

MISSION: IMPLAUSIBLE
SURPRISE AND SUCCESS IN THE HAWAIIAN MISSION, 1819-1825

by

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In the Beginning

Gods followed the movement of their people wherever their worshippers traveled. Hindu deities accompanied their adherents across the Indian subcontinent and Inti's devotees brought him out of the Andes as the Incan Empire spread outward from Peru. Every religion relies on the spread of its god's influence in order to thrive, and no group brought their divine being into "unenlightened" regions as fervently as Christian missionaries. Four hundred years after the Protestant division of the Christian faith, men and women set sail from England and America to bring their God to the natives living in the islands of the Pacific.¹

One of these groups began as a tiny party of New England missionaries selected by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Sailing from Boston Harbor aboard the 241-ton *Thaddeus* in October of 1819, the American missionaries sought the conversion of the Hawaiian kingdom of Kamehameha the Great into God's kingdom on Earth. The Pacific Islands appeared Eden-like in the nineteenth-century popular imagination, much as it does today. With God on their side, the missionaries thought, they would surely meet relatively quick success. Like their predecessors in the London Missionary Society, already active in Tahiti and the Marquesas, the Americans expected to encounter hardship. Unfortunately, the surprises

¹ Maria Otavia de Freitas. "Inca Religion," in *Overview of World Religions*.
<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/latam/inca.html>. Accessed September 20, 2006.

awaiting them in the coming years proved to be more difficult to comprehend than they presumed in the autumn of 1819.²

This study focuses on the expectations and reactions of the first two waves of New England missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands over a five-and-a-half year span. Countless unexpected occurrences startled, surprised, and disappointed the first successful Christian band encamped on Hawaiian shores. Analysis of the interactions between the two groups raises three fascinating questions. What did the company aboard the *Thaddeus* expect to encounter? What did they actually find? How did they react to new concerns? Some of the surprises, such as agricultural methods and dress, proved universal to missionary movements worldwide. Others, such as the intense demand for printed native-language texts, appear unique to the islands. From the missionary arrival in early 1820 through the return of the bodies of King Liholiho and Queen Kamamalu in mid-1825, the New Englanders constantly sought appropriate responses to situations not in line with their own expectations. Countless historians relate these unexpected events in their own studies of Hawaiian history, but few spend more than a handful of pages analyzing the cultural implications of the missionary responses. The following pages

² Bernice Judd, *Voyages to Hawaii Before 1860* ed. Helen Yonge Lind (Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, 1929; reprint, University Press of Hawaii for Hawaiian Missions Children's Society, 1974), 91. In the text, "Hawaii" refers to the islands collectively; "Hawai'i" refers only to the easternmost island. For the sake of consistency, present-day names and spellings are used. Direct quotes leave the original names and spellings intact, even if the spellings vary from line to line within a document; proper names, in particular, tended to change spellings as the missionaries solidified the written form of the Hawaiian language and converted all 'R' spellings into phonetically correct 'L's. All quotes are as originally written; to include notation of spelling errors in the archival documents would add dozens of uses of [sic] and clutter the essay.

delve into the deeper causes of mission surprise and the ideology behind the American responses to the numerous shocks that ultimately shaped the endeavor's future.

The unique missionary situation in Hawaii arose from a combination of native, environmental, internal, and organizational conditions that continually perplexed the families stationed in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Before sailing, the company addressed the expected linguistic problems by enrolling the assistance of four native Hawaiians acting as both translators and role models. Linguistic scholars of the era believed that Polynesians spoke slightly different dialects depending on which island group they settled in, but that the base language was the same. This proved to be a great fallacy, leaving the New Englanders and the Hawaiians unable to communicate adequately with each other for a significant length of time. The missionaries also steeled themselves for an uphill battle against the well-entrenched polytheism dominating the islands under the high priests of Kamehameha. Events during the lengthy voyage sent Hawaii into a religious uproar that the ABCFM could not see coming. The anticipation of New England farming becoming the dominant agricultural methodology met with almost catastrophic failure as the land stubbornly refused to conform to white expectations. The environmental conditions—Hawaii lacks a cold season to drive parasites into dormancy—favored the spread of illness rather than its retardation.

Perhaps more unexpected than the external difficulties were the internal problems that arose within individuals, the mission family, and the ABCFM as a whole. The native Hawaiians returning with the *Thaddeus* quickly found themselves torn between the Protestant values acquired in Massachusetts and the traditional, more relaxed ways of their homeland. Before even making landfall in Hawaii, mission chief Hiram Bingham

and the company's doctor, Thomas Holman, argued over serious disagreements in protocol and ambitions. Tensions rose to the point that Bingham accused Holman and his wife, Lucia, of apostasy. Thomas and Lucia Holman departed their assigned post after only five months, leaving the Christian outpost without regular medical assistance for more than two years. The missionaries understood that their ability to proselytize depended on personal health. Suddenly lacking familiar healthcare, the station wrote repeatedly to the Board of Directors requesting assistance, exposing the unpleasant realization that the mission lacked the necessary support from America. The constant need for supplies, largely due to unexpected problems with the natives, climate, and certain group members, led to a sense of abandonment, relieved only with the arrival of the second mission group in 1823. All of these shocks and surprises, and many more, appear in the writings of the mission membership and subsequent publications related to the mission effort.

The archive of the ABCFM, currently housed in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, serves as the starting point for this study. The archives hold mission journals and personal and professional letters received in Boston from the men and women in the field. The journals, overseen by Hiram Bingham, the ordained head of the Hawaiian mission, provide the most uncensored presentation of station life. The hundreds of pages written during the first half-decade detail the minutiae of mission life; native attitudes and clashes with European and American merchants stationed on the islands are well documented and commented upon. Many entries relate the heathenish activities of the Hawaiian natives in comparison to the pious mores of the American preachers, ruminating on the needs of the indigenous souls. Unfortunately, the missionary letters

are not as useful to this study as the journals. The majority of the early correspondence in the collection consists of joint letters from the men of the mission to the Board of Commissioners, not their friends and families. Since the missionaries wrote to their audience, the letters dryly relate events with minimal independent commentary, focusing instead on theological and liturgical concerns and offering praise to the maker for his gracious protection. The handful of archived personal letters, such as those from Lucy Thurston and Sybil Bingham, add insight to the personal opinions of specific members of the party. Despite their voluminous quantity and wealth of information, the mission archives provide only a part of the complete picture; published works help fill in the gaps left in the missionary record.

The earliest publications about the Hawaiian mission movement were the accounts put forward by the missionaries themselves. The public held a great love of true-life adventure tales, dating back to William Dampier's early eighteenth century accounts of his numerous lengthy voyages and the fantastic tales of Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. Late 18th century publication of the journal of Captain Cook's voyage and death further sparked the imagination, directly influencing the 1797 LMS venture to Tahiti. Public fascination with far away realities combined with the American revival movement—the Second Great Awakening—to spur interest in the Hawaiian venture. Charles Samuel Stewart, a member of the 1823 arrivals, published his story in 1828, only three years after leaving the station. His text, opening with a list of notable non-missionary visitors to the islands (including Lord Byron and Thomas ap Catesby Jones), aims squarely at the Euro-American reading public's fascination with Hawaii. Rev. William Ellis's preface addresses any potential concerns about plagiarism from his own

recently published book by reiterating that any correlations came about because both men witnessed similar events and lived in the same surroundings. That two missionaries from the same station produced popular works within less than five years of each other illustrates the demand for tales of island adventure. Stewart opens his tale with a general history of the islands from the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778 until the author's arrival in 1823. This Anglocentric view of early Hawaii fits with the contemporary idea that no place really existed in any meaningful way until discovered by European or American explorers.³

After the opening chapter, the journal proper begins with the embarkation of the second mission group onboard the *Thames*, sailing from Boston a month before Christmas, 1822, and continues through the Stewart's departure due to ill health in July 1825. Much like his published companions, Stewart commented on all aspects of native life and culture as he encountered them. Early comments focus on obvious differences between cultures--language, clothing, decoration--showing a keen interest outside of his own experiences. Later entries trend away from material observations, moving towards commentary on the intangible aspects of Hawaiian life, such as mourning practices and the movement towards Christianity among the general population. Throughout the work,

³ Diana and Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind: Explorer, Naturalist, and Buccaneer: The Life of William Dampier* (New York: Walker and Company, 2004), 1. John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 11. Charles Samuel Stewart, *Journal of a residence in the Sandwich Islands, During the Years 1823, 1824, and 1825: Including Remarks on the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants; an Account of Lord Byron's Visit in H.M.S Blonde; and a Description of the Ceremonies Observed at the Interment of the Late King and Queen in the Island of Oahu* (London: H. Fisher, Son, & P, Jackson, 1830; reprint, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press for Friends of the Library of Hawaii, 1970), xviii.

Stewart remained fascinated with the natural world he encountered, recording his impressions of the land up to the last entries written on the islands.

Nineteen years after Stewart's account stoked the public imagination, Hiram Bingham, the head of the Hawaiian mission, published *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands*. Bingham's recollections begin with a relation of Hawaii's history before Captain Cook's arrival, colored by the minister's consideration of pre-mission Hawaiians as "idolaters of reprobate." Oral reports of past events are discarded as unreliable, even if it is the only available means of determining history. Bingham held no respect for the traditions he helped replace, so his writings do not mourn their passing even as the author recorded the old Hawaiian beliefs. Unlike Stewart, Bingham began his book with an analysis and critique of the people's beliefs rather than a rumination on their lands, setting the early tone of his recollections.⁴

The work also conveys Bingham's shifting ideals as his experiences forced him to reevaluate his goals. His decision to print tracts and hymnals in Hawaiian rather than English seems to be a pragmatic decision, but ran contrary to the idea of English as a civilizing necessity. Bingham remained primarily concerned with the survival of his station and the conversion of the islanders, but, like Stewart, he allowed himself to marvel at native ingenuity and skill. His descriptions of surfing and canoeing show a lighter side of his often austere personality and his intense curiosity shines throughout the text. Bingham understood the value of his words to the missionary cause and selectively

⁴ Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands; or the Civil, Religious, and Political History of Those Islands: Comprising a Particular View of the Missionary Operations Conducted with the Introduction and Progress of Christianity and Civilization among the Hawaiian People* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hezekiah Huntington, 1847), v, 17.

chose the experiences included in his memoirs. The most difficult early disturbances within the mission group—specifically his disagreements with Thomas and Lucy Holman—receive no mention in his published account. This rift became the earliest test of faith in the fledgling community, which survived sans physician until the reinforcing second wave, so why is it absent from an otherwise detailed account? This type of censorship, either self-imposed or publisher requested, not only occludes key events and ideas but leads careful readers to wonder what else is missing. Recent volumes of mission writings, such as Char Miller’s *Selected Writings of Hiram Bingham*, drawn from the uncensored collection of Bingham’s writings, present a different view from the editions published in the mission leader’s lifetime. Intra-group conflicts appear alongside wonder at the islands’ natural beauty. The inclusion of Bingham’s letter accepting the position in Hawaii shows more complexity and indecision than the 19th century publications provide. These memoirs allow a better understanding of personal motivations and expectations, but necessarily leave many unfilled gaps. Personal recollections present only one side of an event, often with little understanding of any perspective outside their own. Both Stewart and Bingham posit “true” accounts from the Anglo/Christian side, deprived of Hawaiian viewpoints, yet they clarify a sequence of events falling before Hawaiian historians acquired the skills needed to write their own accounts.⁵

Later writers interested in the lives of the missionaries help complete our picture of the early years of the Hawaiian mission. These secondary sources plug the holes in primary narratives through added context and broader perspective. Bradford Smith’s

⁵ Hiram Bingham, *Selected Writings of Hiram Bingham, 1814-1869: Missionary to the Hawaiian Islands: To Raise the Lord’s Banner* ed. Char Miller (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), *passim*.

Yankees in Paradise: The New England Impact on Hawaii provides many interesting details made possible by its detached author. Working from the ABCFM archives in Harvard and Hawaii, as well as numerous books and periodicals both recent and contemporary with the mission, Smith's survey presents an overview of the mission's history, focusing on the character of the islands and the interactions between the Americans and the Hawaiians. The missionaries appear as normal people inserting themselves into an extraordinary set of circumstances, not as the divinely selected heralds of the one true God as presented in many earlier, hagiographic biographies. The story also attempts to present more historical background than either the mission journals or hagiographies contained.⁶

Yankees' first chapter presents the arrival of the mission families against a backdrop of Hawaiian immigration and cultural exchanges with mercantilist crews sailing between Europe, South America, and Asia. Smith gives great credit to the Hawaiians for their engineering and textile abilities, skills considered fascinatingly crude yet effective by the missionaries, as well as the King's understanding of personal economic benefits to be gained from international trade. Events leading to the foundation of the mission effort also receive early coverage. A brief, yet necessary, history of the foundation of the ABCFM sheds light on the ideas leading up to both the evolution from secret society to open proselytization association and the selection of Hawaii as the organization's first overseas station. Smith's observations present a clear, mission-centric view of Anglo-

⁶ Bradford Smith, *Yankees in Paradise: The New England Impact on Hawaii* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1956), passim.

Hawaiian contact that creates an image of heroic confusion as the ABCFM attempted to “save” the islanders.⁷

Better understanding of the missionary mindset requires an examination of religious fervor in the early 1800s. *The Social Ideals of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860*, despite the qualifying dates in its title, details many of the core concepts that led to the New England religious fervor that drove much of the desire to spread the gospel abroad. Author Charles C. Cole claims that the revivals and camp meetings popularized during the Awakening of 1800 created an atmosphere full of enthusiasm and optimism. A new emphasis on flexibility arose within the ranks of ordained ministers as they attempted to reach out to new congregants in places far from home. Additional background comes from Robert H. Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy’s guide to the modern evangelical movement in America. *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide* further discusses the roots of evangelical ideology in the late 18th century. Krapohl and Lippy cite Methodism as the driving force behind the movement as its use of circuit riding preachers forced speakers to utilize different approaches with different groups and emphasized bringing Christianity into new regions of the country. Neither work directly addresses the Hawaiian ABCFM effort, but together, they help illustrate the source of the American efforts and the ideologies involved in such an undertaking.⁸

⁷ King Kamehameha placed all export good manufacture under his direct control, forbidding any unauthorized agents from dealing directly with foreign merchants. Smith, 21.

⁸ Charles C. Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977), 3. Robert H. Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 4.

A broader prospective, linking the Hawaiian mission to those in the rest of the Pacific, is possible through works such as *On the Missionary Trail*, a narrative history of the LMS survey of its missions in the 1820s. Tom Hiney's analysis of the mission inspection tour of George Tyerman and Daniel Bennet shows the universal difficulties of language, disease, and culture shock experienced by British preachers around the globe. Only a single chapter directly concerns Hawaii, and that only briefly touches on the New England mission group, but the analysis of royal governance and the descriptions of pre-Christian belief on the islands contribute significantly to a more thorough understanding of the mission's situation. Hiney's extensive use of archival sources allows a clear picture of the mindset involved in traversing the globe in the name of God.⁹

Completing the overview of missionary histories are studies focusing on a subsection of the mission family: the missionary wives. In *Paths of Duty*, Patricia Grimshaw argues that the rise of Congregationalist and Presbyterian ideologies gave women a greater role in religious life just as the economic transformation of America in the early 1800s led to an increase of working women. This newfound freedom encouraged women to make their own decisions and follow their own goals rather than remain tied to their fathers' and husbands' desires. Grimshaw uncovers the individual histories of the early mission wives, arguing—rightly—that any real understanding of their roles requires understanding their personal motivations and intentions. Continuing on to the *Thaddeus* voyage and well beyond, the work illustrates the daily challenges American wives in the Hawaiian Islands faced that continental wives could never have imagined. Additionally, the mission women had an ability to understand the powerful

⁹ Tom Hiney, *On the Missionary Trail: A Journey Through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa With the London Missionary Society* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 1.

female chiefs in ways the mission men could not, adding an unexpected layer of utility to their roles as wives and, eventually, mothers.¹⁰

Mary Zwiep narrows her study even further than Grimshaw, examining the women of the first wave in *Pilgrim Path*. The seven women who sailed with the first company in 1819 act as a focal point to tell the story of the entire group, presenting a fresh perspective on an oft-repeated story. Working closely from the women's own writings, Zwiep shows the influence of the women on the religious life of the islands. The author points out that while the writings of the men give great detail about the daily objectives and ever appearing new challenges, the women's words add a layer of domesticity, providing a glimpse of New England home life as transported to Hawaii. The lives and roles of the seven women highlights the central role religion played as they tended to native students, helped orphaned native children, and raised their own offspring while attempting to bring Hawaiian culture into line with their own ideals of civilized life. Grimshaw and Zwiep's writings help modern scholars understand the enormous pressures placed on the shoulders of women selected as suitable companions for the men sent out to bring the light of Christ into the darkness and fill in many of the holes left in the previously male-centered histories.¹¹

Another vital source of information comes from studies of the history of Hawaii, encompassing much more than mission life and surroundings. The Hawaiian Islands existed as a populated region long before white sailors added them to their maps of the Pacific Ocean. One of the earliest "authoritative" histories detailing the centuries before

¹⁰ Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), xxi.

