nothing to do with George, even though the "Hawaiian Prince" was their poster child during the early days of promoting the Cornwall school.

The life of George Prince Kaumuali'i illustrates some of the cultural complexities many Hawaiians faced when returning to the Islands from extended excursions into foreign lands. George was a perpetual outsider. In America, he forgot the Hawaiian language and had trouble relating with other Cornwall students. At home in Kaua'i, he lacked the hereditary cultural and

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<sup>88</sup> Samuel Whitney to Jeremiah Evarts, September 30, 1824, *Missionary Letters (typed copies) From the Sandwich Island Missions to the ABCFM, 1819-1837*, Volume 2 (Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society), 392.



political knowledge required to gain power as an *ali'i*. The last tragic image of George, half-mad and stumbling through the jungle, epitomizes the psychological toll suffered by Hawaiians who failed to find a place within this turbulent cultural exchange.

### **Pagan World**

Like Ruggles and Whitney, the men in the mission often took long tours to visit various *ali'i* and preach to the people in some of the more far removed Hawaiian communities. The women were often left alone to continue with their domestic duties, such as sewing, laundry, cooking and receiving guests. In the beginning, the missionaries lived in grass huts, of which Lucy described as “the most uncouth and humble character.”<sup>89</sup> “In short,” Lucia Homan wrote, “an Owyhee house resembles a haystack, as near as anything you could imagine.”<sup>90</sup> For the first few months, the mission houses were thronged with onlookers who wanted to view the curious habits of the white women. “Our house was constantly surrounded,” Lucy wrote, “and our doors and windows filled with natives.”<sup>91</sup>

The Hawaiians called these strange ladies “Long Necks” with their hair tied up and stuffed into bonnets. The most curious activity was the sight of women cooking. In ancient Hawai‘i, the men were in charge of cooking and male and female foods were prepared separately in accordance with eating taboos. American families were preparing all their meals all at once. One day a visiting

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<sup>89</sup> Thurston, 37.

<sup>90</sup> Holman, 27.

<sup>91</sup> Thurston, 43.

female chief was so astonished by the constant domestic chores of the missionary women that she asked Thomas Hopu why this was so. Hopu replied that it was customary for the “Ladies of America, whatever their rank or station, to be doing something” and that they were “seldom idle.”<sup>92</sup> The shocked female chief gave the missionaries one of her attendants, a twelve-year-old boy, to help out with their daily chores.

Visitations by Hawaiian royalty and their train of attendants were a regular occurrence, especially for the Kailua station, which was situated near a hot surfing spot. Lucy complained about the “full view” of luridness that lay “but a few rods” from their station: “There were hundreds of natives, all ages, of both sexes, and of every rank, bathing, swimming, floating on surf boards, etc., nearly or quite in a state of nudity.”<sup>93</sup> The same frolickers, wet and barely dressed, often dropped by the mission house to observe the curiosities of the day. The *aliʻi* came by to pick up their endless sewing orders – a task that was getting oppressive for the missionary women. Sybil could barely stand it – “the first week, a suit of superfine broadcloth, soon a piece of fine cloth to be made into shirts, etc., etc.” – but she knew the goal was to secure the favor of the chiefs.<sup>94</sup>

The missionaries started classes right away. The men taught the high-ranking male chiefs, while the women taught children, female chiefs and the half-Hawaiian daughters of “respectable” foreign residents and sea captains. Teaching was the most rewarding experience for the missionary women. Many wives were disappointed when reality set in: they were in Hawaiʻi to be

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<sup>92</sup> Hopu quote by Holman, 28.

<sup>93</sup> Thurston, 44.

<sup>94</sup> S. Bingham, June 20, 1820.

“helpmeets” for their husbands, a far cry from the romantic image of the sacrificing missionary, battling evil on the frontlines of soul-saving. In the classroom, however, the wives found a sense of purpose and pride. Nine months into her teachings, Sybil blurted, “I love my heathen school.”<sup>95</sup> Classes were restricted to high-ranking chiefs, as per Liholiho’s orders, but as Lucia observed, the *maka’āinana* absorbed everything their *ali’i* learned: “The natives, common people, with whom our house is constantly surrounded, have caught the sound of some of our letters, while we have been teaching – so that wherever we go, we can hear ‘a, b, c,’ etc.”<sup>96</sup>

Although the missionaries placed religious instruction at the center of their teachings, the Hawaiian chiefs were drawn by the West’s most powerful tool, the *palapala*, or reading and writing. Hawaiians were not strangers to rigid systems of learning. The *hula*, for example, was taught in highly systematized “schools” with strict protocols on diet and cleanliness. The *kāhuna* and court genealogists also memorized long chants that lasted for hours, tracing ancestors to the beginning of time. In fact, the missionaries were most impressed with the memorization abilities of the Hawaiians, who could rattle off the genealogy of the Old Testament in one sitting. The missionaries, however, vehemently disdained the *hula*, especially Hiram Bingham:

All parts of the *hula* are laborious, and under a tropical sun, make the perspiration roll off freely from the performers. Sometimes both musicians and dancers cantilate their heathen songs together...The whole arrangement and process of the old *hulas* were designed to promote lasciviousness, and of course the practice of them could not flourish in modest communities. They have been interwoven too with their superstitions, and made subservient to the honor of the gods, and their

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<sup>95</sup> S. Bingham, January 27, 1821.

<sup>96</sup> Holman, 30.

rulers, either living or departed and deified. Liholiho was fond of witnessing them, and they were managed to gratify his pride and promote his pleasure.”

The *hula hula*, or the “hoory hoory” as Mercy Whitney called it, was not only offensive for its “folly and vanity,” but it disrupted classes whenever Liholiho and his large entourage came into town (Figure 26). All the young women in the mission schools disappeared for days, even star pupils like Hannah Holmes, the half-Hawaiian daughter of “esteemed” foreigner Oliver Holmes. “Hannah with three others of the larger scholars has not been able to attend school this week,” Sybil lamented, “The hula hula is again resumed with apparently new interest.”<sup>97</sup> Although the missionaries recognized the national fervor behind the *hula*, they still equated it to the sin of idleness, along with surfing, *Makahiki* games, tattooing and other cultural practices that took time away from religious instruction. In the mission’s first step against “heathen” traditions, they were able to convince Liholiho to ban the *hula* on days of the Sabbath.



Figure 26 – “Danse des femmes de Iles Sandwich,” drawing by Louis Choris (1816), Engraved by Langlumé, in *Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde* (Paris, 1822).

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<sup>97</sup> S. Bingham, February 15, 1821, *Journal*.

For Lucia Holman, the pagan world was too much and she lost faith in the mission: "I learn this truth everyday, that we have no abiding place, no continuing City here."<sup>98</sup> Within five months of arriving at the Hawaiian Islands, Lucia and her husband Dr. Holman were on the ship *Mentor* and heading back to Boston. The doctor believed that the ABCFM misled him into accepting a life of asceticism and he also could not stand the self-importance of Hiram Bingham. Bingham responded to the affront with an order of excommunication for the doctor – a decision that even Lucia's brother, Samuel Ruggles, sided with. For Lucia, the whole idea of splitting up the band was wrong and not in the spirit of the unified mission. Before boarding the *Mentor*, Lucia took a parting stab in her memoirs at the paternalistic pomposity of the missionary enterprise: "I believe the females of this Mission have done more, much more towards the prosperity of it thus far, than the men – on account of the jealousy existing towards the white people. It has been thought by some, that they would not have gotten permission to land had it not been for the females."<sup>99</sup> On her way home to Boston, Lucia passed through Canton and the Cape of Good Hope and later became renowned as the first American female to circumnavigate the world.

