

The Hawaiian Monarchy and Loss of Sovereignty: An Introduction for a Japanese Women's Junior College Seminar

Michael Edwards
Jissen Women's Junior College

Abstract

The following paper will review persons of the Hawaiian monarchy, touching on events important to the understanding of how the sovereign nation of Hawaii was formed, ruled, and then overtaken by foreign annexationists with the complicit actions of the United States. Written in conjunction with a syllabus, this is a narrative written to serve as an introduction to an elective course for a Japanese women's junior college seminar.

この論文では、独立した民族国家であったハワイがどのようにつくられ、統治され、アメリカの共謀により併合への道をたどったのかを理解するための重要な出来事にふれながら、ハワイ王国の王家の人々について再考をする。シラバスと併せて、日本の短期大学のセミナーの選択科目の導入科目として、簡潔な物語形式で紹介する。

Keywords: Hawaiian history, United States history, Hawaiian monarchy
キーワード：ハワイの歴史、アメリカの歴史、ハワイの君主制

Introduction

There may be no band of small islands as well-known as those of Hawaii. To say that its beaches, natural landscape and climate are what any tourist seeks to relax, is cliché. It is cliché for a reason though. The islands have a climate which induces a slowed pace among its millions of inhabitants and visitors. It has only been a tourist destination for little over a century bringing in people from all over the world for brief visits. As high as the numbers of tourists may be, it is questionable how many of them are aware of the turbulent and dark history of the beaches they walk on would tell, if they were to speak. Changes

were slow at first and then accelerated in many directions, so fast and numerous that they became uncontrollable.

A destination popular with tourists the whole world over, yes, but the islands are particularly popular with Japanese. Evident from signboards written in Japanese, Japanese-speaking tour guides and shop attendants, financial and medical services tailored for Japanese clients, all catering to the large Japanese contingent of short-stayers. The history of Hawaii may not only be an interesting subject for Japanese junior college and university students, it is also a way to enhance their global perspective.

Ancient Hawaii

The archipelago we now know as the Hawaiian islands is made up of a string of volcanoes rising above the ocean's surface over two thousand miles from the United States mainland. These islands were settled with several migrations with the latest thought to be from Tahiti around 1200. The Hawaiians are but one of the several members of the Polynesian family who traversed the Pacific bringing culture and religion with them to the numerous islands of the Polynesian triangle. Like other Polynesians, the Hawaiians worshiped nature gods and had a strict hierarchical social structure. At the top of these hierarchical clans were the Ali'i, or high-ranking class who were considered to have been descended from gods. The Ali'i held a solidified place at the pinnacle of societal order with strict rules called 'kapu', which could bring death upon anyone who had the misfortune of breaking some of the strict rules either on purpose or even by accident. To prevent such accidental misfortunes, Ali'i were known at times to have traveled at night so as no commoner would be have the misfortune of stepping on the their shadow, just one of the many taboos during ancient times. Their place in society was also held in place by genealogical record. The keepers of these oral records however were the 'kahunas', or high priests, helping to keep royal bloodlines, marriages, religious worship, and the hierarchy of Hawaiian society in place. The high-ranking Ali'i could also be easily identified by their dress, the most elite of which wore items such as floor-length capes made of yellow and red feathers of the O'o bird, which were caught, plucked of the few yellow feathers on its shoulders, and then released so they would grow back (Seiden, 8). These feathers were woven to a net-like frame for the capes, as well as used for hats decorated with the same bright, rare feathers. The man accredited with 'discovering' the islands is said to have compared the feel of these capes to that of "the thickest and richest velvet", presumably that of Europe at the time (Wisniewski, 9). The Hawaiian culture was held together by oral tradition, a complex set of rules and taboos, and had unique dress which impressed its new

European visitors. These uniquely Hawaiian qualities though, were soon to disintegrate as contact with the outside world began to gather pace.