¹¹ Mary Zwiep, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), xvii.

American arrival is Ralph Kuykendall's *A History of Hawaii*, authorized by the Hawaiian Historical Commission. Opening with the geology behind the islands' topography, continuing through Cook's earthly arrival and mortal departure, Kamehameha's ascension and domination, the fall of the monarchy and the installation of American governance, and ending with Hawaiian education in the 1920s, the survey illustrates Hawaiian history from a distinctly American perspective. The thorough research conducted at the Bishop Museum library, the Archives of Hawaii, and the National Archives of the United States, Mexico, and Great Britain allows a great amount of information in a small volume. Written as a textbook, complete with chapter summarizing quizzes, *A History of Hawaii* presents a picture of Hawaiian life and culture accessible and acceptable to pre-Hawaiian statehood American readers.¹²

The ensuing twenty years witnessed an onslaught of books about Hawaii with more than one hundred published in the five years following the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor alone. In 1945, Stanley D. Porteus contended that the image built up in the public imagination "is as glamorous and insubstantial as a pin-up girl." As is still often the case, Hawaii appeared as a whitewashed paradise free from ills of any sort. Porteus' *Calabashes and Kings* intends to present Hawaii, warts and all, to an intelligent readership unafraid of the controversies and unpleasantness often omitted from other accounts of the islands. This introduction consists of two parts: the first is a chronologic history of the archipelago, from the first European intrusion into the Pacific up to the post-war statehood debate, and the second is a commentary on the natural forces at work shaping the land and the people and animals living upon it. The author addresses the

¹² Ralph S. Kuykendall and Herbert E. Gregory, *A History of Hawaii* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), v.

fawning tone of the work in his introductory section, claiming that his admiration for the islands being his motivating force, certain biases are inevitable. When the missionaries appear in the narrative, Porteus presents them in an unflattering light, referring to Bingham as “narrow-minded and proud of it,” yet credits them with introducing basic medical care and attempts at regulating healthful conduct.¹³

Gavan Daws continued the broad scholarship of the islands in his anglo-centric narrative, *Shoal of Time*. Daws focuses on Hawaii in the centuries between its “discovery” by Captain Cook and American statehood in 1959. Built equally from primary and secondary sources, *Shoal of Time* provides a coherent, linear picture of Hawaii’s transition from isolated archipelago to commercial crossroads. Daws focuses on events rather than individuals, providing more detail about actions and results than about islanders and ideas. The chapters most applicable to this study—the first three—rely strongly on published histories, briefly touching on the ABCFM archives. Kamehameha and his heirs appear as important figures, but their actions receive more emphasis than the ideology driving those actions. Missionaries appear within the text as a divisive force within Hawaiian society with little coverage given to their first years in the islands. Until Liholiho’s death, Daws treats the mission as more of a trigger of change than as a direct agent. After recording the events of the king’s death, the narratives focuses on the effects of mission teachings on Kaahumanu and other powerful ali’i as the powerbase shifted to the regents acting on behalf of Liholiho’s teenaged heir.

¹³ Stanley D. Porteus, *Calabashes and Kings: An Introduction to Hawaii* (Palo Alto, California: Pacific Books, 1945), vi and 77. Porteus’ reference to Bingham’s narrow-mindedness contradicts the missionary’s own marvelous commentary on certain aspects of native life. Perhaps Porteus had in mind only Bingham’s religious views, which remained unshakable throughout his life.

The ABCFM does not play a major role in Daws' history, but he places the group within the political world they inadvertently entered into, leaving more focused studies to later scholars.¹⁴

Kuykendall, Porteus, and Daws each set out to provide a definitive history of the Hawaiian Islands and each succeeded according to their own terms. Kuykendall created a relatively superficial history, but succeeded in making the public aware that Hawaii had a history. Porteus sought to revise the romantic image of the islands by stripping out the glorification of American recreation of the Hawaiian people. Daws presented a more balanced and thoroughly researched text than his predecessors. Each ultimately provided an Americentric history, working forward from European arrival through their contemporary time period to provide their audiences with a broad picture of a complex series of events.

As the specialization of history became more prevalent, individual places along the chain received their own publications. These often follow the established pattern of introducing the geology and topography of their subject, then describing the arrival of the earliest Polynesian settlers and their innovations, narrating the rise of the Hawaiian monarchs, then introducing outsiders and relating the fall of the monarchy and the Americanization movement. Honolulu and Waikiki both appear as focal points in studies by Edward D. Beechert and George S. Kanahele, respectively. *Honolulu: Crossroads of the Pacific*, Beechert's review of the importance of Hawaii's busiest harbor, illuminates the role of trade in shaping Hawaiian culture, particularly the whaler's need for a waypoint to repair and refit ships and crews and how the dominance of sugar

¹⁴ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), passim.

monoculture both built up and decimated surrounding economies. Kanahele attempts to fill historical gaps in Hawai'i's long history with geologic data, mythological interpretation, oral histories, and written documents in *Waikiki 100 B.C. to 1900 A.D.: An Untold Story*. The specialization of each book provides it with a valuable role in supporting this study. *Honolulu* clearly illustrates the impact of outside forces on the native population. The rise of agricultural dominance over the port's economy—first sandalwood, then sugar—helps us understand non-missionary influences from Europe and America. Beechert celebrates the improvements brought to the area in the name of civilization and maritime utility, with the missionaries briefly mentioned as the wedge between the merchants and the chiefs. *Waikiki* focuses much more on a region comparably left alone by outsiders, allowing a view of changes brought by ships and filtered through Hawaiian society. The earlier focus naturally pushes westernization into a secondary position within the text, allowing a broader understanding of the area before boot prints spoiled the sands. Trade forced Honolulu to thrive in the 19th century, while Waikiki died out from alien diseases introduced by those same traders. Beechert and Kanahele present differing interpretations based on differing sources, leading to vastly different studies. *Honolulu* is undisputedly more factual in its presentation, but *Waikiki* does something new for the islands in utilizing rocks and legends to construct a clearer, if imperfect, look into the past. Taken together, the two works augment the broad studies that preceded them.¹⁵

¹⁵ Edward D. Beechert, *Honolulu: Crossroads of the Pacific* (Charleston, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 1. George S. Kanahele, *Waikiki 100 B.C. to 1900 A.D.: An Untold Story* (Honolulu: The Queen Emma Foundation, 1995), 1.

Another important key to comprehending missionary shock is to understand more about the existing Hawaiian cultural mindset at the time the missionaries arrived, a facet generally ignored in early histories of the islands. Historians have great difficulty uncovering the “true” ideas of the indigenous population from the writings of missionaries and sailors, many of whom considered the Hawaiians to be uncultured, uncivilized heathens. This attitude is not conducive to conveying accurately what the locals actually worried about in terms of religion and family. Acts of wanton brutality—such as drawn out execution or infanticide—witnessed by the foreigners might have resulted from Hawaiian jurisprudence or their only obvious means of preventing starvation due to overpopulation. Cultural filters prevented Euro-American witnesses from fully understanding what they saw. Modern anthropological studies and their incorporation into recent histories give a glimpse of what was necessarily omitted in the original texts.

Marshall Sahlins set the standard for Pacific Island cultural anthropology, analyzing native myths to create a clearer understanding of how the Hawaiians saw their world and how that colored their interactions with those who came to the islands. *Islands of History* and *How Natives Think* provide clues about Hawaiian expectations of their uninvited, but not unwelcome, guests. Focusing on the arrival of Captain Cook, Sahlins places Cook in the grander context of Hawaiian mythology. Cook, the anthropologist argues, appeared as a representation of the god Lono, but the Hawaiians did not consider him to actually *be* Lono. The Hawaiians did not expect him to return because he only personified an idea, not an entity. This is a vital idea because Sahlins shows that pre-Kamehameha Hawaiians were not the simple minded, passive farmers long imagined in

idyllic histories; they were complex humans with an intense belief in abstract ideas and concepts, far from the misguided heathens described in the mission histories. Public academic dissent for *Islands of History* prompted the writing of *How Natives Think*, further detailing and exploring the native ideas that led to Cook's unexpected demise. Taken together, the two books help show why the Hawaiians reacted to others, especially missionaries, as they did.¹⁶

The inspiration for *How Natives Think* largely stemmed from the work of Gananath Obeyesekere, whose *Apotheosis of Captain Cook* directly attacked Sahlins' interpretation of the native mindset leading to Cook's death. Obeyesekere believes the Cook-Lono connection arose only in the mind of European historians and that Cook's actions led to his death, not an indigenous concept of divine destiny. Working from nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian Samuel Kamakau, the author highlights the many different sides of Cook shown throughout the islands, claiming that the Englishman appeared differently to each group throughout the islands. Obeyesekere's keen skepticism of Kamakau's authority allows him to focus on interpretations of Hawaiian myth without needing to defend the islander's factual accuracy. The study's use of literary comparisons—Shakespeare's Prospero and Conrad's Kurtz—presents a clever means to portray two aspects of Cook's personality, civilized immunity to foreign ideals and adaptation of native barbarism, respectively. Contrary to Sahlins' perspective,

¹⁶ Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), vii. Marshall Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, for Example* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

Obeyesekere concludes that Cook's violent side erupted at an inopportune time, leading to his demise in Kealahou Bay.¹⁷

The most recent scholarship shies away from the simple explanations and analyses of early Hawaiian studies, preferring to follow the detailed analytical approaches of the anthropologists. No longer are the members of the ABCFM unquestioningly heralded as the saviors of a savage people intent on following in the path of Sodom and Gomorrah. Much like in the published histories of other indigenous American peoples, the nature and intention of white involvement in Hawaiian cultural and societal change has come under closer scrutiny. In *Colonizing Hawai'i*, Sally Engle Merry contends that members of the ABCFM failed to fully consider the long-term implications of their actions on the Hawaiian legal system. Conversion fit with the Hawaiian system of patron gods selected by individual ali'i; Jehovah simply took the place of the gods of war or fire in the personal lives of the converted. Later, as the reality of the mission message became apparent, actual Christianity replaced the hybrid beliefs initially present in the ali'i theology.¹⁸

Within her study, Merry contends that not only did the missionaries successfully convert the religion of the Hawaiian people, but in so doing they converted the laws of the islands as well. The first Hawaiian constitution, drafted in 1840, built off of Christian ideology and biblical law in dictating the law of the land. Merry does not blame the mission for the destruction of Hawaiian culture but she does accuse the proselytizers of gross shortsightedness. In aiding the creation of laws designed to ensure sovereignty, the

¹⁷ Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁸ Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.

well-meaning outsiders created institutions dependent on foreigners to run them and provide ideological interpretation. Islanders without any concept of the jury system needed American lawyers to oversee the newly implemented judicial process. In bringing “civilization” to make the Hawaiians equal to the rest of the western world the mission imposed conformity on those who sought to work with the system. With this, Merry contends, the missionaries unintentionally planted the seeds of cultural destruction.¹⁹

Members of the “Hawaiian Renaissance” school—a modern group of scholars based at the University of Hawaii—consider the ABCFM one of the most destructive forces ever to set upon the islands. Jonathan Osorio believes the ABCFM knowingly aided in the destruction of native society as it won converts to its religious and moral beliefs. Acceptance of Christianity demanded an outward display of devotion in the form of non-traditional dress, the most visible marker of culture. In denying the islanders their accustomed fashion the mission directly attacked a non-religious aspect of Hawaiian life. The moral prohibition of polygamy, prostitution, and other “unseemly” acts continued this assault. Hawaiian abnegation of their own values only accelerated the changes, not their rise to equality. Osorio portrays the missionaries as self-indulgent, greedy interlopers who utilized Christianity to impose a new class system on the Pacific islands, building their power and wealth throughout the 19th century at the expense of Hawaiian cultural survival.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., 79, 258.

²⁰ Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 11-12, 21-22.

Noenoe Silva takes these views a step further, presenting the missionaries as part of a racist movement to Americanize all indigenous people within the United States' sphere of influence. In her analysis, Silva concludes that the mission acted with innate paternalism, treating the Hawaiians as children grasping to understand the changing world around them. Because the Americans imposed the power of the written word and controlled the printing press, they easily throttled the dissemination of ideas contrary to their own. As powerful individuals like Kaahumanu embraced mission teachings they alienated other leaders and disrupted social normalcy. Silva's contention that Hawaiian society actively resisted American absorption is supported by numerous incidents mentioned in both the mission journal and the personal recollections of individual missionaries, but her broad appraisal downplays the chosen roles played by Kalanimoku, Kapiolani, and the other ali'i converts.²¹

The final element required to understand the ideals leading to the missionary voyage, and their mindset is the earliest source used in this study. Just as the English mission movement took inspiration from Cook's published journals, the New Englanders found their inspiration in the memoirs of a young Hawaiian living among them. Henry Obookiah's *Memoirs*, published upon his death in 1818, tell the story of a man searching for contentment and the men and women who aided his cause, while furthering their own purposes. Obookiah left the island of his birth in 1809, around the age of 15, leaving a land of warfare and turmoil in favor of the uncertainties of life aboard an American square-rigger. Captain Brintnall agreed to take Henry with him on his return trip to New York, along with Thomas Hopoo, who would play a vital role within the first mission

²¹ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 34, 53-54, 70.

group a decade later. Upon his arrival in America, Obookiah took up residence in New Haven, Connecticut with Timothy Dwight IV, the President of Yale University.

Obookiah moved around New England over the next several years, living in Hollis, Litchfield, and Goshen, New Hampshire before joining the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut in 1814.²²

According to Edwin Dwight, the author of Obookiah's *Memoirs*, the young man desired nothing less than to return to his native land and spread knowledge of Christianity among his people. The *Memoirs* display Obookiah as a man eager to have a close relationship with Christ, but always questioning his worth as a follower. Dozens of passages relate the subject's inner monologue as he struggled to determine his worth. It is difficult to discern if Obookiah truly felt conflicted about his religious abilities or if Dwight wanted to make the islander appear overly penitent. Memoirs written by anyone other than the subject inherently raise questions of veracity, especially when conversations appear verbatim. Memories recorded directly by an individual often appear slightly differently than they happened; memories recorded by a third party are even more occluded. While it is possible that the native Hawaiian did feel enormous religious pressure from the white Protestants surrounding him, it is also possible that Dwight exaggerated Obookiah's feelings in order to create greater support for fulfilling the dream of establishing a mission in Hawaii. Regardless of the veracity of the *Memoirs*, it is an important volume for understanding the early mission movement, as it

²² Edwin Dwight, *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah, a Native of Owhyhee, and a Member of the Foreign Mission School; Who Died at Cornwall, Connecticut February 17, 1818, Aged 26 Years* ed. Edith Wolfe (New Haven, Connecticut: At the Office of the Religious Intelligencer, 1818; reprint, Honolulu: Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands, the Hawaii Conference, the United Church of Christ, 1968), 1.

became the trigger for the ABCFM voyage to Hawaii. The idea that Hawaii wanted saving, embodied by young Henry Obookiah, became an irresistible motivation.