### **Yanks and Royalty**

After the one-year trial period, Liholiho granted an extension for the missionaries and even allowed them to build permanent frame house structures, a first for foreign residents on the Islands. Despite Liholiho's generosity, however, the young king was only peripherally interested in the mission's

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<sup>98</sup> Holman, 36.

<sup>99</sup> Holman, 38.

message and did not care for a classroom setting (perhaps because of his fallout with Rives). Liholiho presented two of his best boy attendants (one was John Papa I'i) to "do the learning for him." All the accounts written about Liholiho describe him as a sybaritic and unpredictable king who drowned himself in alcohol. The missionaries were constantly on edge trying to figure out the best time to approach the king on various matters, but he was often too drunk or asleep to engage in any conversations. Charles Hammatt, a Boston trader who visited the Islands, recorded a typical exchange between Bingham and Liholiho:

He always talks English when he is drunk, and swears terribly. The missionaries generally stay clear of him on such occasions, but on Saturday Bingham undertook to speak to him on the impropriety and wickedness of getting drunk, and told him God was not pleased with such conduct. ReoReo [Liholiho] replied "I am God myself, what hell, get out of my house, go to your own house, God damn" – Bingham accordingly cleared out and will not probably appear again till clear weather.<sup>100</sup>

According to historian Gavan Daws, "Liholiho lived in two worlds – an old world dying, a new world being born."<sup>101</sup> With the abolishment of the *kapu* system, he was left without rituals to connect with the Hawaiian people and thus he turned to the spoils of aristocracy and drink. Like his father, Kamehameha the Great, Liholiho had a passion for New England-crafted vessels. The king accrued a massive debt to American tradesmen that he promised to pay off in Hawaiian sandalwood, but by the 1820s, the precious trees were almost completely deforested from the Islands. Nevertheless, Liholiho intrigued the missionaries. On the rare moments of sobriety, the king was disarmingly good-natured and

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<sup>100</sup> Charles H. Hammatt, June 1, 1823, "The Journal of Charles H. Hammatt," in *Ships Furs and Sandalwood: A Yankee Trader in Hawaii*, ed. Sandra Wagner-Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999) 17.

<sup>101</sup> Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), 68–69.

genteel, even engaging in philosophical conversations about the world, God and ancient Hawaiian history. But by the afternoon Liholiho was sprawled on his mat, half-clothed and surrounded by consorts (Figure 27). Bingham was vocal about his frustrations with the king:

How differently did Liholiho, in what he regarded as his unbounded freedom, demean himself! He looked at the claims of God, and saw that they were reasonable. His conscience coincided; but the temptations around him, his rebellious lusts, his long continued habits, the power of Satan which he admitted, all stood between his conscience and his duty, between his soul and God.<sup>102</sup>

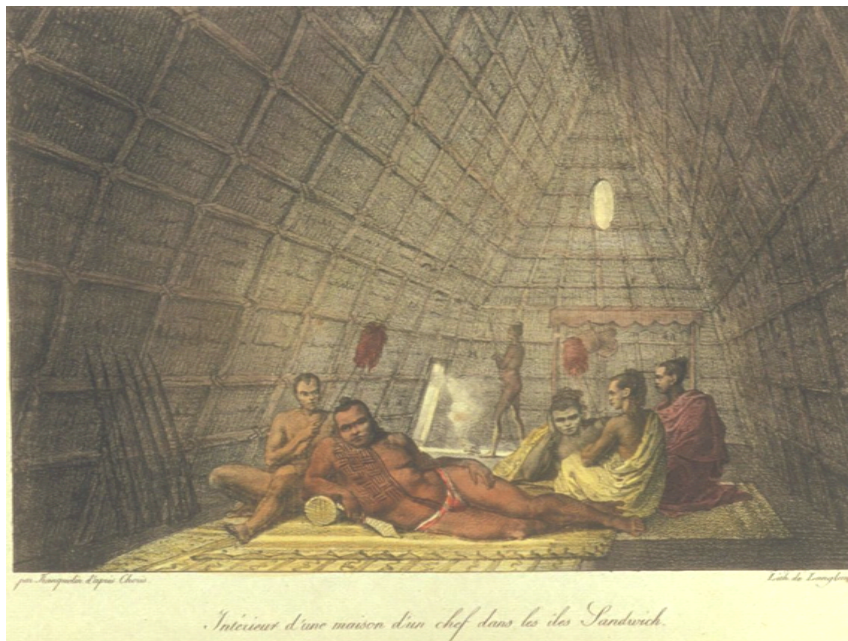


Figure 27 –  
“Interieur d’une  
maison d’un chef  
dans les iles  
Sandwich,” drawing  
by Louis Choris  
(1816), Engraved by  
Langlumé, in *Voyage  
Pittoresque Autour du  
Monde* (Paris, 1822).  
Kirch and Sahlins  
call this picture,  
“Liholiho at Home”  
(Kirch and Sahlins,  
62).

In 1823, the erratic young king decided to sail to England to meet King George IV in a monarch-to-monarch conference. Captain Valentine Starbuck, a whaler from Nantucket, was commissioned to carry Liholiho, Queen Kamamalu, Governor Boki and his wife Madame Liliha to London on the ship *L’Aigle*. John Rives, Liholiho’s *aikāne*, also came along as the official translator. Never before

<sup>102</sup> Bingham, 158.

did a *m'ōi* (chief of supreme rank) embark on a risky journey to faraway lands thus the decision was met with great sorrow by the Hawaiian people and strong objection by the other chiefs, such as Queen Ka'ahumanu. The following year in London, the royal couple caught the measles while waiting for King George to accept their meeting. Liholiho and Kamamalu died within days of each other in the Caledonian Hotel in London in July 1824, never to return to Hawai'i.

Ultimately, Liholiho was unapproachable as a potential convert, so the missionaries put their efforts into Ka'ahumanu, Liholiho's co-ruler, and Keopuolani, Liholiho's mother. The "haughty" Ka'ahumanu, as Bingham described her, was brazenly indifferent at first, often ignoring the missionaries while playing cards or offering only her pinky in salutation.<sup>103</sup> Yet by 1823, Ka'ahumanu was the strongest proponent of Christianity across the Hawaiian Islands. Like many conversion stories, Ka'ahumanu's embrace of Christianity is steeped in legend, but the conventional tale explains that the *kuhina nui* turned to God during a near-fatal illness at the close of 1821. Yet the death of Keopuolani and the departure of Liholiho to London in 1823 both stirred Ka'ahumanu into action. Keopuolani became the first Christian convert under the mission, but her conversion was a deathbed conversion, and like 'Opukaha'ia's deathbed scene, the accounts are filled with flowery lore. Nevertheless, the conversion of a pureblooded *ali'i* such as Keopuolani held much sway with ruling elite. Liholiho's foolish trip to London also left Ka'ahumanu as the highest ruler of the Hawaiian Islands.

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<sup>103</sup> Bingham, 164.