Contact with the Outside World

European countries in search of riches and more efficient trade routes traversed the oceans for centuries and the Hawaiian islands were thought to have been first recorded by the Spanish navigator, Juan Gaetano, naming them the Table Islands in 1555. The most significant 'discovery' of the archipelago came when Captain James Cook stumbled upon them in January of 1778 and named them the Sandwich Islands in honor of the financier of his voyage. Cook's landing coincided with one of the most important seasons for the Hawaiians, which celebrated their god of harvest, Lono. Cook's large western sailing vessel resembled how Lono was thought to have looked and drew excitement and respect from the natives. This belief was soon to be disqualified when, after departing once only to return to repair a broken ship mast, Cook and his men came into conflict with the Hawaiians. The Hawaiians took every opportunity to steal metal objects and things they deemed of value. This included a small boat from one of Cook's large ships. Cook attempted to have the small boat returned by essentially kidnapping the chief Hawaiian until the boat was returned. This strategy, having worked in previous encounters with other Polynesian island natives, proved to be a failure when the Hawaiians rebelled, killing Cook and several of his men on the unlikely day of February 14th, Valentine's Day. Now that Hawaii was on the map, it increasingly became a rest stop for sea merchants and whalers from Europe and America.

Kamehameha I

Kamehameha I, the Ali'i who, with the help of captured British sailors John Young and Isaac Davis, made use of western warfare methods, defeating rival forces on the islands of Maui, Lana'i, and Molokai and after making peaceful agreements with the chiefs of the islands of Ni'i'hau and Kaua'i, unified and ruled supreme over all the islands by 1810. Though coming to power by warfare, once the islands were unified, he ruled in a peaceful manner and is credited with making 'The Law of the Splintered Paddle', which refers to the paddle once broken over his head by a fisherman of a village he'd once attacked without provocation. The fisherman, was later brought before Kamehameha I for punishment, but was released without punishment. The law, in principle, states that no person shall be attacked unprovoked and that all have the right to live in peace.

An absolute ruler, Kamehameha I, was said to be both calculating and industrious when

dealing with foreigners. He initiated the Sandalwood trade which for a brief period was lucrative because of its desirability in Asia. The Sandalwood trees were cut at alarming rate to fuel the trade and the usual work of tending to man-made fishponds and taro fields went undone. In a short time, the Sandalwood trees ultimately became scarce and this source of revenue quickly dried up, not to mention the disdain felt by those charged with retrieving the trees from ever higher slopes of the mountains where they grew. It was also later to become an economic burden in the form of debt for the following monarchy since money was borrowed against future profits which were not to come. Kamehameha I died in 1819 and with him the 'kapu', worship of the nature gods, and the ways of old too, were soon to disappear.

Ka'ahumanu, Kamehameha II, and the Missionaries

With Kamehameha's death in 1819, his son Liholiho or Kamehameha II became the de facto ruler, but he was forced to share his power with his father's favorite wife, the powerful woman Ka'ahumanu. She appointed herself kuhina nui or vice ruler without objection. Women were restrained in Hawaiian society by the many kapu, one of which forbade women to eat with men. Ka'ahumanu soon used her powerful presence to persuade the pliable Liholiho to sit and eat with her and his mother Keopuolani in full view of other male chiefs. Once this kapu system by which Kamehameha I used to stratify and hold Hawaiian society together was broken, the old Hawaiian way of governance received its first irreversible blow. Statues and heiau, or sacred structures used to celebrate the nature gods were ordered destroyed, and though it was understandably contested by many of those who were still loyal to what were soon to be the 'old ways', the kapu system was coming to an end. An increasing number of foreigners in the islands openly defied kapu without punishment or consequential reaction from the gods. The ending the kapu system was then accelerated by not just a number of foreigners, but by a new system of worship, Christianity. The Hawaiian islands were to be set on a new and unexpected religious trajectory.

Just like the kapu, the foundation of societal order was crumbling, as missionaries from Boston arrived in spring of 1820. A 5-month journey on the ocean is no small undertaking, which demonstrates the determination the New England missionaries must have had for coming to 'help' island persons understand their definition of righteousness. A quote from the head missionary, Hiram Bingham's journal quote is indicative of the patronizing view with which the missionaries brought with them to the islands.

..the appearance of destitution, degradation, and barbarism, among the chattering, and almost naked savages, whose head and feet, and much of their sunburnt swarthy skins, were bare, was appalling. Some of our number, with gushing tears, turned away from the spectacle. Others with firmer nerve continued their gaze, but were ready to exclaim, "Can these be human beings!"