Hiram Bingham, an idealistic young man freshly graduated from the Trinitarian Congregationalist Andover Seminary in the fall of 1819, proved one of those most desirous of aiding the cause. A student at Andover Seminary during the Hawaiian's short time at the school, Bingham felt driven to fulfill Obookiah's dream of bringing the Gospels to the unbelieving islands. His early journals revealed an interest in educating "heathen children both at home and abroad," leading him to the ABCFM school in Cornwall and the seminary a few days travel away. In February 1819, Bingham confided to his parents, "From one elevation I cast my eye over the earth and see three fourths of its inhabitants groping in pagan darkness and perishing without the knowledge of the Savior." Within six weeks of completing his coursework, Hiram wed Sybil Moseley, received his ordination, and embarked upon the *Thaddeus* as the head of the mission.²³

Others joined in the mission dealt with similarly fast-paced preparations. The Board refused to send unwed white missionaries, so any of the selected young men who had existing prospects for marriage had to find a mate in a hurry. Asa Thurston, one of Bingham's classmates, met Lucy Goodale, his potential bride and the cousin of yet another classmate, on September 23. They wed three weeks later. Samuel Ruggles married Nancy Wells on September 22 and his sister, Lucia, joined Thomas Holman, the mission doctor, four days later. Elisha Loomis, still 19 years old, and Maria Sartwell

²³ Zwiap, 11. Bingham, *Selected Writings*, 77, first quotation. Ibid., 81, second quotation.

joined each other on September 27. Finally, Samuel Whitney wed Mercy Partridge on October 4, exactly one month after receiving his invitation to join the mission. Dresses were cut, sermons readied, funds raised, and ceremonies performed at a pace few, if any, of the participants expected. The rapid pace of courtship and intense preparations required for the wedding and the ensuing voyage likely prevented much energy being spent on considering just what the newlyweds expected to find upon their arrival in their new home. Only one couple in the initial group sent to Hawaii knew each other as husband and wife for more than a month. That lone pair, Daniel and Jerusha Chamberlain, brought their five children along on the adventure. Interestingly, the marital requirement did not apply to the Hawaiian members. None of the four native men returning under the banner of the ABCFM had a wife. It is possible that the board considered it impossible for them to marry in New England, as the public did not tolerate inter-racial marriage. Another likely possibility is that the Congregationalist leadership encouraged marrying a native woman and strengthening the bonds between Christianity and the island culture.²⁴

The general education level and societal role of the ABCFM's first overseas delegation contrasted sharply with the LMS's first Pacific delegation. Whereas ordained ministers and college educated men and women made up the American group, the British selected only candidates from the lower social strata and possessing labor skills considered useful in an unknown region. The only "specialists" aboard the *Thaddeus* were Dr. Holman and Daniel Chamberlain, the mission farmer. Additionally, assignment to Hawaii necessitated marriage as the board felt unwed men might quickly succumb to

²⁴ Smith, 28-30.

local temptations, “going native” or otherwise abandoning their appointed role within the group in favor of some heathenish desire. In contrast, the *Duff*, the LMS owned ship, carried twenty-six skilled laborers—including six carpenters, two shoe makers, a cooper, a hatter, and a linen draper—and only six women as the men intended to take local brides, strengthening their ties to the community. The Chamberlains’ five children outnumbered the children of all the couples that sailed with the London-based commission. The British emphasis on lower class representatives led by a small number of clergy (four) highlights the different expectations and ideals. The LMS group intended to provide shelter and other necessary items for themselves; the American delegation intended to rely more upon the generosity of the locals for their survival. The *Duff* carried workingmen determined to lead by example while the *Thaddeus* carried families intent on educating the people.²⁵

The spiritual environment prompting the foundation of the ABCFM also differentiated it from earlier evangelical organizations. The Second Great Awakening brought a new theological emphasis into American religious life. Thomas Jefferson’s political victory and religious views combined with ministerial dissent from traditional Calvinist ideology to drive a wedge through New England congregations. As the itinerant preachers and circuit riders moved out of the Northeast, a new fervor gripped the citizenry of the young nation. The Arminian belief that all people could achieve Christian salvation regardless of background appended itself to the Calvinistic ideals of God’s universal sovereignty; atonement existed for all, not just the elect. Arminianism

²⁵ James Wilson, *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, Performed in the Years 1796, 1797, 1798, in the Ship Duff, Commanded by Captain James Wilson* (London; T. Chapman, 1799; reprinted New York: Fredrick A. Praeger, 1968), passim.

also taught that salvation existed only through God's benevolence and that individuals can knowingly reject spiritual redemption. These ideas filtered through eastern towns, reaching Andover, the nation's first dedicated school of theology, by 1812. Here, Bingham learned that no soul could be eternally lost to sin and vice so long as the soul's owner possessed the ability to change his ways and become 'born again.' Calvin's notion that God pre-selected Heaven's residents made missionary work futile; God already made his decision and man had no say in his own ultimate fate. The newly-emphasized Arminian theology encouraged the spreading of Christian ideals as each individual human held the ability to affect their own eternal destiny, the central belief that spurred the ABCFM to action.²⁶

²⁶ Harold Whitman Bradley, *The American Frontier in Hawaii: The Pioneers, 1789-1843* (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1942), 121. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Arminianism." <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01740c.htm>, accessed March 9, 2007. Richard D. Shiels, "The Scope of the Second Great Awakening: Andover, Massachusetts, as a Case Study," *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol.5, no.2 (Summer, 1985): 224-5.

Making Waves

On October 23, 1819, the seven couples, five children, and four Hawaiian men set out on a voyage that led to numerous situations none could expect. The voyage proved more demanding than any aboard expected, beginning with a launch delayed due to uncooperative weather. The company journal shows a hint of the excitement enjoyed by the mission family, stating, “. . . we go out a foreign land, not knowing the things that shall befall us there.” They did not have to wait long before unpleasant surprises began showing themselves. After a few days at sea, many of the missionaries confined themselves to their berths due to horrible seasickness; Hiram Bingham spent more than a month laid up, unable to perform the most routine duties because of his uneasiness. At times, the ship “appeared not unlike a hospital.” Basic human comfort became more important than first expected, as each couple had only a tiny six-foot by six-foot room for themselves and their belongings. Writing about the limitations imposed by the tight quarters, Lucy Thurston wrote “it might well be compared to a dungeon.” Simple wishes such as the desire to dine at regular times often collided with the needs of the ship, adding to the proselytizers sense that they needed to forego consistency in favor of practicality. Yet even the majority of the group met the strongest setbacks with cautious optimism. When the mid-November winds became uncooperative, the mission journal reads:

We cannot but conclude that he that controls the winds and waves, and conducts the affairs of nations, is either kindly withholding us from danger and disasters at Cape Horn, or operating changes in the Sandwich Isles favorable to the introduction and success of this enterprise. He is early inuring us to the hardship, and preparing us for the toils, of a

missionary life.²⁷

During the voyage, the first seeds of individual dissention appeared aboard the *Thaddeus*. The November 11, 1819, entry makes special mention of two items that contributed to the falling out between the Holmans and the rest of the company. Firstly, special mention is made of Thomas Holman's superintendence over the medical stores. As the company physician, this appears logical. Additionally, it is delineated that *all items* are to be held in common, only personal items such as clothing and hygiene products fell outside of this declaration. This set up a problematic juxtaposition as Holman *controlled* the medical supplies while they *belonged* to everybody. Initially, this appears harmless enough; everyone owns the supplies, but the most knowledgeable individual is in charge of their use. Later disagreements between the doctor and the mission family rooted themselves in this decision as Dr. Holman feared his authority being undermined. Additionally, Lucia Holman increasingly removed herself from the role of missionary wife, openly declaring mid-voyage that she felt that mission life did not suit her and making use of items she declared to be hers alone, against the declaration of the group's leaders.²⁸

Fortunately for the mental well being of the New Englanders, not all maritime surprises had unpleasant outcomes. Daniel Chamberlain wrote that his wife enjoyed the

²⁷ Journal of the mission, 3 October 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 1. Ibid., 23 October 1819, first quotation. Daniel Chamberlain's Journal Aboard the *Thaddeus*, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2. Ibid., 21 November 1819, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2, second quotation. Zwiép, 4, third quotation. Miller, *Selected Writings*, 147. Journal of the mission, 19 November 1819, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 1, fourth quotation. This entry is a curious premonition, possibly added to during the recopying process, but illustrates the consistently penitent thinking of the group's leadership.

²⁸ Journal of the mission, 16 November 1819, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 1.

voyage far more than she had expected to and declared that, knowing he was doing the Lord's work, he preferred to be in the ship more than at home. His children quickly adapted to life at sea, learning about the *Thaddeus's* operations. The crew supported the mission, aiding in what ways they could and allowing the transplanted preachers the run of the ship. The enthusiasm of the Hawaiian men among the group also helped keep spirits high, as did the growing familiarity of new husbands and wives.²⁹

The length of the voyage also provided a great deal of time for personal contemplation of what lay ahead and the missionaries began refining their expectations throughout the passage. Hiram Bingham embraced his role as a messenger of the Messiah, but held dark views about the natives he sought to save, referring to his quest as a journey into "Moloch's empire in the Sandwich Isles to plant the Rose of Sharon . . . in idolatrous Owhyhee." Judeo-Christian belief recalls Moloch as a heathen god of the Ammonites appeased only by child sacrifice, not a flattering—or accurate—perspective on the people he set out to enlighten. His dark view of the Hawaiians tinted his expectations with a bloody hue in anticipation of a potentially violent reception. Lucy Thurston also exhibited fears of an unpleasant, early end to her life. During a period of calm aboard the *Thaddeus*, she asked Captain Blanchard if the missionaries faced any risk of murder by the natives. Blanchard replied that the party remained safe of any injury, excepting the possibility of poisoning if a native detected some personal slight. Both Bingham and Thurston's concerns reveal material fears about Hawaii's indigenous population and its perceived propensity towards savagery. The American ideas of naked

²⁹ Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal, 27 December 1819, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2. Ibid., 21 November 1819, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2. Smith, 32-33.

pagans lost without the guidance of the Christian God colored the missionaries' expectations, but the examples of Thomas Hopoo and the other Hawaiians among their party—William Honolii, William Kanui, and Prince George Kaumualii—gave them hope that the islanders could be illuminated to the wrongness of their ways. Despite their best intentions and preparations, the mission family ultimately found itself inadequately mentally prepared for the establishment of a mission station. As the New Englanders steeled themselves for the unknown by learning as much as possible about their future home, Hawaii underwent enormous changes the missionaries had no way of predicting, highlighting the proselytizers' propensity to form expectations based on incorrect assumptions and information.³⁰

Hawaii possessed an active societal structure for hundreds of years before the United States existed as a nation. Polytheistic beliefs and practices, including human sacrifice, traveled with the earliest Polynesian settlers, adapting to each island as befit its inhabitants. Independent kingdoms arose on each island and Polynesian traders transferred ideas and goods between shores. Far from being the backward, uneducated heathens imagined by the “civilized” world, Hawaiians held a firm grasp on the knowledge considered important to surviving in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Boat building, tropical agriculture, weapon making, and other vital know-how meshed with

³⁰ Bingham, *Selected Writings*, 158, first Quotation. *Zondervan's Compact Bible Dictionary* (1993), s.v. “Moloch, Molech.” Lucy G. Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston, Wife of Rev. Asa Thurston, Pioneer Missionary to the Sandwich Islands, Gathered from Letters and Journals Extending Over a Period of More Than Fifty Years, 2nd Edition* (Ann Arbor Michigan: S.C. Andrews, 1882; reprint, 1921), 24, second quotation.

social awareness and ideologies enforced by regional chief-kings to create a rich culture capable of succeeding on its own terms.

Foreign traders appeared shortly after Cook's men returned to England in 1779 with tales of the wealth ripe and ready for the taking. Sandalwood merchants set up shop in the area, as did general merchants supplying goods and offering repairs to ships passing between Asia and the Americas. Within a remarkably short time, Hawaiian society adapted to the foreign presence, going so far as to turn Europeans into pawns in inter-island conflicts as outside knowledge filtered into the islands, providing new ways for the Hawaiian rulers to gain and hold power. One of these local kings, Kamehameha of Hawai'i, carefully cultivated partnerships with European emissaries, seeking their aid in his attempt to conquer the island. The archipelago had a long history of bloody successionary wars, one of which enveloped and killed Henry Obookiah's family, so Kamehameha's unification of the easternmost island is not surprising, but his designs on ruling the rest of the islands was unprecedented in Hawaiian history. Kamehameha convinced Royal Navy officer George Vancouver to provide a modest number of weapons, ostensibly for defensive purposes, along with a small ship, the *Britannia*. Through superior manpower, British materiel support, the assistance of select European captives, and the exploitation of disruptions caused by the frequent successionary wars, Kamehameha suppressed his rivals and commanded control of the Hawaiian Islands by 1810.³¹

Along with unified rule came unified beliefs and customs. Hawaii's polytheistic religion, already dominant throughout the islands, solidified as Kamehameha made

³¹ K R Howe, *Where the Waves Fall* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 157. Porteus, 53.

proclamations affecting the entire population, not just those on Hawai'i. The *kapu*, or prohibition, system allowed the king to regulate daily life by disallowing actions deemed harmful for whatever reason. Hawaiian leaders and priests succeeded in impregnating the importance of following the kapu into native society to such a degree that the populace accepted the high level instructions without debate. The heart of the kapu stemmed from religious proclamations, such as those declaring men's meals as interaction with the divine, thus preventing intersexual dining. The whim of the king often dictated specific kapus, such as banning all sandalwood harvesting and sale without the king's authority, ensuring that Kamehameha alone reaped the enormous profits from the lucrative trade in order to fund his military needs. In many instances, the violation of the kapu resulted in the death of the offender.³²

In early May of 1819, Kamehameha journeyed into the afterlife. Two weeks after the *Thaddeus* set sail, his son Liholiho (Kamehameha II), acting in concert with Kaahumanu, the most powerful of his father's wives, declared an end to the kapu system, beginning with lifting the ban on dining in mixed company. Since Cook's arrival, Hawaiians witnessed the routine breaking of kapus aboard visiting ships, seemingly without any divine retribution. Additionally, the kapu demanding segregated dining placed the burden on men to prepare their own food, as anything prepared by women would be unclean and unfit for the gods. Releasing this limitation freed men, especially the new king, from their strict domestic bonds as men could now put the responsibility of food preparation wholly on the women. Conversely, kapus kept women from attaining

³² Olive Wyndette, *Islands of Destiny: A History of Hawaii* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1968), 75. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, 9. Edward Joesting, *Hawaii: An Uncommon History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), 15.

the same levels of power and respect as men, inspiring Kaahumanu's interest in their elimination. Liholiho's first meal among his wives and close associates ended pleasantly, not in the rain of purifying fire expected by some of his subjects. Seeing their leader emerge from his meal unscathed, a great cry went up among the people declaring the gods to be a lie and the kapus destroyed. The high priest, in a move uncharacteristic for an established holy man, led a mob in the destruction of idols and sacred structures around Kailua on Hawai'i. The beliefs leading to the death of Captain Cook and restricting the actions of the populace no longer ruled the land. This fundamental shift left the native society in a sort of religious vacuum; the old religion no longer held the same social influence, and no new system arose to take its place. Political opposition briefly rose up but Prime Minister Kalanimoku quickly dispatched the would-be rebellion. Just as Hawaii's political structure began to stabilize, its spiritual structure began to crumble.³³

One tradition survived military conquest and religious upheaval intact: the Hula. More than the *Hula 'Auana* (Modern Hula) enjoyed by modern tourists, Ancient Hula carried an air of supernatural eroticism, a joining of gods and humans. Combining erotic poetry with specific body movements, Hula created a religious connection between spirituality and sexuality in a visceral way guaranteed to arouse both gods and men. The survival of the Hula allowed for a small degree of continuity in a time of great change and became a source of continual condemnation from outsiders for decades to come.

³³ Ibid., 67. Ruth Tabrah, *Hawaii: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 35. William H. Chickering, *Within the Sounds of These Waves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941; reprinted Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), 307. Porteus, 58.

Even as its religious meaning dissolved over time, the activity remained a reminder of how things once were and the importance of basic human pleasures.³⁴

Awareness of relatively recent changes in Hawaii's political and religious institutions is vital to understanding the socio-political environment that greeted the missionaries. While united in name upon the Americans' arrival in 1820, independent ideals of governance and organized pockets of the old religion still lingered throughout the islands. Kamehameha forced his rule into every corner of the archipelago, but a handful of subservient chiefs held on to memories of their lost sovereignty, waiting for a weaker king to loose the reins of control. The centuries old religion, dismissed by a young king more interested in his own motives than those of the unseen gods, withered, but did not completely die. The dualities of chiefs and king, gods and irreligious ruler, created a confusing new situation the missionaries could not have predicted under the best circumstances, let alone while huddling on the deck of a wind-tossed ship. Arrival in Kawaihae instantly confirmed many missionary fears and raised several unexpected problems as the Christians learned of Hawaii's new situation.