With Ka'ahumanu in political command, the missionaries also gained tremendous influence across the Islands. The first band of missionaries was also aided by the arrival of London missionary Reverend William Ellis in 1822. Ellis, who was a veteran of the Tahiti mission, helped Bingham decipher the Hawaiian language and better connect with Polynesian culture. By 1823, the Second Company of missionaries from New England also arrived on the ship *Thames*, from New Haven, Connecticut. Elisha Loomis' printing press was also rolling out bibles, textbooks and newsletters – expanding the reading sphere of the Hawaiians with every printed sheet. The new *akua*, called God, and its splendid disciplinary art form, the *palapala*, were spreading across the Islands as Ka'ahumanu, along with Bingham, visited every tiny community (Figure 28). By the close of 1823, Ka'ahumanu ordered all Hawaiians to observe the Sabbath – work, play and even the setting of fires were banned. In the summer of 1824, Ka'ahumanu proclaimed a new code of laws: no murder, no theft, no fighting, observe the Sabbath and learn the *palapala* (reading and writing).<sup>104</sup> Christianity was taught to all Islanders.



Figure 28 – “The Queen at Waimea, Oahu, recommending Christianity” in *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands*, by Hiram Bingham (New York, 1848).

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<sup>104</sup> Kuykendall, 118.

The missionaries reported home to the ABCFM about Ka'ahumanu's remarkable transformation: "to see Kaahumanu, the haughty queen, kneel and confess her sins, and lead her people in prayer before the King of Heaven. Behold she prayeth!"<sup>105</sup> Bingham extolled the Queen as the model convert who lived "in one age of darkness and another of comparative light."<sup>106</sup> For Ka'ahumanu, however, the missionaries were her new *kāhuna* who served as strong allies in her political machinations against other imposing *ali'i* such as Boki, the governor of O'ahu. Kirch and Sahlins explain that the missionaries and Ka'ahumanu cooperated through an "intercultural working misunderstanding" concerning the roles of church and state.<sup>107</sup> Essentially, the missionaries benefited from Ka'ahumanu's political power to spread Christianity, while Ka'ahumanu used the new religion to propagate her power through traditional ritualistic politics. The missionaries were her *kāhuna*, and the churches her *luakini heiau*; the schools disseminated the new *palapala* discipline, and the Ten Commandments became the basis for new kinds of *kapu* restrictions.

Other *ali'i* within or near Ka'ahumanu's political circle also embraced Christianity in public and dramatic ways, such as when chiefess Kapi'olani famously descended into the volcanic crater of Kīlauea and defied the goddess Pele with Christian prayers and zeal. By 1825, Ka'ahumanu, Kalanimoku, Namahana, Hoapili and other male and female high-ranking chiefs were all

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<sup>105</sup> "Sandwich Islands, Journal at Honoruru," in *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 22 (Boston: ABCFM, 1826), 19.

<sup>106</sup> Bingham, 29.

<sup>107</sup> Patrick V. Kirch and Marshall Sahlins, *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67.

baptized into the Congregational church.<sup>108</sup> In some sense, the swapping of deities was not a historically unusual practice in the Polynesian world where political structures were built on the *ali'i-kāhuna* power dynamic. The adoption of Christianity, however, involved a deep-seated condemnation of the cultural past that was ultimately culturally stifling. When Ka'ahumanu passed the new law against adultery in 1829, for example, all the *ali'i* and commoners were forced to give up their multiple spouses and settle on a single partner – a first since the settlement of the archipelago.

### **Rhetoric of Debasement**

The missionaries found success among the chiefs, but struggled with the larger *maka'ainana* population. Despite the great strides in opening schools and increased attendance in churches, the missionaries were continually disturbed by the open sexual and physical behaviors of the Hawaiian people. From the moment of their arrival, the Protestant missionaries employed a rhetoric that deliberately debased the status of the Hawaiians as less than human beings. Reverend Charles Stewart of the ABCFM's Second Company, who arrived in Hawai'i in April 1822, did not hold back his sentiments about the Hawaiian people – sentiments that would be considered racially charged today:

A first sight of these wretched creatures was almost overwhelming. Their naked figures and wild expressions of countenance, their black hair streaming in the wind as they hurried the canoe over the water with all the eager action and muscular power of savages, their rapid and unintelligible exclamations, and whole exhibition of uncivilized character, gave to them the appearance of being half-human and half-beast, and irresistibly pressed on the thoughts the query – “*Can they be men – can they*

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<sup>108</sup> Kamakau, 322–323.

*be women? – do they not form a link in creation, connecting man with the brute?*  
[original emphasis]<sup>109</sup>

Like Hiram Bingham's first-contact moment, Stewart framed his arrival as a frightening event, replete with demonic and androgynous figures. Sheldon Dibble, who came with the Fourth Company of missionaries in 1831, claimed that time did not diminish the revulsion: "The longer one lives among the heathen, the more fully does he realize the ignorance, the vileness, and the abominations of the horrible pit in which they are sunk."<sup>110</sup> Lucy Thurston also shared the same opinion after living in Kailua for six years: "I had acquired such knowledge of the language and character of the people to realize with what revolting characters I was surrounded."<sup>111</sup> Lucia Holman viewed Hawaiians as living in the "lowest depths of depravity" where they glorify in "what should be their greatest shame."<sup>112</sup> For the missionaries, the moral perversion of the people even extended to the quality of the land, such as when journal passages describe landscape features as the "heathen brook" or the "Pagan mountains."

Despite the altruistic intent of the mission, such denigrating words against Hawaiians are found throughout missionary writings, both in public and private logs. The bulk of their disdain was aimed at the *maka'āinana* class, who did not have the same kind of exposure to western culture as the elite *ali'i*. Furthermore, the *ali'i* were familiar with the strict protocols of "correct" living, as exemplified by the rigid *tabu* that regulated a chief's *mana*. The commoners, however, were

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<sup>109</sup> Charles Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands During the Years 1823–1825* (New York: John P. Haven, 1828), 64.

<sup>110</sup> Sheldon Dibble, *History and General Views of the Sandwich Islands Mission* (New York: Taylor and Dodd, 1839), 45.

<sup>111</sup> Thurston, 96.

<sup>112</sup> Holman, 32.

increasingly disconnected from their traditional interdependency on the chiefs as foreign influences also changed ideas about hierarchy and power. The missionaries, for whatever reason, were unable to recognize that the destitute conditions of the commoners came from the fractured state of traditional Hawaiian values. For missionaries like Bingham, the destitution – i.e. poverty, venereal diseases, alcoholism, nakedness, idleness, etc. – always existed as a byproduct of a godless society.

The dichotomous language used by the missionaries was more than a contrasting tool to highlight the differences between good and evil; it was also a way to build a spectrum where Hawaiian society represented the very base instincts of humanity, while old New England values represented the epitome of moral and civilized living. Dibble challenged his readers to imagine this giant chasm, “*How immense the distance up from heathenism to Christianity! Who can conceive of it? Look down, if your sight can bear the giddy depth, low down into the deep pit of mire and heathen pollution, and then up to the eminence of a true child of God, and measure, if you can, the distance.*”<sup>113</sup> Due in large part to the writings of the missionaries, Hawaiians were no longer viewed as “noble savages” and proud warriors of the romantic past, but a hopelessly degraded and perverted mass of condemned souls. Both Bingham and Dibble reasoned that Polynesians were a “forgotten race” from ancient biblical times going back to Noah that “relapsed into a state of heathenism.”<sup>114</sup> Bingham thought the fall from grace occurred so many generations ago that the Hawaiian people became

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<sup>113</sup> Dibble, 55.

<sup>114</sup> Dibble, 18.