The teachings of Christianity took hold quickly, with the rise of the effectual leader of the islands, Ka'ahumanu, embracing the new religion and going as far as to fashion new Hawaiian law based on the Ten Commandments. Her acceptance of this new religion made it easier for commoners to follow it as well. The New Englanders also brought a printing press and soon put the Hawaiian language into script, making the word of the Bible accessible to all. The Hawaiian language was alphabetized using the common 5 vowels; a, e, i, o, u, and 7 consonants; h, k, l, m, n, p, and w. The Hawaiians must have felt a sense of excitement having their own language in written form, yet at the same time surely may have experienced a sense of cultural malaise at being told that hula and nudity were immoral.

In 1823, Liholiho or Kamehameha II, known for his restless disposition, often traversing back and forth amongst the islands, decided to visit England to see King George IV. It wasn't to be. Both he and his Queen, Kamamalu contracted the measles shortly after their arrival. The disease was often fatal for Hawaiians who had no immunity to the disease. The Hawaiian King and Queen died just days apart, never meeting the King of England. On the islands, Ka'ahumanu would continue to serve as regent until her death in 1832. The younger brother, Kauikeaouli, Kamehameha III, would now take the throne at a young age and was destined to be Hawaii's longest serving monarch. Ka'ahumanu had abolished the kapu system and being heavily influenced by the missionaries, instituted a Protestant form of Christianity which Kamehameha III was at first very reluctant to embrace, but later did. In 1840 a new constitution and form of government was introduced, with the king, a kuhina nui, and council of chiefs sharing power. These changes were seen as necessary to make Hawaii more respectable to the many nations which increasingly dealt with the islands. The time of Kamehameha III's reign was a turbulent one with Hawaii suffering the pains of trying to transform itself from one with a self-contained island society, to one which would have to deal with, appease, and eventually succumb to the western forces from over the seas. A Hawaiian scholar of the time, David Malo, foresaw what was to come:

"The ships of the white man have come, and smart people have arrived from their great countries which you have never seen before, they know our people are few in number and living in a small country: they will eat us up" (Wisniewski, 41)

This encroachment on the islands was coming from several fronts and Hawaii was in need of legal frameworks to handle the ever increasing claims foreigners were making. One case in particular led to Hawaii briefly losing its sovereignty. It occurred when a British man, Richard Carlton decided to take his and other British citizens' complaints over land rights to their home government. England sent a warship and its captain, Lord Paulet, to protect the British island inhabitants' rights. Paulet made severe demands on Kamehameha III, which the King could not meet, and so he was forced to concede the islands to Great Britain. For five months, the flag of the United Kingdom flew over the Hawaiian Islands until an English man superior to Paulet, Admiral Thomas came to the islands and reversed Paulet's actions. This return of the islands prompted one of the most famous of proclamations made about the islands by Kamehameha III, "The Life of the Land is Perpetuated in Righteousness". And to this day, a statue of Kamehameha III stands in Thomas Park in Honolulu, named after the British admiral who restored Hawaii's sovereignty.

Kamehameha III's reign from 1834 to 1863 also saw the implementation of a new constitutional government. This important transformation, too, was a necessity in becoming recognized by foreign nations and to help maintain the sovereignty of the islands. Due to a lack of knowledge about western law, banking, business, and on how to run a constitutional government, Kamehameha III and his most trusted advisors appointed several foreign, white men to government positions.

Land ownership, a common concept in North America and Europe, was foreign to native Hawaiians, but was an idea that had to be confronted in order to keep pace with the foreign encroachment. Kamehameha III being the ruler of all the land in the islands, now decided on the 'Great Mahele' or the great land division in 1848. The islands' lands were divided among the commoners, the chiefs, and himself. Since land ownership was a foreign concept to Hawaiians, many did not take advantage of the opportunity to take claim to the lands they might have been entitled to, and the ones that did, including many chiefs, sold their land to foreigners who in turn sought to make profits by planting pineapples and sugarcane. This growing agricultural sector coincided with the ever-decreasing population of native Hawaiians and the foreign planters needed foreign laborers, the first of whom came from China. With bad conditions on the ships these Chinese immigrants brought the disease, smallpox, which led to an epidemic in the islands, killing scores of Hawaiians whom had no immunity. This disease along with sexually transmitted diseases in the islands helped to lower the native population during Kamehameha III's rule. He died in December of 1854 and was to be succeeded by his two nephews.