³⁴ Ibid., 15, 116.

Contact and Shock

The mission company reached sight of Hawaii on March 30, 1820, after 163 days of seaborne difficulties. The day's journal entry states that the *Thaddeus* pulled "so near the shore as to see . . . with the help of a glass men and women immortal beings, purchased with redeeming blood." Additional surveillance recorded "the walls of an ancient Moreah, or heathen temple appears, where the sacrifices of abomination have long been offered to Mamons." This entry lays bare both of the mission's largest concerns: future salvation and present damnation. The mention of Christ's "redeeming blood" reflects the Arminian ideals held by the preacher. Belief in Christ's divinity naturally led to a just and pure life, ending in admission into Heaven. Mention of abomination (any religiously heinous act in Biblical thought) and Mammon (a demonic personification of greed) reveals the missionaries' belief that the unsaved and unrepentant were evil, not just ignorant. None of the New Englanders had first-hand experience with Hawaiian practices; they only knew what their instructors—none of whom had visited Hawaii—claimed to be true. Obookiah's influential memoirs told of a place where children could be "cruelly destroyed" and gave the impression that Hawaii was a truly corrupt and barbaric place. The expectation of needing to wrest spiritual control from the ancient gods' firmly entrenched kapu system deeply affected the plans and aspirations of the American proselytizers.³⁵

³⁵ Journal of the mission, 30 March 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 9, first and second quotations. *Zondervan's Compact Bible Dictionary* (1993), s.v. "Abomination of desolation." *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Mammon." <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580b.htm>, accessed October 31, 2006. Dwight, 1, third quotation.

Discovery of the upheaval of the indigenous belief system and the coronation of a new king both encouraged and perplexed the new arrivals, who scrambled to find a suitable explanation for the timing of the events. Unlike most visiting ships, the *Thaddeus* did not immediately encounter swarms of canoes filled with foods and supplies to trade, leading those aboard the ship to determine it must be a time of kapu. The first group ashore, including Hopoo and Honolii, found that Liholiho's ascension rendered the kapus null and void, a discovery met with sadness that the opportunity to convert the great Hawaiian unifier had slipped away. The next morning brought the opposite scenario: great numbers of curious natives rowed out to the ship, eager to trade and reconnoiter the new arrival in the harbor. The swarm of canoes and islanders, a familiar sight to the sandalwood merchants, surprised the mission group, leading Hiram Bingham to record:

Their manoeuvres in their canoes, some being propelled by short paddles, and some by small sails, attracted the attention of our little group, and for a moment, gratified curiosity; but 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, was appalling.

Bingham's gut response to his first encounter with the islanders on their terms reveals much of the leader's mindset; initial fascination quickly turned to revulsion. The minister felt the peoples' appearance reflected their nature, not their surroundings. American concepts of poverty and modesty, projected onto the approaching crowd, created an immensely negative impression on the visitor. Rather than considering the Hawaiians as potential students of the Word, he reviled them as subhuman. Bingham's prejudices

flared boldly, setting the tone for the mission family's early impressions of the Hawaiian people.³⁶

The sudden crowding of the decks with dark-skinned islanders rattled the mission family, who had no concept of how to react to individuals lacking any meaningful concept of New England politesse. Fascination quickly gave way to concern about the natives' ability to achieve Christian salvation; the people filling the ship did not fit the image they had in mind when the *Thaddeus* left port. Bingham's recollections display an unwavering affirmation of duty, but his implication that others wondered, "Can such beings be civilized? Can they be Christianized?" belies his own concerns, however fleeting. American optimism gained small reinforcement when a few of the islanders responded to missionary queries about Christianity with a positive statement that Liholiho had made mention of it in the past, though the context of his remarks is not recorded. This discovery provided little immediate comfort for Sybil Bingham who, distraught at the men's lack of clothing, ran to her cabin to cry; her personal morality, molded by New England norms of behavior and Christian dictums, did not allow for such public displays of one's body. Eager imaginings about the first contact between themselves and the "noble savages" created a false impression of Hawaii's inhabitants in the missionaries' minds. Reality and expectation collided and, much to the surprised chagrin of the missionaries, reality triumphed over the Americans' incorrect assumptions.³⁷

³⁶ Journal of the mission, 30 March 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 9. Bingham, *Residence*, 82.

³⁷ Journal of the mission, 30-31 March 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 9. Bingham, *Residence*, 81, quotation. Grimshaw, 26.

At this time, the mission accounts clearly show that the missionaries held powerful yet erroneous expectations of what they would find. The examples of Hopoo, Honolii, and Kanui reminded them that individual Hawaiians could embrace a strange, new religion and way of life, but the islanders in their own element seemed altogether different. It is likely that the ABCFM delegates imagined the native Hawaiians to behave similarly to those enrolled in the Massachusetts mission school, as those students represented the only real contact any of the missionaries had with Pacific islanders. The 19th century proselytizers unintentionally characterized an entire society from a combination of working with a small group far from home and the stories of brutality highlighted in Obookiah's memoirs. This image contrasted sharply with reality, causing some members of the mission to reevaluate their chances of success and experience an exaggerated form of contact shock, the initial surprise felt upon encountering unusual peoples and circumstances.

Earlier missionaries in the Pacific faced the same problem correlating their ideals and the native reality. The first English mission to the South Pacific, a region of great fascination since the publication of Cook's journal, did not go as smoothly as some members of that mission expected. One of the first two men set ashore by the LMS ended his stay after only two days, as the facts of his situation differed too greatly from his expectation. John Harris disembarked from the *Duff* in the Marquesas in June of 1797, reticent to leave the secure, familiar confines of the ship. Harris' concerns became real when all of his belongings were stolen during his first night ashore. In a goodwill gesture spurred by the loss, the local chief offered the company of his wife for the missionary's pleasure on his second night in the village. The Englishman declined,

firmly and repeatedly, before retiring for the night. Confused at the man's refusal of her company, the chief's wife collected a few of the other women in the village, determined to investigate his sex and convinced no normal male could decline her companionship. They entered into the hut where he slept and began examining him. Upon waking, the scandalized Harris bolted out of the hut and spent the rest of the night sitting on the beach, waiting for the *Duff's* boat to come and take him off the island. The traumatized man remained aboard the ship until it returned to London several months later.³⁸

Fortunately for all involved, the American company fared much better in their first few days among the Hawaiians than Harris did in the Marquesas. The revelations of the first day and the shock of the second day's throng of islanders caught the missionaries off guard, but did not bring on widespread dread or despair, only moderately increased concern. Further adventures ashore improved perceptions as the local high priest showed the Christian preachers the remains of a place once sacred to one of the island's gods. According to Lucy Thurston, the new bride of Asa Thurston, the priest treated the reverends as brothers, a far different welcome than the wholesale theft encountered by Harris twenty-three years earlier. There is no implication that the mission family felt any danger during their first native encounters, only a mild discomfort owing to the situation being so different than expected.³⁹

³⁸ Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 99. John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 15.

³⁹ Lucy G. Thurston, *Life and Times of Mrs. Lucy G. Thurston, Wife of Rev. Asa Thurston, Pioneer Missionary to the Sandwich Isles, Gathered from Letters and Journals Extending Over a Period of More Than Fifty Years. Selected and Arranged by Herself* (Ann Arbor, Michigan; S.C. Andrews, 1882; 2nd ed., 1921.), 28.

The first interaction between the mission and members of the Hawaiian nobility—called *ali'i*, both singularly and in plural—came on April Fools Day, quickly shaking some of the New Englanders' notions of Hawaii's idolatrous heathen culture. As the mission vessel sailed abreast of Kawaihae, near present day Hilo, the regional chief and Prime Minister of the kingdom, Kalanimoku, and two of his queens came on board the *Thaddeus* to greet the new arrivals. Rowed out by more than a dozen strong men, and shaded with a Chinese parasol and plumage-tipped poles signifying their noble rank, the Hawaiian delegation made a strikingly different impression on the newly arrived Americans than had their subjects the day before. Bingham stated, "Their tall, portly, ponderous appearance seemed to indicate a different race from those who had visited the vessel before, or a decided superiority of the nobility over the peasantry," while Nancy Ruggles thought them "monstrous" in size. Lucy Thurston wrote of Kalanimoku, known to the whites in the islands as Billy Pitt, "In dress and manner he appeared with the dignity of a man of culture." Expectations swung wildly about, trying to align with the witnessed realities. In the Americans' minds, the dignity of the *ali'i* clashed with the baseness of the people, leaving the missionaries to wonder which represented the "real" Hawaii as, in their minds, Hawaiian society should exist as a single, simplistic entity. The proselytizers' ideas recorded in the first few days show the internal conflicts that arose when preconceptions met with a situation far different from their expectations.⁴⁰

The role of women in Hawaiian society became the biggest initial source of surprise within the mission family. Early nineteenth century America maintained the patriarchal mindset prevalent since the arrival of the first Europeans in North America.

⁴⁰ Bingham, *Residence*, 81-82, first quotation. Zwiép, 63, second quotation. Thurston, 30, third quotation.

Men led public life, men led private life, and men led spiritual life. Dissent from this mold occasionally appeared, but the Capital, the boardroom, and the pulpit remained the dominion of those possessing a Y chromosome. The Hawaiian power structure, like that of many North American tribes, allowed women to hold great power in native society. While not matrilineal like the Iroquois and Cherokee, the Hawaiian social structure granted women the ability to hold political power equal to any man in the islands. Unused to dealing with powerful women, the missionaries had to rethink their intent of focusing their conversion efforts on male rulers.⁴¹

This reevaluation began before the first missionaries unloaded their supplies onto the beach. Kalanimoku's two wives, and two of Kamehameha's widows, came aboard during the *Thaddeus's* third day in Kawaihae. Initially impressed by the chief's appearance and hospitality, the missionaries paid little attention to the women. When the mission leaders gained an audience with King Liholiho after sailing to Kailua on April 4, they noted that four of his queens nonchalantly played cards in the corner while a fifth fanned the Hawaiian sovereign. After listening to the American request to introduce Christian teaching in his kingdom, Liholiho consented to think it over after consulting with Kaahumanu, the queen regent. Without her approval, the mission faced the prospect of returning to Boston and reporting instantaneous failure. In his memoirs, Hiram Bingham recorded, "At this time, we had not the means of knowing fully the standing and influence of Kaahumanu, and perhaps lost time and opportunities on that account; but we soon learned to appreciate her importance in the nation." Kaahumanu returned to the court on April 10 and the king made his decision within hours of her arrival. Liholiho

⁴¹ Lee Sultzman, *Iroquois History*. <http://www.tolatsga.org/iro.html>. Accessed October 29, 2006.

decided to grant the mission a one-year test period, after which he would reevaluate their claims and decide to extend their stay or ask them to leave. Additionally, he forbade the mission from sending for reinforcements.⁴²

The protracted royal deliberation not only demonstrated the importance of women in Hawaiian society and government, it also highlighted the unexpected utility of the missionary wives. Royal advisors informed the king of rumors that the Americans came to conquer, not convert, and that if given a foothold they would turn the kingdom into a colony. Liholiho sought reassurance that the missionaries' plan to take up residency on Oahu and Hawai'i did not include any military facet, as reported by some of his advisors. Bingham assured the king that his group only sought to bring religion, not conquest, and that they determined locations remote from the king would prevent any potential embarrassment falling upon his highness. The missionaries' lack of firearms surely helped their argument, as did the presence of American women; after all, who would endanger their women by intentionally placing them in the line of fire? Lucia Holman wrote, "I believe the females of the 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." Due to the leadership roles played by women in island society, it is likely that the Hawaiians granted power to the white women denied to them by their husbands. While the American women took on important roles early in the mission's tenure, their influence within the group eventually waned as they focused on raising their children and as their husbands' increased their own familiarity with local customs and language. The

⁴² Bingham, *Residence*, 81, 87. Grimshaw, 27. Journal of the mission, 10 April 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 13. Smith, 42.

foreign women lost much of the power they briefly held, but they remained objects of fascination among the native peoples.⁴³

Mission wives reacted more strongly to surprises than did their husbands. This difference stemmed not from feminine weakness or better preparation on the part of the men, but from the native treatment of the female newcomers. Caucasian men began routinely visiting Hawaii more than thirty years before the ABCFM arrived in the archipelago. Beginning with the China-bound *King George* and *Queen Charlotte* in May of 1786, more than 120 different European, American, and Russian crews anchored in the many available harbors along the island coasts. Some ships hauled cargo, others made war, but few, if any, carried women onboard. This made the mission wives particularly fascinating to the natives, most of whom had never seen white women before. Crowds routinely formed wherever the American women went as curious observers contemplated their impractical dress—long sleeves and petticoats made little sense in the tropics—and watched as they went about their daily chores. The newly arrived men focused on the spiritual corruption of the people and dealt with the king and his chiefs. Their wives faced the daily challenges of running a household in an unfamiliar land, under constant observation by the common people. Numerous shocks and challenges to Protestant, New England preconceptions shaped the lives of the entire mission family, but the wives faced the stiffest challenges to their notions of normalcy.⁴⁴

⁴³ Journal of the mission, 8 April 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 11. The missionaries suspected that American merchants conspired to keep Christianity out of the islands as it might damage their business interests. Grimshaw, 30, quotation. Bradley, 126.

⁴⁴ Judd, 1-17.

Aside from the women's unforeseen roles in both societies, the islanders' morality also challenged the evangelicals' ideals. The decades of cultural interaction with white sailors left an enormous imprint on the islanders. Cook's little trinkets of iron evolved into a complex trade system focused on transferring goods to, and between, America and Asia. Bingham and his followers noted, disdainfully, that immoral behaviors made up the majority of ideas imported from the foreigners. Hawaiian morality did not line up with Christian codes even before the first outsiders appeared. Overt sexuality did not offend the Hawaiians; rather, they celebrated sexual displays and encouraged adventurous explorations. Many of the ruling class received instruction in intercourse, an appalling concept to those who brought the Word. Several noteworthy chiefs actively practiced bisexuality and polygamy. This freedom extended to trade between lower class women offering sex in exchange for goods from visiting sailors. Cook's men rejoiced in the company of Hawaiian women, as did successive crews who put in to port throughout the region. The sexual trade ensured goods desired by the islanders reached the shore and kept the sailors in good spirits. Unfortunately for the natives, venereal disease entered alongside tools, feathers, and cloth.⁴⁵

Men isolated at sea, locked in a homosocial environment for months at a time, developed strong sexual appetites. Much like in the gold rush camps that sprung up in California in the 1850s, sailors aboard merchant ships—and vessels of a more nefarious nature—engaged in any manner of acts to satisfy their sexual wants; some brought women aboard to help pass the time, others engaged in homosexual relations, referred to as the “boom cover trade,” with their shipmates. Native women stood to gain plenty

⁴⁵ Sahlins, *Islands of History*, 10.

from foreign men starved for sexual attention from the opposite sex. Since the majority of ships' crews had little interest in homosexual encounters in the presence of women, they needed something to present the male half of the island population. Alcohol, specifically rum, proved a successful surrogate and created the second, and most criticized, failing in the missionaries' eyes: alcoholism. The mission journal includes numerous references to the king's addiction to spirits and condemnation of the ship captains who actively encouraged Liholiho's drinking habit. An entry recorded only six days after the mission gained royal sanction mourned "it is a grief to see that most white men who have intersection with the people are in league with the 'enemy of all righteousness.'"⁴⁶

Despite the ABCFM's pre-voyage decision to minister to two different islands, anxieties rose when the time came for the party to split. Liholiho insisted that the doctor and one of the preachers remain with him in Kailua while the rest sailed on to Honolulu. Despite the rift between the physician and the other couples in the group, three pregnant women aboard the *Thaddeus* expressed great concern over the loss of Thomas Holman's services. Sybil Bingham encouraged the others still on board by reminding them, "GOD will be our physician." Debate arose whether the Bingham or the Thurstons should stay with the court, neither enamored of remaining with the increasingly reticent Holmans. The party decided Asa Thurston should stay, along with Hopoo and Kanui, both of whom had entered the service of the king as translators. Lucy Thurston declared her new home "the land of pilgrims and strangers . . . dry and barren as the Arabian deserts." Dividing the party also meant dividing the supplies, raising the potential for the missionaries to

⁴⁶ Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000), 173. Journal of the mission, 16 April 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 14.

encounter shortages of essentials such as flour and cloth. The possibility of localized shortages increased with division, especially as mission families grew; a family of four needed more food and cloth than did a couple without children. All of the medical supplies remained with Holman in Kailua, further raising tension between the doctor and the rest of the group.⁴⁷

The first days after arrival filled up with surprising new sources of anxiety. Liholiho's abolition of the existing religion created a void for the missionaries to fill, but they had trained to deal with an existing belief system, not the empty space left by the proclamations and predilections of a king enjoying his new lack of constraint. His insistence on the advice of Kaahumanu perplexed the newcomers accustomed to a male-dominated way of life. Native morality—or immorality, depending on perspective—caused the missionaries to bristle and shook their belief in the Hawaiians' ability to learn the Gospel. It is difficult to integrate successfully new social and ethical ideals into an established culture sharing a common language with the proselytizers. Influencing the pillars of a society with a pre-literate education and a different spoken language is far more difficult. Adding to the unplanned difficulties, contrary influences from established traders and foreign sailors threatened to prevent successful new teachings from taking root and enduring outside of the classroom. Separation and dissention within the group made an uncomfortable situation seem perilous. All of these factors required the New Englanders to realign radically their expectations of quick success, especially as internal conflicts combined with external difficulties, threatening to overwhelm the entire project.