“immeasurably distant” from the “conformity and will of their holy Creator.”<sup>115</sup>

The geographical isolation of the Hawaiian Islands also contributed to this idea of moral isolation. In some sense, the missionaries adhered to the crude pseudoscience of early nineteenth century phrenology, where people were quantified into “higher” and “lower” categories of race, but they also traced humanity through the Old Testament and the biblical Diaspora of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. To many missionaries, the Eden-like tropical islands of Polynesia further confirmed the population’s primitiveness.

The inherent degradation of the Hawaiians was “logically” put forth in various convoluted theories. Reverend Lorrin Andrews, of the Third Company and first school principal of the Lahainaluna Seminary in Maui, thought his Hawaiian students were innately “unable to think.”

Their ancient religion required no mental effort. Their priests told them what to do, and it was death to do otherwise. Their sports and wars, therefore, were all that called forth their mental energies. Add to this, the sensuality in which they indulged – and it must be that they are an unthinking people...Every conversation we have with them, every lesson we hear evinces it. I have heard several persons converse together hours upon one simple thought, too silly for even children to talk about for a minute.<sup>116</sup>

The bulk of missionary writings that described the “native character” of Hawaiians often resorted to infantilization – where Hawaiians were presented as having the intellect of a child, and thus unable to control their bodily urges and emotions. Furthermore, missionaries viewed the sensual indulgences of

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<sup>115</sup> Bingham, 29.

<sup>116</sup> Lorrin Andrews, “Unthinking Character of the People,” in *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 32 (Boston: ABCFM, 1835), 391–392. It should be noted that Lorrin Andrews resigned from the mission in 1842 as a staunch abolitionist when he claimed that the ABCFM received funds from Southern slave states. See Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society, *Missionary Album: Sesquicentennial Edition 1820–1970* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society, 1969), 24–25.

Hawaiians to be excessive, such as when Reverend Andrews claimed there were more than “twenty different ways of committing adultery” on the Islands.

Certainly, a large part of this rhetoric was to play up to the audience in the United States. By expressing the gravity of the situation in the Islands, the missionaries hoped for more charitable donations at home. Moreover, the clergymen in New England viewed the foreign missions as a means to promote and propagate the faith at home. The October 1834 issue of *The Missionary Herald*, for example, reminded New England ministers about the importance of this very public endeavor: “The cause of the *foreign missions*, urged upon the people for their sympathies and support, increase their *personal* interest in the gospel and augments their desire for the salvation of their children and friends at home.”<sup>117</sup> In order to deliver the full effect at church, the *Herald* advised, “the minister should occasionally review the most formidable obstacles in the way of the missionary enterprise; the opposition of skeptics at home; the indifference of many in the church; avarice and indolence...the obstinate resistance of the heathen; their numbers and prejudices; their distance and degradation.”<sup>118</sup> Essentially, the message of the donation sermon was one of chastisement: those who opposed the benevolent work of the missionaries were no better than the lowest of the heathen.

In many ways, when the missionaries described and rebuked the “depravities” occurring around the Hawaiian Islands, the condemnation was also a veiled Puritan jeremiad against the “backsliding” culture of the United

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<sup>117</sup> “Method of Conducting the Monthly Concert of Prayer,” in *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 30 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 391.

<sup>118</sup> “Method of Conducting,” 390.

States. In 1831, for example, Reverend Lyman Beecher delivered a lecture in the Park Street Church using the same kind of language while blasting the godless “freethinkers” of the nation: “The family...that centre of attraction, which holds back the heady and high-minded...these political Vandals would dismantle. The fire on its altars they would put out; the cold hand of death they would place on the warm beatings of its heart – to substitute the vagrancy of desire, the rage of lust, and the solitude, and disease, and desolation, which follow the footsteps of unregulated nature exhausted by excess.”<sup>119</sup> In other words, godlessness and excessive, unregulated desire were serious threats against the sanctity of the Christian family unit. The missionaries in Hawai‘i thus recorded numerous instances of “lascivious acts” as proof of the complete social collapse and familial breakdown, where Christian order (i.e. family, work, church, etc.) was in dire need of “restoration.”

Some Americans believed the lasciviousness of Hawaiians was infiltrating domestic shores. One concerned resident in Nantucket in 1822, for example, wrote to the *Boston Recorder* about the growing population of Hawaiians in whaling communities: “This place has long been the resort of youth from pagan countries. Not many years since, there resided here twenty Society and Sandwich Islanders, who, on stated evenings when the sky was clear, assembled in the streets, erected the ensigns of idolatry, and in frantick orgies paid their worship to the host of heaven.”<sup>120</sup> The moral panic was oddly reminiscent of the Salem

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<sup>119</sup> Lyman Beecher, *Lectures on Scepticism Delivered in the Park Street Church, Boston, and in the Second Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Corey and Fairbank, 1835), 82.

<sup>120</sup> “Heathen School at Nantucket: From the Boston Recorder,” *The Religious Intelligencer*, vol. 6, no. 49 (May, 4, 1822), 779.



witch trials almost a century and a half earlier, where demonic imagery was used to express unregulated sensuality.

### Salubrious Islands

For the first Companies of missionaries, however, the sexually permissive culture of Hawai'i was perceived as a real threat that went beyond mere rhetoric, particularly when it came to the issue of raising their own children on the Islands. By the time most of the missionary children grew to six or seven years old, several parents – including the Bingham, Ruggles and Whitney families – made the heart-wrenching decision to send their children home to New England to be raised by another relative or acquaintance.<sup>121</sup> The entire Chamberlain family left the Islands in 1823 when it became clear that the five children had no means for a proper education. The Thurston family, however, decided to keep their children on the desolate lava field of Kailua. Lucy created stringent rules for her five children:

The first rule to be attended to with regard to children is that they *must not speak the native language*. It is an easy thing to *make* such a law, but it is a mother's duty to guard it from being violated, and to form in her children *fixed habits* of doing as they are required. It, of course, follows that they are never left to the care of natives after they reach the age of prattling. No intercourse whatever shall exist between children and the heathen. On this point I am very particular.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the constant mob that surrounded her house, Lucy managed to keep the children sequestered from view for years in a "child's department," a walled-in compound of structures. When the two oldest children turned twelve and thirteen, Lucy allowed them to start reading in the Hawaiian language and

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<sup>121</sup> Mary Zwiep, "Sending the Children Home: A Dilemma for Missionaries," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, no. 24 (1990): 39–68.

<sup>122</sup> Thurston, 102.

observe some of her classes, but “the restriction of non-intercourse among the natives” was never removed.<sup>123</sup>

Sexual contact and carnal knowledge occurred at a young age in early Hawaiian society. The missionaries were also horrified to observe family huts without any partitions, where everyone slept on the same spread of mats and adults fornicated right in open view of their children. However, Mary Kawena Pukui emphasizes that sex education for the children involved the entire household in ancient Hawai‘i: “This was the duty of the grandparents. Grandma trained the girl; Grandpa taught the boy. This was in the commoner *‘ohana* [family]. A boy from the *ali‘i* was trained by and had his first experience with an older chiefess. He learned timing – how to please a woman.”<sup>124</sup> Sex was a skill that required expertise, but also an art form that brought immense pleasure – much like the *hula* and surfing. Shame, guilt, anxiety and danger were not expressions that framed the understanding of sexuality in Hawai‘i. For the missionaries, however, all sexual acts that occurred outside the bounds of matrimony were detrimental to a moral and civilized society.