Short Reigning Kings

In just 19 short years, 1855 through 1874, the islands would see three kings. The younger of Kamehameha's two nephews Alexander, or Kamehameha IV came to the throne in January of 1855 and was a king concerned with, as were the several monarchs after him, the sovereignty and health of the kingdom. A major project Alexander is remembered for is the building of Queen's Hospital. It was funded entirely by himself, Queen Emma, and donations from the public.

As a teenager, Alexander and his older brother, Lot, traveled to Europe via the United States with a main advisor to their uncle, Gerrit Judd, a former missionary. During this time, the teenagers were exposed to the outside world. An experience of particular note concerns the racism Alexander experienced in the United States, once being mistaken for a person of African origin, he was almost expelled from a train. Kamehameha IV did not forget that experience and was biased toward the British ever afterward. His wife, Queen Emma, however, was also half Scottish.

As king, Alexander could be excitable, and an event he regretted was having shot a close friend whom he thought was cheating with his wife, Queen Emma. It was not true and the King was forever depressed about it. Adding to his depressive state was grief over the death of his four year old son, Albert. Reigning just over 8 years, Kamehameha IV died in 1863 and his elder brother Lot, or Kamehameha V, then became King. He is said to be the most similar to the great Kamehameha I, for his looks and temperament. Lot's first action as king was to form a new constitution that would have more Hawaiians in the government. There was much turmoil in the government during his rule. At one point, the haole, or white, members refused to speak Hawaiian, and the Hawaiian members refused to speak English. Kamehameha V did however see a time of economic prosperity while he reigned, largely due to booming sugar production and profits of from white-owned sugar plantations. These plantations were in ever-increasing need of labor, the first immigration of laborers arriving from China in 1852, and later from other countries such as Japan, Korea, Portugal, and the Philippines. Lot died in December, 1872 without naming an heir to the throne and thus for the first time in Hawaiian history, an election was held. There were two main candidates, Lunalilo and Colonel David Kalakaua. Lunalilo won the election but would reign less than two years. He died in 1874 of tuberculosis. He was a popular and well-liked king, but is also said to have been somewhat of a heavy drinker, earning himself the nickname, Whiskey Bill (Daws, 190).

With the death of another king without an heir, an election was again held. This time the two candidates were Colonel Kalakaua and the widow of Kamehameha IV, Emma Rook.

Kalākaua won the controversial election and so the reign of Hawaii's penultimate monarch began in 1874.

Kalākaua

Kalākaua would also be given a nickname, 'The Merrie Monarch'. He had a fondness for alcohol and card games, but he was also trained as a lawyer, a composer, very nationalistic, and loved the hula, which he revived during his reign. A native from a small band of islands thousands of miles away in the Pacific Ocean, he was able to hold intellectual conversations with people of high social class in Europe. He was also the first monarch of any nation to travel around the world, visiting many countries and even meeting the pope. As kings before him, he attempted to restore Hawaiian traditions such as the hula, earlier banned by missionaries and despised by the foreign community who viewed the ancient dance as backwards and uncivilized.

Despite being a cosmopolitan man, he too was faced with very troubling circumstances during his reign. While the population of the islands increased, the native Hawaiian population itself, continued to shrink. Hawaii also saw a dramatic increase in the sugar industry. The foreign business community pushed for a 'reciprocity treaty' with the United States. This agreement ensured that Hawaii could sell sugar to the U.S. duty free. This deal was made with the U.S. and greatly benefitted the business community, but it later may have contributed to the weakening of Hawaii's sovereignty, when the U.S. ended the agreement causing the sugar planters in Hawaii to lose their great profits.

In 1887, these white businessmen owned ships for transportation, operated banks, and newspapers which attempted to spread negative news about Kalākaua to the United States. (Ing, 88) Many also owned sugar plantations and mills and pushed to have Hawaii be governed to favor their own interests and not necessarily those of the native Hawaiians. They thought Kalākaua spent too much government money on nationalistic celebrations, trips abroad, and a grand new residence for the Hawaiian monarchy, the Iolani Palace. These expenditures, on things meant to be sources of pride, and symbol of Hawaii's sovereignty, were exactly what the white foreign business community opposed. These groups led by white men, many the descendants of the first missionaries formed groups called the Hawaiian League and the Honolulu Rifles which forced Kalākaua to sign a new constitution in the summer of 1887 (Ing, 170). It was named the 'bayonet constitution' because of the way he was made to sign it. A bayonet is the knife-like attachment on the end of a rifle!