⁴⁷ Bingham, *Residence*, 91. Smith, 42. Grimshaw, 31, quotations.

Culture Crash

Numerous unexpected situations and the resulting difficulties taxed the nerves of the visitors unfamiliar with the native culture and surroundings. Unforeseen annoyances began picking at the missionaries the first night the Thurstons and Holmans spent in their new home. In his recollections, Hiram Bingham described the house Liholiho provided for them:

A small thatched hut was by the king's order appropriated for their accommodation, if such a frail hut, 3½ feet high at the foot of the rafters, without flooring, ceiling, windows, or furniture, infested with vermin, in the midst of a noisy, filthy, heathen village, can be said to be for the *accommodation* of two families just exiled from one of the happiest countries in the world.

Bingham's words echoed the mindset of the mission family. Only uncivilized people lived in such conditions, not respectable men and women. The mission leader's description also gives more insight into preconceptions carried along from America. "Proper" houses did not have the same characteristics as the Hawaiian hut, aiding the argument that the Hawaiians were not as civilized as the visitors. That the king selected this seemingly inferior hut for his guests supported their ideas that he did not possess full understanding of the importance of his probationary guests. The New Englanders felt themselves deserving of treatment as esteemed teachers, not lowly peons worthy of only a dingy hut; messengers of God and deliverers of eternal salvation surely deserved better, especially those from such a young, important nation. In actuality, the king provided the mission with one of the largest huts in the village, a fact the missionaries failed to appreciate due to their own cultural expectations. Liholiho provided sentries to keep curious Hawaiians away from the hut and permit the missionaries a chance to rest

comfortably during their first night on land. Unfortunately, the king's soldiers remained helpless against the most sleep-stealing intruders in the islands. Lucy Thurston recorded, "There was a secret enemy whose name was legion lying in ambush; or rather we had usurped their rights and taken possession of their own citadel. It was the *flea*." The impression made that first night did not bode well for the remainder of the group's stay.⁴⁸

The days immediately following disembarkation brought the situation more into line with expectations but also created new surprises. Queen Kamamalu donated two Chinese four-poster beds and Liholiho donated a dining table for the couples to use during their stay in the hut. After Asa and Thomas hauled all of their imported effects outside, the families thoroughly cleaned their home, replacing all of the straw mats and sweeping both the ceiling and the floor. Lucy and Lucia trimmed the beds with small curtains and hung additional fabric between the bedposts and the walls, providing a much-desired sense of privacy, if only in a small area. This division also set the stage for future debate about the proper usage of items held in common; private, cordoned off spaces made it easy to keep selected items, such as luxuries brought from home, to oneself or raise suspicions about activities carried on out of public view.⁴⁹

In addition to the fleas, dirt, and lack of furniture, the missionaries stationed with the king found it difficult to establish any sort of daily routine as Liholiho's queens stopped in several times a day to visit, accompanied by their attendants and escorts. Lucy Thurman wrote that she and Lucia Holman were "Marys" in the presence of the visiting queens, and "Marthas" when left alone, references to the New Testament sisters that

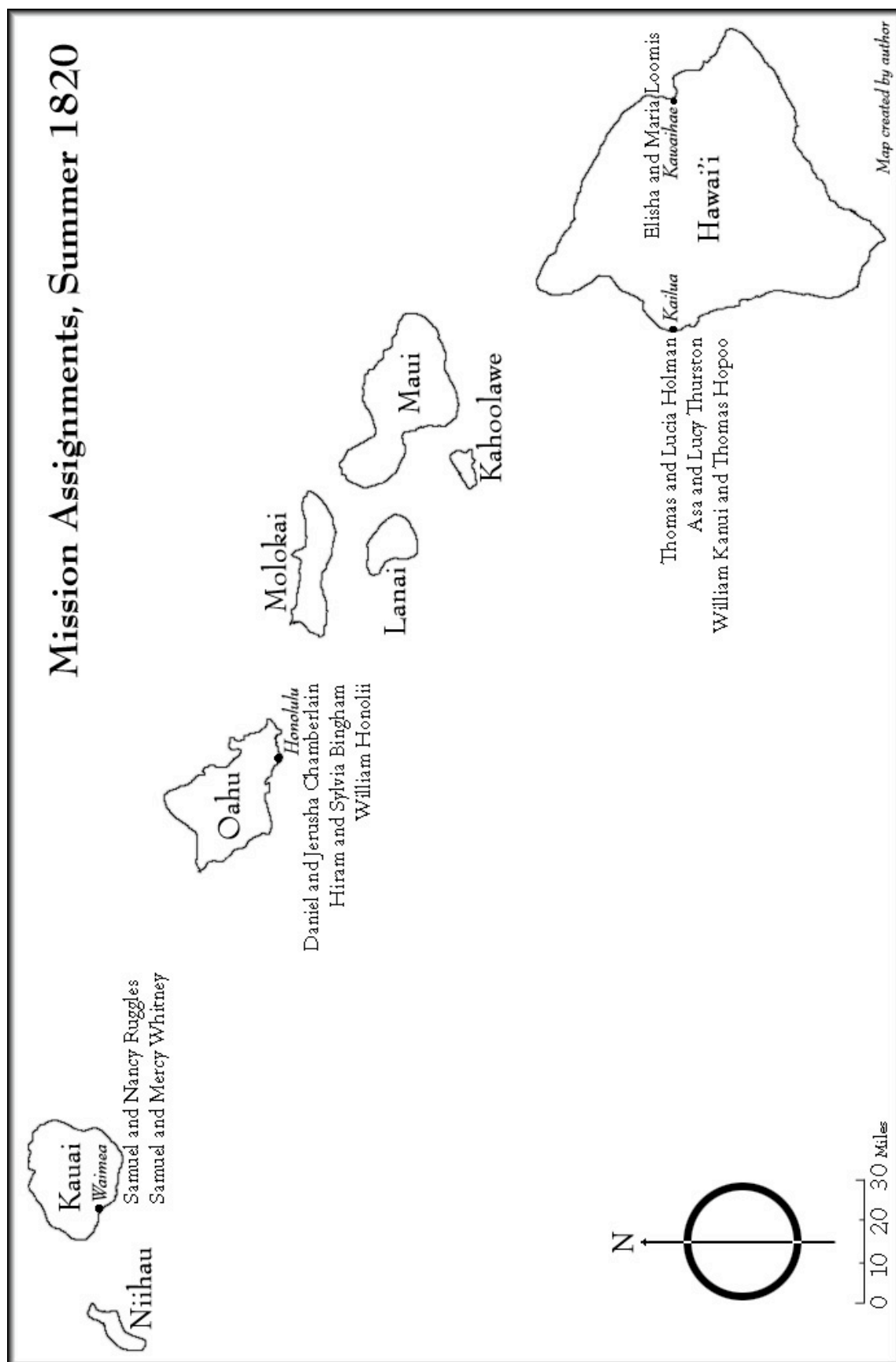
⁴⁸ Bingham, *Residence*, 91, first quotation. Thurston, 37, second quotation.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 38-39. Despite the instruction that all items be held in common, the Thurston family kept the table for many years after ending their mission work.

aided Jesus. This curious remark presents a reminder of spiritual mindfulness while neatly delineating the two roles missionary women played: contemplative observers and fastidious homemakers. In Christian theology, Mary often appears as a symbol of spirituality and scholarship with Martha acting as the embodiment of hospitable preoccupation. In Lucy's reflection, Mary represented the wives' steadfast scholarship and religious witness while Martha reflected their intense desire to keep their home in a familiar New England manner. When the queens visited, Lucy and Lucia gave them their full attention and listened to them as they read. If left alone to tend to their own needs, the American women did their best to physically transform their situation into a more familiar arrangement.⁵⁰

The majority of the mission who pressed on to Oahu faced their own unexpected findings. The first day in Honolulu marked the beginning of two key struggles that lasted throughout the mission's tenure: opposition to alcohol and to the influence of the white merchants and sailors interspersed throughout the islands. Like their proselytizing brethren working in the Ohio country in the 18th century, the missionaries found rum intricately tied to trade, pushed by the white merchants who sought every possible advantage. Daniel Chamberlain's first journal entry written in Honolulu reveals concerns

⁵⁰ Thurston, 39. Zwiép, 199. Mary and Martha, the biblical sisters of Lazarus, hosted Jesus in their home one evening. In the book of Luke, Mary sat with him and listened to his discussions, leaving Martha to take care of the cooking, cleaning, and other preparations. In the book of John, Martha takes the initiative to seek out Jesus to raise their dead brother while Mary later anointed Jesus' feet. Numerous painters, including Vermeer and Tintoretto, illustrated these scenes, highlighting the importance of women in the life of Christ, an idea not lost on the women of the ABCFM. James E. Kiefer, *Mary and Martha of Bethany*. <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/213.html>. Accessed November 20, 2006. United Methodist Women, *Mary & Martha: Friends of Jesus*. <http://gbgm-umc.org/UMW/jesusandwomen/marymartha.stm>. Accessed November 20, 2006.



about the royalty's interests in gambling, drinking, lewd behavior, and other imported vices. Boki, chief of the island of Oahu, made his first appearance to the missionaries while drunk, forcing the visitors, and the *Thaddeus*'s increasingly eager to depart captain, to wait an additional day before asking his permission to unload their belongings. Chiefly drunkenness, while frowned upon, did not surprise the Americans; Bingham seemed almost to expect it due to his continually plummeting view of the Hawaiians. The proselytizers' surprise related more strongly to the source of the vices than to the evils themselves. The station journal reports, "it is a grief to see that most white men who have intersection with the people are in league with the 'enemy of all righteousness,'" reflecting the tendency of European and American merchants and sailors to consider morality less important than fulfillment of their own desires. If those desires required the social lubrication of alcohol or the company of a Hawaiian woman in their bunks, the foreigners did what they deemed necessary to fulfill their wishes. The missionaries found this policy almost as vile as the native willingness to aid the whites in their quests for profit and vice. Again, the mention of Satan as the ultimate source of blame shows the missionaries' predilection towards considering Hawaii a beautiful sanctuary of real evil, not a place solely molded by the influence of men. Early differences of opinion foreshadowed decades of conflict between the missionaries and merchants who vied for power in the Pacific.⁵¹

⁵¹ Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal, 15-16 April 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v1, 118 / 2. Peter C. Mancall, "Men, Women, and Alcohol in Indian Villages in the Great Lakes Region in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol.15, no.3 (Autumn 1995): 425-448, 430. Journal of the mission, 16 April 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 14.

Not all whites in the islands fell under the Devil's control as a helpful few actively aided the mission. Unlike in Kailua, where Liholiho granted a house to the mission family, the Honolulu residents sheltered in structures loaned to them by Mssrs. Winship, Lewis, and Navarro, three foreign merchants operating from Oahu's primary harbor. Unfortunately, even this blessing fed increasingly negative views of the locals. While the new inhabitants inspected one of their proposed homes, a curious native stole the key out of the door lock. Local inability to find, or indifference towards, the thief added to the missionaries' belief that they should simply expect such actions from so base a people, an unfair opinion held for many years.⁵²

Other missionary complaints arose from the still-glowing ashes of Hawaii's native religion. Many people continued to live as they had before Liholiho wiped the spiritual slate clean and activities sanctioned under the old gods remained common after the king declared the kapu system over. Men and women now dined together, but they also participated in other activities that the Christians could not tolerate. The unabashed sexuality of the people brought about great discomfort and condemnation among the mission family, who wrote,

Tho the people have abolished their idols they have not abandoned their vices. To the stranger who enters their habitations of ignorance and depravity—as a token of respect or for the sake of gain, the husband offers his wife, the father the daughter and the brother his sister!

When the ministers admonished the natives for this practice, the Hawaiians replied, “Other white men tell us this is right—but you are strange white men.” Again, the blame falls on other “civilized” people actively corrupting the islanders already labeled wicked.

⁵² Bingham, *Residence*, 95.

The battle over sexual propriety raged for several years as the mission attempted to counter the Hawaiians' deeply entrenched moral flexibilities.⁵³

In Kailua, Lucy Thurston became the unwitting fulcrum of the conflicting sexual ideals. One afternoon, while teaching one of Liholiho's sons, a former priest appeared in her yard, deliriously intoxicated. Upon seeing the priest and fearing his position of power, the prince and the numerous observing villagers fled the area. After admitting himself to her home and languidly rolling about on her bed, the old priest pursued the startled woman around the room, out of the house, and back into the house, finally driving her into a corner. Not interested in permitting his sexual advances to continue, Thurston picked up a large stick propped in the corner and delivered a swift, sharp blow to the man's arm. As her assailant stepped back, smarting from the unexpected counterattack, the woman sprinted out of the house towards the king's residence, seeking her husband's aid. The prince had already delivered news of the situation and Asa Thurston met her along the path. Together they returned to the house, along with several queens and the prince, to set things straight. When the priest reappeared in the yard a few minutes after their arrival, the assembled company ordered him to leave. Tired of the man's rebukes, Rev. Thurston took it upon himself to forcibly remove the man into Liholiho's custody. Lucy Thurston later recalled that only her husband's direct intervention prevented the king from ordering the priest's execution, further delineating her contrasting images of the civilized Americans and the heathen Hawaiians.⁵⁴

⁵³ Journal of the mission, 28 June 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 20. Underlining in original.

⁵⁴ Thurston, 51. Thurston, Mrs. L. G., Extracts from journal, 21 September 1820, ABCFM Archive, ABC 19.1 v.1, 202.

This event marked a major shift in official Hawaiian attitudes towards the missionaries. Public belief in the supremacy of the indigenous priests faltered as they witnessed the removal of the holy man from the house. While the prince ran to get help, the rest of the observers had fled in fear of the priest's powers. The royal refutation of these powers solidified among the people as they witnessed the victory of royal muscle over priestly rank. Royal support of the newcomers also manifested itself in this event. Rather than attempt to save face by excusing away the lustful advances of a drunken old man, the ruling class acknowledged his actions as part of the outdated system and made it clear that the Christians held more worth to them than the old priesthood. The incident also showed the capability of the missionaries to defend themselves from assault, if not trespassing. Lucy Thurston's later reflection on the event concluded that she was the first and last missionary wife accosted by a Hawaiian, reinforcing the legitimacy and power of the shift in royal concerns as well as the respect afforded to the New England women.⁵⁵

Unfortunately, not everyone in the company resisted native overtures as easily as the minister's wife. Modern pop-culture imagines Hawaii as an oasis of freedom, where ways of life are different from the rest of the nation. A similar mindset existed in the early nineteenth century as sailors left their cultural inhibitions in their homeports. William Kanui, called Tennooe in the mission journal, did not face an abrupt assault on his ideals of decency like Thurston; rather he faced the difficulty of being a young man on an island filled with temptations. Concerns within the group arose before arrival in Kailua as Kanui failed to attend shipboard worship services and neglected his religious studies in favor of reveling with the *Thaddeus*'s crew. Unlike the whites sent into the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

field, Kanui did not have a wife and thus lacked an outlet for his sexual desires consistent with the moral teachings of his New England schooling, teachings he quickly abandoned. Once ashore, Kanui left the mission for long stretches of time, neglecting to account for his whereabouts during his absences.⁵⁶

In mid-July, less than four months after arrival, the mission leadership summoned the re-transplanted young man to make an accounting of himself and repent of his heathenish actions. Kanui did so, but immediately resumed the activities that led to his censure. On July 21, the group decided to formally reprimand William Kanui, declaring him “repeatedly guilty of intoxication . . . spending the day in the open commission of intolerable sin.” The mission leaders saw excommunication as the only suitable recourse and removed him from “the communion and fellowship of this Church, to deliver you over to satan for the destruction of the flesh.”⁵⁷

Kanui’s behavior and resulting punishment surely struck at least a minor blow to the collective psyche of the mission troupe. The fall of one of their own—so soon after arrival—showed the Americans the possibility of failure and the fallibility of their new teachings. That Kanui chose to follow his native ideals rather than those of his formal education raised a difficult question: if a Hawaiian immersed in American Christianity throughout his formative years could easily discard the mission teachings, how readily would new converts still in their native land abandon the mission doctrines? Strict rules of behavior and morality contrasted with the easygoing outlook of the islanders and the

⁵⁶ Bingham, H. to William Tennooe, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 150.