Along the same lines, the missionaries were oblivious to the Hawaiian concept of *‘ohana*, or family. In Hawaiian terms, the “close family” extends beyond the American notion of the nuclear family (i.e. father, mother, brothers and sisters). For example, Pukui explains that in Hawai‘i, “if you are [cousins] of

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<sup>123</sup> Thurston, 130.

<sup>124</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, E. W. Haertig and Catherine A. Lee, *Nana I Ke Kumu: Look to the Source*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: The Queen Lili‘uokalani Children’s Center, 1972), 79. The concept of *‘ohana* goes back to the cosmological origin story found in Hawaiian oral traditions and *ali‘i* genealogies. All Hawaiians are believed to be descendents of the sexual union between Papa (“Mother Earth”) and Wākea (“Sky Father”). The taro plant, also a child of Papa and Wākea, is the twin sibling of humanity, thus symbolizing the Hawaiian people’s *‘ohana* relationship with the land.

the same generation, you are all brothers and sisters. You are all *'ohana*'<sup>125</sup> All elders are addressed as *kupuna*, and *keiki* denotes anybody's child. *Makua* applies to any parent, aunt, uncle, or relative of the parent's generation. Children in Hawaiian communities, even today, are raised communally; it is not unusual for a *keiki* to stay at any *kupuna*'s or *makua*'s house for an extended period before returning to his or her real parents, for example. This kind of nebulous arrangement where "anybody" was mom, dad, or sister, offended the missionaries who adhered to the "domestic piety" model of a traditional New England home. And yet ironically, the missionaries themselves sent their own children away to be raised by distant relatives and sometimes even strangers.

Interestingly, however, many of the later missionary families in Hawai'i had inordinately large families compared to their rural New England counterparts at home. According to Grimshaw's calculations, each missionary wife who lived on the Islands until forty-four years of age gave birth to an average of six or seven children while out in the mission field.<sup>126</sup> Embarrassed missionaries often attributed the prodigious births to the "salubrious" or "tropical" climate of Hawai'i when corresponding with astonished family members back at home.<sup>127</sup> Elisha Loomis, the young printer, was convinced that "persons arrive at the age of puberty here much sooner than in a colder climate" thus Hawaiian children entered sexual maturity at a faster rate.<sup>128</sup> More than likely, the romantic and alluring atmosphere of the Hawaiian Islands was too

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<sup>125</sup> Pukui, Haertig, Lee, vol. 1, 167.

<sup>126</sup> Grimshaw, *Paths*, 89

<sup>127</sup> Grimshaw, *Paths*, 92.

<sup>128</sup> Elisha Loomis, June 28, 1824, *The Journal of Elisha Loomis*, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library.

indulgent of an excuse to admit to family members toiling on the farm back at home.

### **An Outrage**

On May 6, 1825, Captain Lord Byron (cousin of the poet) arrived in Honolulu on the *HMS Blonde* with the remains of King Liholiho and Queen Kamamalu. With the honorable Lord Byron as special advisor, the council of chiefs determined that Liholiho's younger brother, Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III), who was only twelve-years-old at the time, was much too young to take over the affairs of the kingdom. The council's verdict was for the young King Kauikeaouli to continue his studies in the mission school and Queen Ka'ahumanu to continue her reign. Meanwhile, Byron suggested, the Hawaiians needed a more comprehensive (i.e. written) code of laws to protect the kingdom in the modern age. Ka'ahumanu took note of Byron's advice, but her interest was in the spiritual condition of her people and less about the intricacies of taxes, port duty fees and property.<sup>129</sup> Instead, Ka'ahumanu and the chiefs imposed more sanctions against the "iniquities" that plagued the ports of Honolulu and Lāhainā, such as prostitution, drinking and gambling.<sup>130</sup>

In January 1826, Lieutenant John "Mad Jack" Percival commander of the U.S. Navy ship, the *USS Dolphin*, sailed into the port of Honolulu and caused a notable commotion that raised eyebrows back home in the United States. Since the *Dolphin* was the first official U.S. Navy vessel to ever touch the Hawaiian

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<sup>129</sup> Kuykendall, 119–120.

<sup>130</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 243.

Islands, the missionaries expected a level of formality akin to the honorable Lord Byron's impressive visitation. Percival, however, was heading home from what he considered a trivial mission – to seek out and capture the mutineers of the Nantucket whaleship *Globe*, somewhere around the Mulgrave Islands. The *Dolphin's* stopover in Hawai'i was merely for repairs and to let the weary crew blow off some steam – the most accepted reason to park at the Islands. According to Bingham and the missionaries, "Mad Jack" Percival lived up to his moniker and unleashed a sustained hysterical tirade when he learned that prostitution and alcohol was banned around the port of Honolulu.

To give some context, Lieutenant Percival, the pride of Cape Cod, was a living legend in the U.S. Navy by the time he arrived in Hawai'i. He received his name "Mad Jack" and naval merits for his daring stunts in the War of 1812, where he captured British ships and used those captured ships to secure even more enemy vessels. After the war, the dogged seaman earned his heroic reputation as a celebrated pirate-hunter in the West Indies. By any estimation, whatever stood in Percival's way in Honolulu was destined to lose. Ka'ahumanu, however, was equally resolute and refused to back down from Percival's request to lift the ban on the "society of women."

According to Ka'ahumanu, an incensed Percival personally approached her and demanded to know, "By who are the women tabued?"<sup>131</sup> The "new" Ka'ahumanu answered that it was her edict – inspired by God – but Percival

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<sup>131</sup> Bingham, 285–286. The conversation between Ka'ahumanu and Percival was apparently recorded by Ka'ahumanu and later translated by the missionaries – Bingham inserts this translation into his account. According to the October 1830 edition of *The Missionary Herald*, Ka'ahumanu's written testimony of the *Dolphin* incident was handed to the USS Vincennes for delivery to the navy "as an official complaint against the commander of the Dolphin."

scoffed, “It was not by *you*; it is by Bingham.” Ka’ahumanu, who was renown for her wit replied, “Why are you angry with us for laying a tabu on the women of our country? Had you brought American women with you, and we had tabued them, you might then be justly pleased with us.”<sup>132</sup> Percival reputedly stamped in rage and threatened to get all his men drunk from the ship’s rations and have them “pull down the houses of the missionaries” if the ban was not lifted. Nothing was resolved that day, but on the following Sunday – on the Sabbath – a ragtag collection of about fifty mariners descended on Bingham’s service and demanded an end to the ban. Bingham noted that not all of the ruffians were from the *Dolphin* but also came from the Honolulu port community.

The standoff culminated at Bingham’s house where Sybil and her children locked themselves inside (by this point, the missionaries were living in New England frame-style houses). Bingham and his Hawaiian congregation surrounded the house as the angry mob started smashing windows and brandishing knives and clubs. A crewman from the *Dolphin* took aim at Bingham’s head with a club and the towering chiefess Namahana deflected the blow. “It was the signal for resistance,” wrote Bingham, “for which the natives had waited.”<sup>133</sup> The Hawaiians overwhelmed the rioters as Bingham witnessed a man “knocked senseless” and another received a “severe cutlass wound.” Percival soon arrived and ordered his men to leave the scene.