In poor health, Kalākaua set out for San Francisco hoping for better medical attention

in 1890. His health declined quickly and he died early the following year in San Francisco. Unlike his recent predecessors, Kalakaua did name an heir to the throne. At the beginning of his reign, he had named his younger brother, who died at the young age of 22. Next in line was his sister, Liliuokalani.

Liliuokalani and the Annexationists

Like her brother, Liliuokalani was well-educated, very nationalistic, and a composer of music writing Hawaii's most well-known song, Aloha Oe. In 1891, the new queen Liliuokalani took the throne, but did not favor the constitution that her brother had been forced to sign. In 1887, after returning from a trip to Europe, Liliuokalani wrote in her self-authored story what she thought of the foreign owned business element in the islands.

For many years our sovereigns had welcomed advice of, and given full representations in their government and councils to, American residents who had cast in their lot with our people, and established industries on the islands. And they became wealthy, and acquired titles to lands through the simplicity of our people and their ignorance of values and of new lands laws, their greed and their love of power proportionately increased...
(Liliuokalani, 178)

She goes on to write, responding to how her people were seen as unfit to manage their own islands.

...if we manifest any incompetency, it is not foreseeing that they would be bound by no obligations, by honor, or by oath of allegiance, should an opportunity arise for seizing our country, and bringing it under the authority of the United States. (Liliuokalani, 178)

In 1890, the U.S. instituted the McKinley Tariff Act which put a tariff on Hawaii's sugar just the same as the rest of the world. An earlier Reciprocity Treaty which allowed sugar from Hawaii to be imported to the U.S. free of tariffs, was now void. The sugar growers in Hawaii were now losing profits and saw the only way to correct their situation would be to become part of the United States, eliminating the high tariffs. This fueled their desire to take over the islands.

In 1893 Liliuokalani sought to draw up a new constitution which would restore the power to the monarchy, but her self-appointed government colleagues betrayed her and wouldn't agree to it (Wisniewski, 96). Knowing this, foreign businessmen and those in favor of annexation to United States formed a group known as the Committee of Safety. Their

goal was to overthrow the monarchy and form a new government. They requested the help of the United States' Minister to Hawaii, John Stevens, to agree to supply soldiers from an American warship to protect American interests on the islands as well as recognize the new provisional government they had formed and he agreed. On January 16th, 1893, a group of American Marines marched into Honolulu and stayed the night. The next day, the Committee of Safety took over the government building and declared a new Provisional Government and replaced that of the Queen. This could not have been done without the support of John Stevens, and the presence of American soldiers he allowed to be sent into Honolulu under the veil of protecting American interests and property.

Things soon took a turn though, as a new United States president, Grover Cleveland, took office. He sent a top government official, James Blount, to investigate what had taken place in the islands. His report was in favor of restoring Liliuokalani to the throne. President Cleveland agreed, but the Provisional Government took up arms and threatened to fight to keep their government in place. For various reasons, the United States government decided that it would not use force against its supporters. The Provisional Government formed the Republic of Hawaii with Sanford B. Dole, son of a missionary, as its president on May 31, 1894. The monarchy had been overthrown.

In a plot to restore the Queen, many of her supporters gathered weapons to rebel, but were found out. Liliuokalani was said to have known of the plot, and was arrested and imprisoned in a room in the Iolani Palace for eight months. To protect the lives of her imprisoned supporters, she renounced any claim to the throne in 1895 (Marantz, 51). Upon her release, she traveled to the United States and appealed to the United States government without success. In 1898 the United States officially annexed the Hawaiian Islands and in 1900 declared it a territory. The Hawaiian islands became the 50th state of the United States in 1959.

Conclusion

Without question, cultural malaise must have affected the Hawaiian monarchy and people. In a brief period of 120 years, their geographically beautiful islands with warriors for ancestors, mythical nature gods, and a strictly oral language, were seized and cast away in order to fulfill the desires of a country seeking to expand. A young Hawaiian lady tour guide at the Iolani Palace once answered with a tone of inevitability, when asked about Hawaii now being part of the United States. She replied; " If it hadn't been the United States, it would have been someone else".

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