⁵⁷ Journal of the mission, 22 July 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 23. Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal of the mission, 21 July 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 118 / 2. Bingham, *Selected Writings*, 180-4. Bingham, H. to William Tennooe, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 150, quotations.

demolition of the kapus. Interestingly, the mission writings do not dwell on these problems. Both the mission journal and Chamberlain's private writings mention the event but do not follow up on any island fallout. Hiram Bingham and Lucy Thurston's self-selected reminiscences completely omit Kanui's abandonment of his Christian faith, likely due to their desire to keep the public uninformed of the most negative facets of their adventures. William Kanui, having failed his Christian mission, disappeared into Hawaiian society.

Apostatic Alienation

A far more important and far more shocking personnel crisis quickly followed the translator's defection. Less than three weeks after Kanui's abandonment of his position, Thomas Hopoo traveled to Honolulu with the report that Thomas and Lucia Holman intended to leave their assignment. This news sent a shockwave through the community even though, like Kanui, problems between the Holmans and the rest of the mission family arose before arriving in Hawaii. Thomas openly argued with Daniel Chamberlain as they traveled to Boston, planting seeds of disagreement along the path to the islands. The doctor patched together relationships enough to maintain civility, but kept an air of difference between himself and the rest of the group. Lucia Holman repeatedly confided her concerns about the quality of life in Hawaii to the other ladies in the group, going so far as telling Sybil Bingham she wanted to return home before boarding the ship. Sybil's admonishment brought resentment from Thomas, who took great offense at her chastisement of his wife.⁵⁸

Tension continued building throughout the voyage. Dr. Holman and Rev. Bingham clashed over the rules governing supply usage. Holman felt that some items should remain personal property, such as gifts, and that all medical supplies fell under his sole authority. Bingham suggested all items should be held in common, even items only useful to select individuals. The men further disagreed over concepts of marital propriety as Thomas' "disgusting familiarity" with his wife aboard the *Thaddeus* strained the

⁵⁸ Journal of the mission, 6 August 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 23. Abstract of the facts stated by the Church at the Sandwich Islands in relation to the apostasy of Dr. Holman, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 270.

tolerance of the group. His declared earthly intent to earn a fortune and provide a comfortable life for himself and his new bride conflicted with the stated divine goals of the ABCFM.⁵⁹

These early complaints and disputes reveal a great deal about the ideas fueling the rift and the tolerance displayed for the sake of achieving God's kingdom on Earth.

Thomas Holman and Hiram Bingham appeared to be polar opposites. Holman sought his own success and comfort while Bingham desired a role in bringing Christian teachings into new regions. The doctor showed his awareness of the need for cooperation, even if he did not agree with the terms provided. Group cohesion relies on the ability for group members to get along with each other; without an air of understanding and willingness to combine forces in pursuit of a common goal a group will ultimately fail. Holman made several early mistakes, potentially alienating key members of the mission family, but his awareness of the need to work together prevented his immediate exclusion from the effort.

Bingham also understood the need to work together and, more importantly to the mission's success, the need for a doctor to accompany the venture. The group could replace lost Bibles and might succeed with a carpenter in place of a farmer, but a physician remained irreplaceable. Forgiveness, one of Christianity's core teachings, played a crucial role in keeping Holman among those selected to set sail for the Pacific. It is curious that the disagreements in New England, foreshadowing future problems, did not prevent the Holmans' inclusion in the effort. Perhaps the ABCFM directors believed the problems would melt away in the face of the shared struggles sure to arise upon

⁵⁹ Ibid., quotation.

arrival in Hawaii. Maybe no other physician could join the group before the scheduled departure date. Organizational stubbornness might have prevailed over common sense after investing time, training, and prayers in the doctor's preparation for the mission. Some may simply have viewed the disagreements as symptomatic of a larger struggle between opposing social groups. The reasoning behind the decision remains unclear, but Bingham and the ABCFM leadership chose to stick with the Holmans' after their personality disagreements first created conflicts within the group. One thing is certain: if the commissioners felt strongly that Thomas Holman would abandon the Christian effort, they would not have allowed him to sail with the others. With this mindset, the events that unfolded in Hawaii must have given the leadership in Boston an unpleasant, unexpected surprise.

A letter sent to America the day after Kanui's excommunication indirectly warned of the impending problem. Opening with thanks for the humility gained from Liholiho's abolition of idolatry, claiming, "He . . . has saved us from the danger of glorying in triumph," the men of the mission—excepting Dr. Holman—wrote of the immediate need for two ships full of reinforcements. They specifically requested men "inued of self-denial," a request likely in response to the Holmans' comparatively lavish desires. The letter is particularly interesting in that it condemns those who disregard the stated ideals of the mission effort while simultaneously recommending the ABCFM openly disregard the king's order limiting the number of missionaries on the islands; divine law trumped

national law in the minds of the signatories. Apparently, they saw Dr. Holman as a greater threat to success than King Liholiho.⁶⁰

The decision to send the Holmans to the Pacific proved faulty within days of making landfall on Hawai'i. Three days after moving into the hut in Kailua, Lucia Holman asked Lucy Thurston to meet with her privately. Retiring to a mud-walled storehouse near their shared home, Lucia confided to her comrade that her feelings had not changed and that "she never would be willing to exercise that degree of self-denial which was called for by a situation among this people." Lucy's record of the conversation contains an air of both surprise and resignation, as if she expected to have the conversation eventually, but not within a week of arrival. Thomas and Asa vehemently disagreed about their roles in Kailua; since the king specifically requested his presence, the doctor believed his focus should be on his specialization and tending to the court. The minister believed Holman used this as an excuse to avoid the menial chores necessary to improve the mission's quality of life and ability to preach to the locals. Arguments arose over the use of the limited supply of fresh water and a small amount of sugar, an alleged gift Lucia claimed entirely to herself. Fraternization with white merchants opposed to the mission's objectives pushed the Holmans further out of the fold. Their self-determined relocation to Oahu finally drove the evangelical group to remove the Holmans from their duties. Eventually the mission leadership elected to excommunicate the couple.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Bingham, H. and others To Samuel Worcester, 23 July 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 112-118.

⁶¹ Thurston, 39-40. Journal of the mission, 6 August 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 23. Zwiép, 87. Abstract of the facts stated by the Church at the Sandwich Islands in relation to the apostasy of Dr. Holman, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 270.

Both sides submitted their version of events to the startled and dismayed Prudential Committee. It is unclear which argument arrived in Boston first, Hiram Bingham's 99 page assault on the Holmans or Thomas Holman's 12 page defense of their independent actions. The accusatory letter delineated the conflicts mentioned above, questioning the Holmans' religious conviction and desire for God to triumph over Satan. Holman's defense had a lighter tone, reading as if the writer did not understand the reasons behind the ill will bearing down upon him. In his mind, he and his wife need not be ashamed about seeking a more comfortable situation, especially since the water supply in Kailua did not even meet basic sanitary standards. Holman also claimed the local chiefs thought he worked for the American government, sent to spy and learn how to easily conquer the islands. This supposed high-level mistrust filled him with great fear, inhibiting his ability to function with a clear mind. Regarding the independent relocation of himself and his wife, Holman pointed out that, due to Lucia's poor health, they received permission to move to Kauai on their own, but instead waited to travel with Liholiho to Oahu, their preferred location. By accompanying the king, they felt they merely fulfilled their agreement to serve his court; Thomas' obligation demanded they move.⁶²

The Holmans' decisions and actions led to Hiram Bingham immediately suspending the couple from all mission activities and responsibilities. Elisha and Maria Loomis relocated from Kawaihae to Kailua to support the Thurstons, effectively shutting down the east coast station. The internal struggle facing the group led to the rethinking

⁶² Abstract of the facts stated by the Church at the Sandwich Islands in relation to the apostasy of Dr. Holman, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 270. Holman, Thomas To the Prudential Committee, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 231-4.

of assignments and raised questions of individual resiliency. Daniel Chamberlain wondered mournfully, “who will fall next?” The farmer also reflected on the differences between the two departures, writing that Holman’s exit struck a greater blow than did Kanui’s. Does this mean that the doctor committed greater sins than the translator did, or did Chamberlain consider the white man more important to the cause than the Hawaiian? Given the nature of their “crimes,” the latter explanation seems more likely and presents a place where native people’s actions not carrying the same weight as the whites’ deeds, much like a child’s doings are not taken as seriously as an adult’s. From this perspective, Holman actively chose to turn from the righteous path whereas Kanui simply followed his base instincts. The idea shining through is that any native who learned and followed scripture still fell short of the Americans and Europeans born into God’s grace, an impression that carried throughout the early years of the mission and on into the American colonial period. Regardless, Thomas Holman would not simply melt away into the populace; the mission had to deal with him and Lucia.⁶³

After analyzing both points of view, the Prudential Committee agreed with the majority of the missionaries and declared the Holmans guilty of apostasy. Their perceived abandonment of Christianity rendered them completely useless to the cause. Declaring, “His charges on this page are all vague and indefinite,” the Prudential Committee sided with Bingham in every conflict between the men. Samuel Ruggles also wrote to the committee against Holman, echoing the complaints of Bingham and fully supporting removing the apostates. The doctor likely injured his own case with the defensive letter he sent. His letter showed constant, uniform opposition to his opinions

⁶³ Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal, 6 October 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2.

and made little mention of his religious motivations. A post-script requesting the mission benefactors send new clothing and cloth for his and Lucia's use only showed his great arrogance or naivety about the situation. On January 18, 1821, nine and a half months after arriving in Hawai'i, the mission leadership voted to excommunicate the Holmans. Thomas and Lucia returned to Boston aboard a merchant vessel, permanently cutting all ties to the ABCFM.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Abstract of the facts stated by the Church at the Sandwich Islands in relation to the apostasy of Dr. Holman, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 270.

Uneasy Progress

The removal of the Holmans freed the missionaries to refocus on routine duties and the Christianization of the Hawaiian Islands. Free from fears of internal undermining of their efforts, the American men began earnestly preaching, proselytizing, and building while the women tended to the wifely duties of cooking, cleaning, tailoring, teaching school, and taking care of anything else the men did not. The knowledge that everyone involved in the effort now sought the same outcome eased minds and buoyed sunken spirits. Small successes rallied the group's focus back onto the cause and provided pleasant surprises. Daniel Chamberlain began planting an enclosed garden in December, a situation completely at odds with traditional New England winter agriculture. Hiram Bingham, despite a lack of any significant carpentry training, successfully designed and built a small settee and set of chairs for his home. Occasionally, native activities brought guilt-free pleasure to the company, as exemplified by Bingham's breathless description of surfing. Minor accomplishments helped bolster group confidence as it squared off with the entrenched traditions of the islands.⁶⁵

Hiram Bingham, like the evangelists and circuit riders driving the Second Great Awakening in America, exhibited an impressive ability to ad-lib and adjust his methods to reach various audiences, never missing a chance to provide religious instruction. On an expedition to view a mountain range on Kauai, the Hawaiians engaged Bingham in a discussion of creation. When his guides asked if his God formed the mountains,

⁶⁵ Journal of the mission, 2 December 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 35. Journal of the mission, 17 October 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 28. Journal of the mission, 10 July 1821, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 181.

Bingham replied, “Yes, this is our God, - and is he not yours also?” “No, our gods are all dead,” came the reassuring reply. A simple nature walk turned into a complex theological lesson as the group wound across the island. The missionaries understood that their activities and responses to native curiosity played an important role in winning new converts and reinforcing ideals taught in the classroom. God took center stage while geology played only an unmentioned supporting role. Any opportunity to invoke the almighty reinforced Christian thinking in both the minds of the missionaries and their hosts.⁶⁶

When simple discourse failed to win minds, the missionaries used empirical evidence to try to prove their point. The two mission men stationed in Honolulu learned of a M’oo, a Hawaiian god, residing in the area. Determined to fight off heathenish notions and reaffirm the veracity of their own beliefs, the two men ventured out to find the home of Akóoāh M’oo, a violent reptile god. When they arrived at the place said to be Akóoāh M’oo’s home, Bingham and Chamberlain declared, “we do not believe there is any such M’oo there, and if there is, it cannot be a god.” Native guides leading the group replied that the god’s house “is in the ground where you cannot see it.” This rebuttal startled the missionaries who felt that visual proof should be enough to dispel any superstitious ideas, especially since all of the native information about Akóoāh M’oo came from one man claiming to be the sole survivor of a supernatural attack. Ironically, the missionaries continually denied that men needed to see God before becoming a Christian because faith overrode the need for tangible evidence.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Bingham, Rev. Hiram. Journal of tour to Atooi, 1 August 1821, ABCFM Archive, ABC 19.1 v.1, 187.

⁶⁷ Journal of the mission, 7 March 1821, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 45.

Formal education served not only to aid development of a written Hawaiian language and provide the basic mental skills considered essential to civilization, but it acted as the entry point for Christianity in the islands. Days before the Holmans' removal, a student wrote, "I cannot see God, but God can see me," the first English sentence written by a Hawaiian in their homeland and the central tenet to the introduction of Christianity. This single statement crudely displayed the student's understanding of omnipresence, a contrast to the highly localized nature of many Hawaiian gods. Like the Christian missionaries sent to western China in the seventh century, the Americans faced the difficult task of layering monotheistic beliefs over a polytheistic culture. Rather than follow the early examples of the Asian missionaries—certainly unknown to 19th century theologians—the ABCFM sought to teach the Hawaiians like children, working from broad ideas like God's omnipresence up through more advanced concepts.⁶⁸

Liholiho demanded that he and his chiefs become the first pupils, insisting that they would determine if the new ways were worth teaching to the rest of the populace. The king immediately ordered two of his subordinates to study in his place, showing his own interests lay far outside the classroom, yet he officially approved of the American instruction. The numbers of students allowed to attend classes steadily grew as the king permitted more to enroll and Christian teachings slowly began to spread out across the islands. Attendance fluctuated from day to day, depending on the weather, celebrations, burials, and other unpredictable variables. Local governmental support greatly enhanced the schools' popularity among the public. Tamoree, one of Honolulu's chiefs, greatly

⁶⁸ The mission had 86 students in three locations by early 1822. Bingham, H. and others to Jeremiah Everts, 1 February 1822, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 119. Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras*, (New York: Wellspring, 2001).

aided the mission schoolmasters. His presence in a classroom ensured a high turnout for the day as his subjects sought to keep up with his knowledge. When he left the island for a few months, attendance dropped off sharply, highlighting not only the public propensity to follow in the actions of the leadership but also the fickle interest of many of the students. Teachers constantly struggled with the unexpected tidal pattern of interest in learning. Some days, so many students arrived that classes had to move to a larger space. Other times so few attended that the missionaries cancelled classes.⁶⁹

Numerous activities and events competed with the schools for the public's attention. The majority of these distractions met with predictable scorn from the missionaries, sometimes out of moral disagreements and sometimes due to misunderstandings about the nature of the events. Counter to Hiram Bingham's fascination with surfing, most of the mission's members considered it a waste of time better spent learning scripture. The traditional Autumnal season of sacrifice and boxing arrived without fanfare, leading to the belief among the missionaries that the Hawaiians no longer paid attention to the traditional rituals, yet one unexpectedly durable ritual threatened to undo much of the mission's work.⁷⁰

No Hawaiian practice witnessed by the missionaries brought as much scorn and condemnation to the islanders as the Hula. Unlike the brief, modern dances performed to impress idle tourists, the traditional ceremonies lasted multiple weeks, sometimes lasting a full month, providing a physical expression of Hawaiian spirituality. Dances and their accompanying music presented stories of the gods and goddesses interacting both with

⁶⁹ Daws, 67. Smith, 43. Journal of the mission, 1 August 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 23, quotation. Letter from H. Bingham to Samuel Worcester, 11 October 1821, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 114-5.