That evening, Percival sent a letter to Governor Boki apologizing for his men’s actions, but he continued to demand “enjoyment” for his men to prevent any “anxiety to the missionary family.” Boki, who had an ambivalent

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<sup>133</sup> Bingham, 287.

relationship with the missionaries and Ka'ahumanu, yielded to the commander and let some women out to the *Dolphin*.<sup>134</sup> Bingham seethed as he watched the "first load of vile women" climb into the *Dolphin* as "the shout of the vile" rang from the decks.<sup>135</sup> Or at least that was Bingham's version of the *Dolphin* incident.

For Percival, the incident was likely a minor event that completely left his mind by the time he returned to the United States. Percival was accustomed to having his way at sea, but he was surely unprepared for the deluge of attacks by the mighty pen of the clergy. A few months prior to the *Dolphin* incident, Reverend William Richards and his family at the Lāhainā station in Maui were also threatened by a band of English whalers for a similar issue. The missionaries were upset about the rising threats against their families and lashed out against the mariner community in several editions of *The Missionary Herald*. "The evils at the Sandwich Islands had risen so high and assumed such an aspect," one report stated, "that the consequence of silence seemed likely to be more disastrous"<sup>136</sup> The missionaries had enough. Other Christian publications also chimed in on what they perceived to be a grave injustice against the missionaries and the spirit of Christian charity. All of them concurred that it was "an outrage."

"Our lives have been, and still are, somewhat exposed, as is the universal opinion here, to the rage of riotous seamen, who find the influence of the Gospel a check to that licentiousness, which had been so prevalent and unrestrained at

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<sup>134</sup> Boki was a political rival of the Ka'ahumanu clan, plus he owned a rowdy joint called "Blonde Hotel" (after his trip on the *HMS Blonde*) that was a notorious site of "iniquity."

<sup>135</sup> Bingham, 288.

<sup>136</sup> "Opposition of Foreigners," *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 23 (Boston: ABCFM, 1827), 202–203.

the islands,” Bingham wrote in the *Herald*.<sup>137</sup> The *Boston Recorder and Religious Telegraph* painted Percival as the Big Bad Wolf of the seas: “[Bingham] mentions instances of Capt. P’s railings at the law concerning females, speaking of the mission in the most hostile manner, threatening to shoot Mr. Bingham if he came to the council of chiefs, demanding the repeal of the law, and threatening to blow down the town.”<sup>138</sup> Reverend Richards gave his own account in *The Religious Intelligencer* and wondered aloud “whether Capt. P. was indeed an American officer, or whether he was not a *pirate*” and asked the Christian community to “weep *tears of blood* over the lamentable consequences to this people of the violence and infamy of one of our own national vessels.”<sup>139</sup> The US Navy had no choice but to launch an investigation.

In some sense this is what the American Board wanted, a high profile incident to increase exposure for the mission and an opportunity to chastise those in America who mocked the missionary cause. But the publicity also brought up some questions about the mission, particularly concerning Hiram Bingham and his “meddling with matters of government.”<sup>140</sup> The original policy of the ABCFM was to stay out of Hawaiian government matters, but Bingham believed the Board in Boston did not understand the complexities of the issues that missionaries confronted out in the field. As long as standards of morality were at stake, Bingham reasoned, tampering with the government was

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<sup>137</sup> Hiram Bingham et al., “An Outrage,” in *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 22 (Boston: ABCFM, 1826), 370.

<sup>138</sup> “Outrage at the Sandwich Islands,” *Boston Recorder and Religious Telegraph*, December 29, 1826.

<sup>139</sup> William Richards, “Late Outrage at the Sandwich Islands,” *The Religious*, January 6, 1827.

<sup>140</sup> “Opposition to Foreigners,” 203.



occasionally a necessity. Nevertheless, Bingham argued, he had nothing to do with the adoption or creation of laws in Hawai'i – that was all in the hands of Ka'ahumanu and the chiefs.

### **Opposition to the Missionary Position**

The Charleston Navy Yard failed to find any wrongdoing by Percival in the Honolulu incident – or if there was any verdict only the Navy knew since they never disclosed the results.<sup>141</sup> Percival likely received nothing more than a slap on the wrist since he was given captaincy of the fabled *USS Constitution* for the last ceremonial global tour of “Old Ironsides.” Lieutenant Hiram Paulding, who served on the *Dolphin* under Percival and published a memoir in 1831, thought the entire affair was “most ungenerously ascribed to the officers of the *Dolphin*” and “greatly misrepresented in this country.”<sup>142</sup> Instead, Paulding's journal describes an amiable visit to Hawai'i with calls to Hawaiian royalty, pleasant hikes in the interior and even a church service led by Bingham. Yet Paulding questioned the efficacy of the missionaries and felt “the stamp of civilization” was “scarcely perceptible” on the Islands. He described the conditions of the inhabitants as “truly wretched” and thought lessons in agricultural skills would benefit the Hawaiians far more than the missionaries' “mysterious doctrine.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Phillips, 104.

<sup>142</sup> Hiram Paulding, *Journal of a Cruise of the Schooner Dolphin Among the Islands of the Pacific Ocean* (New York: Carvill, 1831), 225–226.

<sup>143</sup> Paulding 223–231. On a humorous note, Paulding, who had no knowledge of the Polynesian language, thought *aikāne* was “high carnie” – “[Kalanimoku] was the high carnie, or great friend of [Kamehameha].” Paulding also made an islander friend during his travels and said they were both “high carnies.”

Spaulding was merely echoing what many of the foreign residents in Honolulu and visiting captains felt about the missionaries, or about Bingham in particular. A common complaint heard around the mercantile community was that crops were unattended and labor was short because the natives were constantly occupied in school and church activities. Furthermore, Hawaiians were getting an education – a threat to any system of cheap labor. Indeed, the economic, political and legal issues for Americans in Hawai'i were getting complicated, thus U.S. officials agreed to send U.S. Navy vessels into Hawai'i in a formal capacity. The accruing sandalwood debt by the chiefs owed to Boston merchants was a primary concern and the booming whaling industry perhaps required navy protection. Also on the navy agenda was to look into the quirky but influential community of American missionaries stationed on the Islands.

As a show of goodwill after the *Dolphin* embarrassment, the Navy placed Reverend Charles Stewart, a former missionary at the Lāhainā station, as the ship chaplain on the *USS Vincennes* for its visit to Hawai'i in 1829. Naturally, Stewart wrote a glowing report of the mission's progress. Stewart, who was overjoyed to reunite with his old missionary friends, found "everything in a most promising and prosperous state" and was pleased to report on the "variety and luxuriance of the productions" around the Islands.<sup>144</sup> "Mad Jack" Percival found the *Vincennes* reports to be preposterous given the extreme bias of the chaplain. While submitting a request for reimbursement to the Navy for expenses incurred in Honolulu, Percival took a jab at the Navy's new cultural exchange program: "It should be recollected that, at this period, the natives of the Sandwich Islands

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<sup>144</sup> Charles Stewart, *A Visit to the South Seas in the U.S. Ship Vincennes*, Volume 2 (New York: John P. Haven, 1831), 66.

were not, *if they are now*, in the state of civilization which they were described to be at the subsequent visits of the Vincennes, Captain Finch, by his chaplain, *who is a missionary*...I have heard it frequently asserted by gentlemen who are engaged in commerce, that the visit of the Dolphin had a more salutary effect than any subsequent vessel which has been there.”<sup>145</sup> One of Percival’s claimed expenses was “two principal entertainments to the Chiefs of Sandwich Islands, given on board the Dolphin” for a total of two hundred dollars – monetary evidence for the “salutary” nature of his visit.