⁷⁰ Journal of the mission, 21 October 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 29.

each other and the mortals they ruled. Native leaders dedicated each ceremony to a specific god and generally offered up to celebrate a major event, the Hula acted as a highly regimented and carefully planned out commemoration. Dancers selected to participate in a particular ceremony trained for long periods. Just as the Christian mission only allowed ordained ministers to preach, religious doctrine demanded that only highly trained dancers perform the Hula. Hula organizers worked within a framework of established gestures, each with a particular meaning and usage. The dancers followed strict choreography, usually in conjunction with rhythmic accompaniment in order to tell a story with some universal message. Poetry, superstition, philosophy, theology, history, and sensuality combined within the Hula to shift both observers and participants from a purely physical presentation into a religious experience.⁷¹

Interestingly, the Hulas witnessed by the missionaries carried a different meaning than the celebrations witnessed by Cook and Vancouver. Abolition of the kapu system loosened indigenous interpretations of the dance. Spiritual importance faded with the old gods, changing the Hula into a celebratory event rather than a religious ceremony. Foreigners, initially drawn to the Hula out of curiosity, focused on the sexual content of the dances, particularly as presented by the female dancers. Gradually the spectacle changed so that the gestures and songs still told stories, but the audiences no longer saw them literally, instead they viewed the dances as grand spectacles of entertainment. This led to a shift away from the traditional mythic storytelling and towards the presentation of sensual love-poems set to rhythmic movement. While the make-up and meaning of the

⁷¹ Nathaniel B. Emerson, "Unwritten Literature of Hawaii," *American Anthropologist* n.s., vol.8, no.2 (April – June 1906): 271-275. Martha W. Beckwith, "The Hawaiian Hula-Dance," *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol.29, no.113 (July – September 1916): 409-412.

Hula as a whole changed, one aspect remained constant: the lyrical content of the Hula songs. Chanted in time to percussion and/or the dance, many of the songs contained thinly veiled references to sexually explicit situations. Inability to understand the language briefly shielded the missionaries from the lyrical content, as did a lack of knowledge of the nuanced meanings once the Americans received translations of the chants. As the missionaries learned of the undertones, their disapproval only increased.⁷²

Unable to understand the spiritual origins and wary of the ceremony's ongoing popularity, the missionaries considered the Hula nothing more than a gross display of hedonistic heathenism. Hiram Bingham acknowledged the great skill and artistry required to create such a spectacle, but he derided the first Hula he witnessed as a waste of time, "designed to promote lasciviousness." He singled out the dancer's colorful but scanty costumes as a great violation of modesty, abhorrent to the Christian observer. Many of the station's students missed several weeks of lessons as they prepared and presented the dance. Liholiho, not the most assiduous student in the best circumstances, also absented himself from lessons in order to observe the ceremonies. Charles Stewart, who joined the mission in 1823, perhaps best summarized the missionaries' opinion, calling the Hula "exhibitions of licentiousness and abomination which must forever remain untold."⁷³

Missionary surprise at the nature of Hawaiian ceremonies extended from the Hula's celebration of life to the mourning practices observed after the death of valued members of the native society. Much as it did for the Biblical Israelites, the Plains

⁷² Philippa Pollenz, "Changes in the Form and Function of Hawaiian Hulas," *American Anthropologist* n.s., vol.52, no.2 (April – June 1950): 225-234. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, 9-15.

⁷³ Bingham, *Residence*, 123-124. Stewart quotation in Pollenz, 228.

Indians of North America, and modern Brazilian Amerindians, ritualistic wailing played a vital role in the funerary practice. Stoicism and self-restraint had no place in Hawaiian mourning, unlike the Euro-American tradition. Unlike the western customs the Christians considered normal, the Hawaiians began their lamentations before a person died, displaying their sorrow in full view of the dying individual. The Americans encountered the native mourning practices first hand in March of 1821 when Rikarika, chief Krymokoo's wife, became terminally ill. Upon entering the dying woman's hut, Hiram Bingham entered into a distressingly unexpected scene.

Some were amusing themselves by cutting off each others hair, close to the head, over the ears, and indulging in loud laughter; some were lying as upon their faces, apparently sympathizing with the bereaved father and uttering loud wailing with tears; others were cheerfully employed playing cards; and others appeared to have used the bottle too freely to be qualified for mourning or mirth.

Any single act the reverend witnessed would shock his sense of funerary propriety; the collection disturbed him greatly. Bingham's incomplete comprehension of the scene—his preconceptions of decency prevented his understanding of the meanings behind the native actions—reinforced mission notions of island savagery.⁷⁴

Similar events surrounded the death of the wife of Keeaumoku. Maui's chief, known to the missionaries as Governor Cox, Keeaumoku supported their efforts, keenly assisting Elisha Loomis with the printing of the first Hawaiian language text. The chief also helped spark interest in the *palapala*, the written Christian scriptures, via his own fascination with writing. Close ties between the ali'i and the mission made the public

⁷⁴ Francis La Flesche, "Death and Funeral Customs Among the Omahas," *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 2, no. 4. (Jan. - Mar., 1889): 3-11. Greg Urban, "Ritual Wailing in Amerindian Brazil," *American Anthropologist* n.s., vol. 90, no. 2 (June 1988): 385-400. Journal of the mission, 5 March 1821, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 45, quotation.

display of mourning in honor of his wife's passing all the more surprising to the Americans. For seven days after the woman's death, mourners sacrificed birds, hogs, and dogs in her honor. Hiram Bingham later referred to the weeklong observance as, "so sickening to the missionaries, so offensive to God, and so degrading and ruinous to the people," that he again questioned their humanity. The nobility of the gesture did not impress the Christians, who called funerary proceedings, "truly distressing to the heart of the Christian Missionary." For the missionaries, solace came from the fact that none of the Hawaiian rulers present took part in the ancient rituals.⁷⁵

It is noteworthy that the mission did not actively seek to interrupt the mourning proceedings in either instance; rather an air of curiosity and disappointment prevailed within the group. They certainly did not approve of the phenomenon, but they seemed to realize their inability to change all of Hawaiian society in one grand motion. A handful of light-skinned newcomers needed more than two years to implement widespread religious reformation throughout the islands. Also interesting is the missionary comment that three chiefs—Keeaumoku, Tamoree, and Kaikioeua—did not intervene as either participants or mission advocates. This official mention showed the proselytizers' approval of the three native leaders, but also unpleasantly reminded the mission of the reality of the socio-political situation; governments can display recommended patterns of behavior, but without resorting to despotism they cannot force public conformity with that behavior.

Mission teachings about marital expectations met consistent public opposition in the early years of the apostolic effort. The transference of spouses between ali'i occurred

⁷⁵ Smith, 84. Bingham, *Residence*, 174, first quotation. Journal of the mission, 17 November 1822, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 87, second quotation.

with great regularity. One of the first examples the missionaries encountered came in early 1821, when Prime Minister Kalanimoku took a fancy to his brother Boki's wife, Likelike. Kalanimoku held the higher rank so he took Likelike for himself, leading Boki to take Liliha, his nephew's wife. Hawaii's moral code allowed for the powerful to acquire whatever, or whomever, they liked. If a separation involved children, custody did not automatically go to one parent or the other, almost certainly assuring a struggle. Late in the same year the mission witnessed a literal custody battle as a father and mother came to blows over the child's fate. After many painful strikes, the man relinquished all claims to his offspring. While watching the proceedings, the New Englanders heard the story of an earlier couple who bitterly traded custody of their only child back and forth, "till the father to end the dispute, knocked the child on the head, which put an immediate end to its existence." Again, the tale stands alone, without moralizing, perhaps relating either the missionaries' acceptance that change came slowly or, given the hectic pace of life on the stations and the demands on all of the individual missionaries, a lack of time to write an appropriate response. Certainly both practices ran counter to the Christians' promotion of monogamy and disdain of divorce.⁷⁶

Alongside the barrage of unfamiliar and unexpected native traditions, a variety of sicknesses, the root causes of many native occasions of wailing and hair cutting, took their toll on the mission. From the first night ashore, the Americans viewed the Hawaiian huts as squalid harbors of vermin and illness, foreshadowing a harsh future. Exhaustion from the constant labor of erecting the various stations took an enormous toll on foreigners unaccustomed to the tropical environment. Despite immunity to many of the

⁷⁶ Smith, 67. Journal of the mission, 29 August 1821, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 57.

diseases that had scourged the Hawaiian populace in the decades after contact with Captain Cook, the missionaries found themselves afflicted with numerous illnesses native to Hawaii. Lucy Thurston wrote of several instances of ailment and the difficulty of fulfilling her duties to both the mission effort and her family. Simple fatigue claimed many temporary victims, particularly the wives who tended to the children, cooked, sewed, entertained royalty, taught lessons, and cared for their husbands. Rest proved a sound curative for the adults in lieu of a doctor, but the children did not always fare as well. Most of the white children stayed surprisingly healthy considering the lack of medical supplies and their parents' unfamiliarity with island curatives. Unlike the first English settlers in America, the New England Missionaries did not find themselves unprepared for disease. Even though Dr. Holman's presence shows a level of expectation, preparedness could not dampen the sadness felt when Hiram and Sybil Bingham's second child, born in January 1823, succumbed to an unnamed illness while in infancy. This tragic fate offered the unpleasant surprise of demonstrating the rites and rituals involved in Christian burial to the Hawaiian public.⁷⁷

Levi Parson Bingham's death, the mission's first loss to disease, came two years after the New Englanders arrived on the islands. The second followed swiftly and dealt another stern blow to the group. Two years after Daniel Chamberlain openly wondered who would be next to fall after the Holmans, he became the answer to his own question. The Chamberlains struggled throughout their stay in Hawaii; the soil did not support the North American agricultural methods and crops Daniel specialized in, the native influences on the children's morality greatly vexed the mission leaders, and the secular

⁷⁷ Grimshaw, 40. Smith, 94. Bingham, *Residence*, 175.

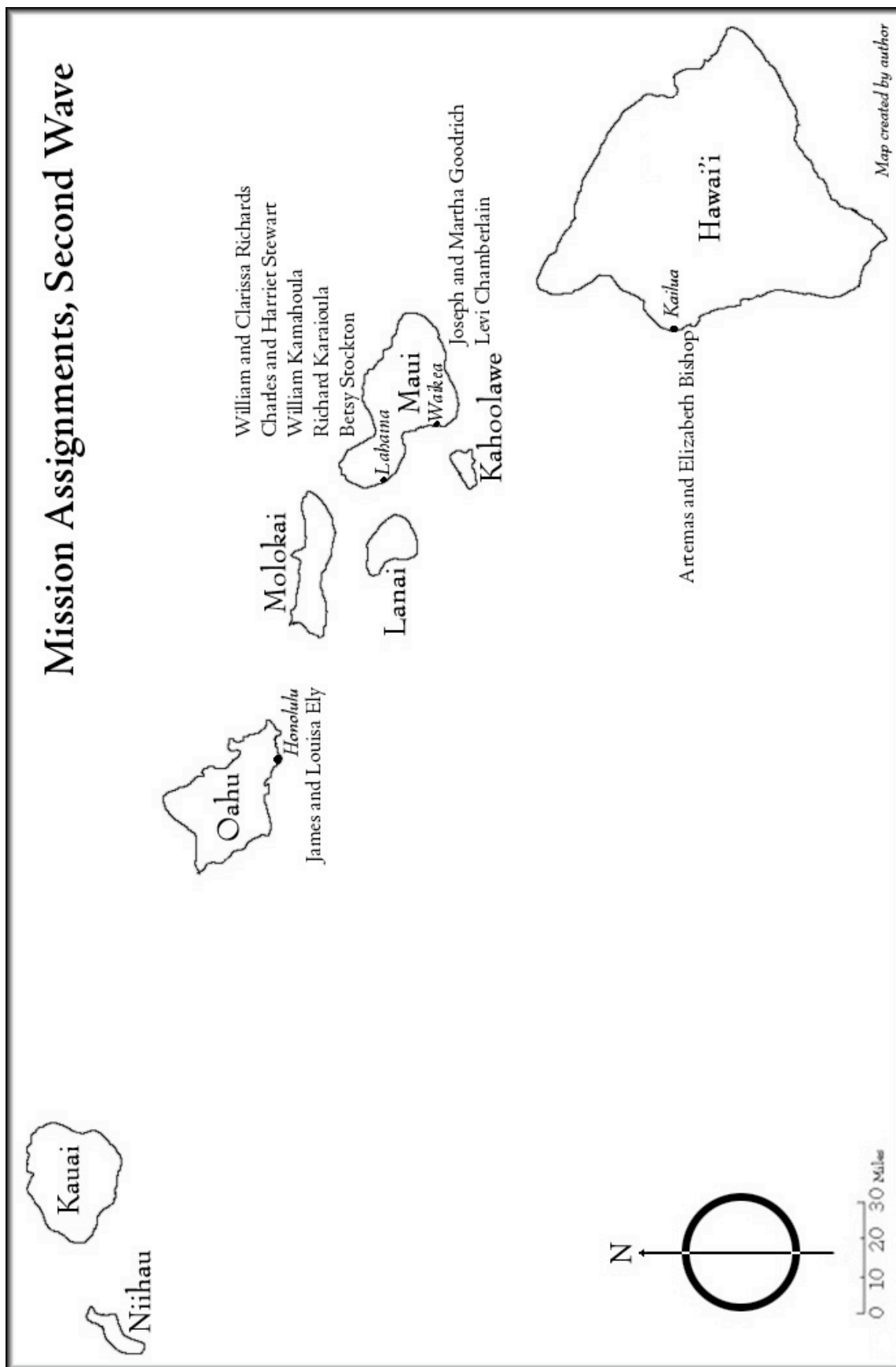
nature of Daniel's role made him an outsider within the group. After two years of exertion and toil, rheumatism forced the family patriarch into a lengthy term of home confinement. His wife, Jerusha, redirected all her energies towards aiding her ailing husband, leaving Sybil Bingham to cook for the more than three-dozen people normally present at meals. Daniel nearly fulfilled his wish that his life be used up in the effort to convert the Hawaiians. Contrary to the earliest desires recorded in his journal, the Chamberlain family sailed for America in the spring of 1823, eager to return to physical and moral health.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Smith, 89. Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal, 11 November 1822, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 118 / 2.

Reinforcements and Rumormongers

Reinforcements, arriving soon after the Chamberlains' departure, found themselves stunned at the conditions their predecessors lived in. Upon seeing the native Hawaiians for the first time, Charles Stewart, a minister with the second delegation, considered the islands far more beautiful than the islanders, wondering, "Can they be men—can they be women?—do they not form a link in creation, connecting man with the brute?" Upon attempting to dock at a suitable stony quay in Honolulu, the ship's fourteen missionaries learned that the kapu system died in name, but still occasionally existed in practice. As the ship pulled close to the chosen mooring point, a group of natives cried out, "Kapu! kapu!" The landing lay near the king's palace and he had forbidden non-royal use of the jetty. Kamehamaru, Liholiho's favorite queen, came to the water's edge and apologized for the inconvenience, directing the newcomers to a spot nearer the village. Negative early impressions continued to build as they established contact with the resident ABCFM workers. Elisha Loomis appeared as a skeletal shadow of the man they knew before and the women looked worn-down and pitiable, not the condition the second group expected. Fleeting hopes for signs of great Christian progress disappeared in the presence of the king, whom they met while he was drunk and almost entirely nude.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Charles Samuel Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands, During the Years 1823, 1824, and 1825: Including Remarks on the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants; an Account of Lord Byron's Visit in H.M.S Blonde; and a Description of the Ceremonies Observed at the Interment of the Late King and Queen in the Island of Oahu* (London: H. Fisher, Son, & P, Jackson, 1830; reprinted Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press for Friends of the Library of Hawaii, 1970), 88, quotation. Smith, 95. Stewart, 94.