The visit by the *USS Potomac* commanded by Captain John Downes in 1832 produced two different accounts of Hawai’i that exemplified the pervading mariner versus chaplain bias. Jeremiah Reynolds, secretary of the voyage, read Reverend Stewart’s books as a primer on Hawai’i, but deemed the works as hyperbole when he saw the conditions himself: “The idea of turnpikes, or roads, is really most ridiculous, and is calculated to mislead very much as to the extent and the nature of the advancement of this island in such improvements. And the splendid descriptions which have been given of the numerous handsome vehicles and carriages, are more in the poetical workings of the imagination than a drawing from reality.”<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, Reynolds found Hawai’i to be “much in a state of nature” and about as civilized “as when first discovered by Captain Cook.”

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<sup>145</sup> John Percival to John Anderson, January 17, 1833, “Rep. No. 86,” *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives at the Second Session of the Twenty-Second Congress*, December 5, 1832 (Washington: Duff Green, 1832).

<sup>146</sup> Jeremiah N. Reynolds, *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac Under the Command of Commodore John Downes* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1835), 404. See Charles S. Stewart, *Journal of the Residence in the Sandwich Islands During the Years 1823–1825* (New York: John P. Haven, 1828).

Francis Warriner, a chaplain on the *Potomac* from Springfield, Massachusetts, on the other hand, was delighted to report on the “unexampled success” of the missionaries and was impressed by the “sacred repose of Sabbath” being practiced around Honolulu. A tea session at the Bingham’s frame house almost made the chaplain forget he was on an island in the middle of the Pacific:

The ladies present were intelligent, amiable, and accomplished; and the gentlemen showed themselves no strangers to refined society. It was a pleasure to me to meet not a few from good old Massachusetts, and one or two who had been born and educated within a few miles of my own native village. Many inquiries were made concerning their friends in America, several of whom were known to me. The party was so much like one in America, that had I been placed there by accident, or could I have forgotten the circumstances of my visit, I should have fancied myself in New England.<sup>147</sup>

One of the “circumstances of the visit” of the *Potomac* was a sensitive issue for Hiram Bingham. When John Rives, the Frenchmen and *aikāne* to Liholiho, traveled to London on the ill-fated journey, he continued home to France and requested French authorities to send a Catholic mission to Hawai’i. A small low-profile French Catholic mission was set up in O’ahu in 1827, but the priests and a small number of Hawaiian converts were continually harassed and sometimes imprisoned by Ka’ahumanu and the chiefs.<sup>148</sup> In 1831, just prior to her death, Ka’ahumanu banished the priests from the Islands and shipped them off to an arid wasteland in California (somewhere around present-day San Diego). In addition to the ongoing sandalwood debt issue, Captain Downes of the *Potomac* brought notice to the chiefs that the banishment of the Catholics was highly

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<sup>147</sup> Francis Warriner, *Cruise of the United States Frigate Potomac Round the World During the Years 1831–1834* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster), 224.

<sup>148</sup> Kuykendall, 137–144. There is also evidence that some chiefs punished Catholic converts with cruel hard labor.

disproved by many Americans. Unfortunately, the sixteen-year-old King Kāiʻikeyaouli could not be held accountable for the late Kāʻahumanu's actions.

That left Bingham to answer questions about the banishment. The rancor of the conservative Congregational church against "Papists" was well known and Bingham made no qualms about his disdain for "Romish priests." According to Warriner, when Captain Downes reminded King Kāiʻikeyaouli and the chiefs that Catholicism was tolerated in America, Bingham quipped, "I presume they are."<sup>149</sup> The young Kāiʻikeyaouli reminded Downes that King Liholiho banned idolatry in 1819 and that Catholics were no exception, a retort that seemed to please Bingham. While Bingham never admitted to working in cahoots with Kāʻahumanu to oust the Catholics, he nevertheless expressed tacit approval. The Catholic dilemma was never solved in Hawaiʻi until 1839, when Captain Laplace arrived with the French frigate *L'Artémise* and threatened to open fire on Honolulu, which forced the chiefs to accept Catholics and the import of French wine.

The criticism of Reverend Stewart's "civilized" accounts of Hawaiʻi continued when Dr. William Ruschenberger, surgeon on the *USS Peacock*, visited the Islands in 1836. The doctor was unimpressed with the "cultivation" work of the missionaries and called Stewart's Hawaiʻi memoirs "pleasing fictions of a novelist," "poetic fancy" and "a work of imagination."<sup>150</sup> The barrage of attacks from fellow Navy writers was too much for Stewart. In the spring of 1838, the reverend tore off a letter to a New York newspaper and swore to denounce the

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<sup>149</sup> Warriner, 234.

<sup>150</sup> William Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World Including an Embassy to Muscat and Siam in 1835-1837* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1838), 465.

“aspersion” and “libelous calumny” in the “most public way” in his power.<sup>151</sup> Stewart wrote nearly twelve lengthy letters over a two-week period as a testament to his “rigid accuracy” and defended the Sandwich Islands Mission with a sharp pen. Stewart’s book on Hawai’i was a Sunday school classic that was sold for charity, thus Stewart was compelled to defend its honor. Dr. Ruschenberger shot back in the Philadelphia papers by calling Stewart “a lady” and then tore the book apart chapter by chapter in nearly sixteen lengthy letters.<sup>152</sup> The general public and the editors found the bickering amusing, but by mid-summer the editors told Stewart and Ruschenberger that the newspapers “cannot promise to publish more” of the argument and would “give no further encouragement” to the matter. For the larger American public, the once captivating mission in Hawai’i turned into background noise.

### **End of an Era**

In 1840, Sybil Bingham’s health became a concern and the Bingham family went home to New England. Hiram was in the middle of building the iconic Kawaiaha’o Church in Honolulu, but he never saw its completion. Sybil’s health continued to deteriorate in Massachusetts and the American Board refused to reinstate Hiram back in the Islands. In the end, Hiram made more enemies than friends. His unwavering conviction may have benefited the launch of the mission, but his arrogance and abrasiveness often confused the charitable spirit of the collective endeavor. Bingham’s departure was by no means the end of the

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<sup>151</sup> Charles Stewart, “Dr. Ruschenberger and the Sandwich Islands,” *Waldie’s Select Circulating Library*, no. 21, pt. 1, May 22, 1838.

<sup>152</sup> William Ruschenberger, “The Rev. Mr. Stewart and His Rigid Accuracy,” *Waldie’s Select Circulating Library*, no. 23, pt. 1, June 5, 1838.

Protestant mission in Hawai'i, but it was certainly the end of an era. Other missionaries like the Thurstons continued to toil away in the Islands, but the thundering voice that spoke like Genesis sweeping across the Isles no longer led the band.

Bingham spent many cold New England winters penning his six-hundred-page tome, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands* (1848). The memoir was essentially a lengthy defense of his entire career. For Bingham, his mission was straightforward: "To save their souls was the main object, but that object was not to be singly and constantly pressed on the attention of such people. Their uncouth and disgusting manners were to be corrected, their modes of dress and living to be improved, their grossness, destitution, and wretchedness, if possible, removed; and taste, refinement, and comfort, substituted."<sup>153</sup> By Bingham's estimation, the bulk of these goals were mostly accomplished under his watch, with the Christian foundation "firmly laid" upon the Islands.<sup>154</sup>

For Bingham, the inclusion of the words "residence of twenty-one years" was crucial to the title of his book. Bingham's story was about extended contact, not some uninformed account in a journal from a passing seaman doing his best Captain Cook impression. Bingham was the *Kahuna Nui* (Great Kahuna) of the vaunted chiefess Ka'ahumanu, favorite wife of Kamehameha the Great, who purged the Islands of licentiousness and dark idol worship. But Americans did not want to hear Bingham's version of the Pacific and his work went mostly unnoticed. The public wanted to read Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the*

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<sup>153</sup> Bingham, 169.

<sup>154</sup> Bingham, 616.

*Mast* (1840) and Herman Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) and *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1848) – lurid tales of “going native,” cannibalism and *aikāne* companionship.

In the end, Bingham's old-fashioned New England sensibilities could not keep pace with the modern complexities that faced Hawai'i. By the 1840s, a number of missionaries were resigning from their mission posts to continue on the Islands as “pious merchants” or political consultants to the kingdom.<sup>155</sup> The heady culture-versus-Christ debate evolved into conflicts of practical business interests. King Kamehameha III, though taught and raised by missionaries, never fully embraced Christianity and even brought back the old practices of the *hula* and other cultural celebrations. And though the church bells still rang, more people rose to the whistles of the plantation mills as they joined Buddhists, Catholics and other new Island residents into the fields. Bingham's dream of building a commonwealth, a City upon a Volcano, died along with Ka'ahumanu, his *kuhina nui*.

### **Ye Olde Kailua**

In 1841, Lucy Thurston left the rustic cabin at the Kailua station and took her grown children to the United States to send her daughter, Persis, to Mount Holyoke Seminary. Lucy and Asa agreed that it was time to expose their sheltered children to the outside world and send them off to school on the U.S. mainland. The long journey took a major toll; one of Lucy's younger daughters fell sick and died in New York. When Lucy returned to Kailua in 1842, she felt a

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<sup>155</sup> Burlin, 21–49.



strange mixture of both heartache and relief. The empty chairs in the dining area were painful reminders that Lucy and Asa were now alone, but the hundreds of Hawaiians who came to welcome her home – who bathed their tears on her hands as they wept – also reminded Lucy why she would never leave the Islands. Even more, the outside world was a different place compared to when Lucy left it in 1819: “The rattling and jolting, the puffing and screeching, the dashing and wetting, the whistling and howling, the running and shouting, the rocking and creaking, and groaning of stage, car, steamboat and ship, of winds, waves, and mariners, are they exchanged for the purest pleasures that have survived the fall, the peace and tranquility of domestic life?”<sup>156</sup> For many missionaries who returned home after a long stint, they hardly recognized the modern world of trains, steamboats, factories and other novel forms of “progress” and “civilization.” The very New England that the missionaries tried to impress on the Hawaiians had modernized and left the old world preachers behind.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the threat of cultural irrelevance extended to all the first wave of Yankees who poured into the Pacific, including the preachers, whalers, traders and beachcombers. In some respects, Hawai‘i became a refuge for New Englanders who clung to nostalgic notions of the pilgrim spirit and maritime romance. For many modern Americans, the stories coming from Hawai‘i sounded like an archaic period piece, where drunken sailors launched cannonballs at panicked preachers to release Puritan restrictions against wine, women and song. The mainland had newer concerns by the mid-

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<sup>156</sup> Thurston, 156.

nineteenth century, like industry, immigration, slavery, transportation and the western frontier. For Lucy, coming home to Kailua was like returning to 1820, when a simple exchange between a biscuit and a banana could inspire a lifetime of religious toil.

## CONCLUSION

From the moment John Ledyard from Connecticut stepped off Captain Cook's ship onto the shores of the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, New Englanders reacted strongly to the open sexuality of Hawaiian society. For nearly a century, explorers, traders, preachers and wives filled their ship logs and journals with the "ineffable" practices of Polynesian culture. And yet despite the numerous references to *aikāne*, polygamy, lewd gestures, lasciviousness, prostitution and other attempts to classify sexual behavior, rarely did New Englanders describe Hawaiian sexuality in terms of love or affection. Interestingly, the same holds true today, where the modern study of sexuality often devolves into staid discussions on gender, religion, race, ethnography, biology and power. In many ways, sex is inevitably a private matter in western society and language is often used to "skirt the issue."

Yet in ancient Hawai'i, sex was front and center, the paradigm for understanding the world. In a sense, sex was the language that went beyond words. As a physical manifestation of human contact, sex carried more power and meaning. Unlike the West that endlessly debated the politics of sex, Polynesian society was rooted in sexual politics. As many of the "Pacific texts" examined within this study illustrate, post-Revolutionary and Antebellum New Englanders struggled with issues surrounding the erotic and sensual. When confronted with the open *aloha* of the Polynesian world, Americans inevitably filtered the exchange through anxieties about religion, family, reputation, privacy, decency and all the other boundary markers of "civilized" living.

Hawai'i had too much kindness, too much affection, too much emotion, too much sun and too much sex.

However, the excesses were fine as long as New England *men* were plying the Pacific Ocean. Some sailors, like John Ledyard, found it shocking and disturbing, but all of them agreed the Hawaiian Islands offered extreme abundance for sensually deprived sailors returning from months at sea. Some mariners like Joseph Ingraham and Amasa Delano fully immersed themselves into the *limen* and experienced the *aikāne* world of Polynesian male bonding. The white men admired the physical beauty and grace of the “noble island savages” while the Hawaiians boarded the immense foreign ships to “rediscover” the lands told in old genealogical legends. Meanwhile, the women of the Islands enjoyed the new attention and the abundant gifts of feigned courtships – before the stigma of harlotry set in.

The staunch New England missionaries arrived in 1820 and sought to stifle these excesses. They were not only horrified by what they perceived as pure depravity in the Hawaiian people, but they were also offended by the abhorrent behavior of seamen and merchants, many of them fellow Yankees. Conversely, the foreign community in Honolulu detested the missionaries for introducing Christian ideas of morality, guilt and temperance among the Hawaiian people. The missionary women were a major force in establishing old New England domesticity; they aimed to replace Hawaiian female sexuality with notions of piety and submissiveness to paternal authority. The height of the missionary period, however, was short-lived. By the time the U.S. Navy took interest in the Islands by mid-nineteenth century, the American colonial process was in full swing, as Bibles moved onto guns.

In Hawai'i, there is a popular adage taken from James A. Michener's novel, *Hawaii*, that describes the general attitude towards the history of the New England missionaries: "They came to the islands to do good, and they did right well."<sup>1</sup> The double-entendre "they did right well" feeds into the prevailing local notion that the missionaries not only succeeded in turning Hawai'i into a Christian nation, but that the children and grandchildren of the missionaries also became wealthy plantation owners in the aftermath. Today, locals use the term "The Big Five" to refer to a near-mythical cabal of missionary descendants who controlled the sugar plantations and now supposedly lease prime real estate to all the top resorts. Like many local stories, the origins and activities of "The Big Five" companies are mixed with truth and fiction – not all of them were missionary relations and some companies are no longer in existence. Yet the image of the white millionaire from New England missionary descent is a powerful and lasting archetype on the Islands. Today, Americans tend to view Hawai'i as a mere extension of the West Coast and its liberal "surfer" culture, but on the Islands, the locals are highly cognizant of an old and domineering Northeastern presence, both real and imagined. New England may have forgotten about its Hawaiian connection, but Hawai'i will always remember its New England past.

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<sup>1</sup> James Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Random House, 1959), 353.

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