A key element revealed itself at work in forming the second missionary wave's contact shock: the new arrivals' lack of knowledge about the realities of life in the Pacific. Sailing three years after the initial group departed, assuming a six-month transit time for one way communication, this allowed at least three opportunities for two-way discussions of life at the station. The ABCFM leadership knew of the hardships facing the first New England émigrés. Surprising discoveries made upon landing in 1823 reveal that the reinforcements did not have complete knowledge of the situation they elected to enter into. It appears that the committee in charge of recruiting new American volunteers either did not have a full reckoning of the hardships their charges encountered or chose to omit information potentially harmful to their cause from the presentations given to prospective recruits.

If the board leadership did not know the extent of the difficulties posed during the first three years, the missionaries must have purposefully left out any details that portrayed their actions in a negative light. The one hundred-page condemnation of the Holmans and the detailed descriptions of indigenous customs oppose this theory. Additionally, one of the most fascinating entries in the official record concerns the omission of facts. The entry made on January 16, 1824 notes, "Gladly would we be excused from recording the faults of our members or the censures which the church is required to pass on delinquents, did not historical fidelity and our duty to our patrons require it." Open admission of the desire to ignore protocol and report less than they did raises questions about their reasons for not wanting to record the mission's darker moments. The most reasonable motives for this concern are that the missionaries sought to present the board with a glowing picture of wondrous progress, desired to prevent

publication of certain members' failings, or simply wished to put past difficulties behind them without further contemplation. Fortunately for modern scholars, none of these three rationales halted the negative reports. Christian morality required full accountability to the higher ranks within the movement; to present an inaccurate picture would be a lie, placing the mission alongside the sinners they sought to save. This obligation nullified the second possibility as well, leaving the editing to the board members. Merely forgetting about the internal failures of the deputation proved impossible due the essential roles played by the comrades who left and the importance of major events, no matter how detestable their outcome. The missionaries expended far too much energy dealing with failure and crisis to let setbacks fade quickly into the mists. Full reports of mission events made their way back to New England on a regular basis, warts and all.⁸⁰

The proposition that the Boston-based leadership carefully excised potentially harmful tales from public accounts used to recruit new missionaries is not outlandish. Modern recruiters routinely omit unsavory details about their organizations. University admissions officers, unless pressed, do not tell prospective students about recent crimes on campus. Accounting firms do not go out of their way to inform potential employees about federal fraud investigations. Advertising agencies do not trumpet pending layoffs to their investors. Similarly, the ABCFM members likely kept negative field reports out of circulation. Evidence for this exists in the published writings of Hiram Bingham, which went to press without any mention of Thomas Holman's defection or his own illness during the long voyage to Hawaii. There are indications within the mission journal that select entries left the board members with great disdain for the information

⁸⁰ Journal of the mission, 16 January 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 225.

present; long sections are bracketed in pencil, with the word ‘omit’ written in the margin. Sections dealing with the Christian burial of a unconverted native high priest—performed purely for political reasons—and mission acknowledgement that formal bans on shipboard prostitution would turn many native souls against the mission did not fit with the sunny picture the board wished to present to potential investors in the cause. The amazement of the second group of missionaries upon their first contact with both the islands and the established mission clearly shows the newcomers entered into a situation unlike anything they expected.⁸¹

The second wave possessed little ability to prepare for one of the most nefarious challenges awaiting them: the wanton spread of hearsay throughout their new home. Word traveled quickly throughout the Hawaiian Islands as news and rumors sailed with the canoes and outriggers of the natives and aboard the brigs of the white merchants. The first rumor that appeared, the white-originated claim that the missionaries intended to lead an American invasion of the islands, disappeared within days of the first group’s arrival. Any who still believed the tale when the second company appeared did not represent the majority opinion and certainly did not have the ear of the king. More threatening reports arose in 1824, after the new arrivals spread out across the islands.⁸²

The unexpected death of Tamoree in May 1824 briefly cast the mission’s security into doubt as whispers of foul play crept throughout the countryside. Hawaii’s religious leadership had a long tradition of *pule anaana*, praying someone to death. Great kings employed special priests to seek the gods’ intervention and end the life of a rival standing

⁸¹ Journal of the mission, 1 February 1825, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 233. Journal of the mission, 13 November 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 233.

⁸² Thurston, 58.

between them and a goal, usually greater military or political power. While trust in this ability waned after the formal ending of the kapu system, pockets of belief remained throughout the islands. In 1824, spring brought the illness and demise of two prominent ali'i, leading the public to look for connections between their deaths. Keeaumoku, the first to die, publicly supported the mission, leading the public to wonder if conversion shortened one's life. As the Hawaiian people discussed the leader's death, some speculated that the American ministers held the same powers as the deposed Hawaiian priesthood, allowing them to use spiritual power to kill whomever they wished. After Tamoree, also a mission supporter, died, a small group accused Charles Stewart of committing pule anaana against the chief and claimed he intended to use this power to murder everyone on Oahu. Stewart learned the origin for the fears stemmed from his frequent visits to a particular spot on the side of Punch Bowl Hill. To the minister, the place appeared little more than a nice, flat space to meditate and study, but the natives remembered an indigenous temple once sitting on the site and linked the past activities with the current resident. Stewart shrugged off the accusations and no more mention is made in either his recollections or the official record.⁸³

Other rumors proved more troubling to the company than the fear of death prayers. One story often related concerned "an alarming native," bent on the removal of the mission. After a few claims of this individual wreaking unverifiable havoc the missionaries dismissed his existence as a hoax born of mistaken or mischievous informants. A more terrifying tale wound its way from Kailua to Honolulu after a thief struck the mission house in the satellite station. Initial reports stated that a raiding party

⁸³ Journal of the mission, 29 May 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 232. Stewart, 294.

swept into the village and that the missionaries lost all but the clothes they wore. A hasty effort began assembling wares to send to aid the newly destitute, but halted as clearer details arrived. Ultimately, the station leader learned that thieves made off with only a few articles of clothing and five or six rain-catching tarps. The short-term psychological damage to the mission was far greater than the value of the missing items.⁸⁴

These two different incidents presented another layer of difficulty for the New England proselytizers. Alone in a new and often unfriendly land, the missionaries had to discern real threats from those only dangerous to their psyches. Stories of a crazed Hawaiian seeking to drive them off forced the Christians to decide if a real threat existed, and, if it did, what steps they needed to take to protect themselves. Such preparations and worries took time and energy away from their spiritual objectives and physical needs. Even rumors with a seed of truth, like the tale of Kailua's devastation, showed the concerns faced by such a widely dispersed community. Instantaneous long distance communication did not exist in that era, so the mission relied on word of mouth for the most recent news. Much like the childhood game of telephone, words changed and events became exaggerated with each retelling, turning a small act of petty theft into a large-scale assault. Fact and fiction routinely and unexpectedly collided throughout the mission's tenure in the Pacific, taxing the nerves and testing the dedication of the Christian effort.

⁸⁴ Journal of the mission, 21 May 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 232.

The Good News

Fortunately for the mental health of the missionaries, they also encountered numerous pleasant surprises in the early years of their effort. Initial impressions of the Hawaiian terrain softened the impact of the islanders' lack of western propriety and morality. Daniel Chamberlain declared, "The climate, and soil answer fully to my expectations," a sentiment later disproved by his inability to farm in his accustomed manner. Hawaii made a greater first impression on Charles Stewart, who recalled, "Nothing can surpass the wild beauty of the promontories forming the headlands of this part of the island [southeast Oahu]." Unlike the people, the land changed very little in the first years of the mission. As the islanders' ideas became more acceptable, by mission standards, the land remained beautiful, if not always amenable to the Americans' wishes. The inability to grow wheat for flour did not dissuade Stewart from joyfully describing the sunsets unique to Hawaii.

The west is filled with rich and brilliant tints, the reflections of which give a softened beauty to the heights of Ranai and Morokai; while they cover the bolder mountains of Maui with purple, and line the crimson clouds, that overhang them, with the deepest shades of amber and gold.

The small islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean presented many challenges, but they also afforded wondrous vistas suitable for long periods of meditation and enjoyment.

Even the highly focused Hiram Bingham marveled at his surroundings, recording

amazement that snow-capped Mauna Kea slowly receded into verdant hills, displaying a northern winter and tropical summer in a singular view.⁸⁵

As time passed, the missionaries made inroads into Hawaiian culture and society, successfully winning converts and support from the ali'i. School enrollment continually rose as chiefs took a more active interest in reading and writing. After the Americans settled on a written Hawaiian alphabet they set about translating hymns and creating texts for use in mission schools. As Elisha Loomis began typesetting to print the first set of Hawaiian language books, he encountered an unexpected difficulty: he needed far more blocks for the letter 'K' than he had available. The enormous demand for books built up as the press patiently awaited delivery of the needed letter blocks. Once Loomis began printing the texts, he encountered a second dilemma. Hawaiian nobility, enthralled with their newfound literary skills, demanded more and more books. As the schools reached more people, they, too, sought more reading material. Demand far outstripped supply, creating a bottleneck in the educational process. The flood of requests for spelling books and hymnals pleased the missionaries, surprising them in both the needs of the transcription process and their success at impressing the Hawaiians with the utility of the written word.⁸⁶

Once the much anticipated, and expected, ali'i conversions began, the mission began feeling that the Christian presence truly mattered to the Hawaiian people. The missionaries did not expect the manner in which the conversions manifested themselves.

⁸⁵ Chamberlain, Daniel. Journal, 19 June 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 118 / 2, first quotation. Stewart, 91, second quotation. Ibid., 261, third quotation. Bingham, *Residence*, 69.

⁸⁶ Bingham, Hiram to Jeremiah Evarts, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 125. Journal of the mission, 7 January 1822, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 1, 67.

Keeaumoku, Maui's governor and the mission's first powerful supporter, joined the Christian effort due to a prophetic dream. In his vision, "he saw the whole island on fire, and all the water in the surrounding sea could not quench the flames. He sought for safety, but in vain—he could find no shelter." Immediately upon awaking, the chief sent for the missionaries to interpret the dream for him, providing the first real opportunity they found to directly influence the ali'i. Following in Joseph's biblical footsteps, two of the Christian men spoke with Keeaumoku and convinced him that his dream represented the fate of his people if they turned away from God's teachings and asked him to allow them to teach him about Christian beliefs. The chief assented to their wish and invited them to conduct worship at his home the next day. When the two men returned the following morning, dozens of Hawaiian noblemen and women met with them at Keeaumoku's behest. A dream opened doors that words could not.⁸⁷

Kapiolani, Boki's wife, also became a fervent supporter of the Christian cause, taking it upon herself to spread the mission's influence. By the time of her conversion in 1824, several ali'i sided with the mission morality and took a dim view of their past beliefs. The chief's wife took her convictions a step further, directly assaulting the old gods. Pele, the fire goddess, still held sway in certain regions of the islands, particularly those frequented by volcanic activity. Kapiolani sought to lend her powerful support to the Hilo station, which had thus far failed to make any headway in the quest for Hawaiian souls. Trekking more than one hundred miles on foot, she sought to use her influence to speed the acceptance of Christianity on Hawai'i's eastern shore. While on her journey, Kapiolani stopped on the slopes of Kilauea, reputed to be Pele's home. There she

⁸⁷ Thurston, 65. In the book of Genesis, Joseph acted as a dream interpreter for the Egyptian pharaoh.

confronted a priestess and engaged in a battle of wits to prove the superiority of God over the old ways. After defeating the priestess, the noblewoman continued to the crater, where she and Joseph Goodrich, one of the second group sent to the islands, held a brief prayer service. Their survival marked a triumph over Pele; the lack of harm done to them served as definitive proof of Jehovah's supremacy in the mind of the faithful. Kapiolani became a close ally of the mission, transforming her mindset such that she denounced the use of Hawaiian words by the white mission children, not out of selfish pride but from a belief that Hawaiian did not meet the civilized standards she embraced.⁸⁸

Other leaders embraced mission ideals and policies as their own. Kuakini, governor of Hawai'i, declared the Sabbath a day of rest and created laws forbidding any work to be done that day. He personally enforced the law by interrupting those who refused to comply and chastising them publicly until they agreed to halt for the day. Many people ignored the laws whenever Kuakini left the island on official business, but the missionaries appreciated the help. Kaahumanu, the stubborn dowager queen, grew fascinated with reading, eventually becoming an avid student and promoter of religious instruction. Through this fascination she absorbed mission ideals and made them her own, passing laws forbidding murder, infanticide, thievery, and Sunday toil, activities previously tolerated to differing degrees within Hawaiian society and law. Keopuolani, Liholiho's mother, became a believer in the mission's message through her dedication to temperance. During a particularly riotous evening of kingly celebration, the former queen consort publicly reproached her son, crying, "'Pupuka! pupuka!' 'Shameful! oh, shameful!'" before joining the evening church service. The missionaries' responded to

⁸⁸ Bingham, *Residence*, 227. Smith, 118-119. Grimshaw, 41-42. Thurston, 113. Wyndette, 109.

the unheard of rebuke of the king with great praise for the woman's character and thanked God for her aid in their quest to convert the king. Liholiho refused to change his ways, but the mission gained a powerful ally.⁸⁹

Acceptance by the Hawaiian ruling class provided the Christians with a spiritual foothold in the islands. Without the conversion of Liholiho, the missionaries needed a great deal of support from the ali'i. In Keeaumoku they found their first "true believer," the first Hawaiian chief desirous of more than an awareness of the foreign religion. His influence made it possible for the mission's message to reach a wider audience than did the New Englanders' efforts alone. Kapiolani's conversion provided an emotional rallying point for the proselytizers and helped them rebuff lingering beliefs in the indigenous gods, especially the powerful Pele. Kuakini embodied the influence that high-level island leaders held over their subjects. Unfortunately, his occasional trips abroad also displayed the tendency of the public to ignore religious laws in the absence of a strict enforcer. Keopuolani's stand against her son, the most powerful man in the islands, emboldened the proselytizers and gave them greater hope for their success in winning the king's soul. Kaahumanu, the most powerful of the converts, provided the strong personality and iron will necessary to speak out against the old ways and influence the younger generations in favor of the mission theology and morality.

Elisha Loomis accidentally encountered the results of ali'i influence first hand during a routine resupply trip. The printer traveled from Honolulu to Puuloa to claim a load of *pole*, a mixture of decomposed coral and seashells used as plaster. As his boat

⁸⁹ The Americans referred to Kuakini as Governor Cox. Journal of the mission, 11 April 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 227. Bingham, *Residence*, 226. Stewart, 165, 195, quotation.

pushed off to return home, a series of strong waves nearly overwhelmed the small craft, forcing him to return to shore and wait for the surf to calm. During the night spent away from his station, Loomis discussed theology with his unexpected hosts. One of the men involved in the discussion told the missionary, “All the Hawaiians have now but one God, Jehovah.” Loomis, amazed to learn of the Hawaiian-led spread of the Gospel into regions away from sustained mission contact, excitedly reported his discovery to his comrades immediately upon his return the following day. Native leaders historically acted as exemplars to their followers, modeling desired behaviors and beliefs. With the fall of the indigenous priesthood and the arrival of the foreign god, the ali’i inadvertently found themselves in the role of religious leaders. Word spread that the ruling class increasingly accepted the foreign beliefs, and the public followed suit. Mission ideals began spreading without direct contact, an unforeseen achievement welcomed by the ABCFM.⁹⁰

Mission influence also moved offshore into the cabins of the merchantmen anchored in the Hawaiian harbors. Captains became increasingly annoyed with their crews’ propensities to slip to shore in search of wine, women, and song or to carouse with local women instead of tending to their maritime duties. After the mission proved its durability and popularity among the ali’i, a group of whaling ship captains sought its aid in creating a new code of moral and legal behavior for the sailors. Rather than seek advice about the content of the legislation, the floating ad hoc committee sought only the use of the mission press to reproduce the tract detailing acceptable behavior. After a brief consultation, the press swiftly generated the requested documents. This transaction

⁹⁰ Journal of the mission, 18 January 1825, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.3, 232.

marked the beginning of a shift in the merchants' perception of the ABCFM's goals. Missionaries, once seen as rivals in trade and obstacles to greater wealth, took on the role of arbiters and purveyors of morality. A ship's crew is useless if all aboard are sick with venereal disease or too drunk to fulfill their duties. Christian intolerance of sexual promiscuity and drunkenness aligned with the ship captains' desire for a functional crew, creating awareness that the mission might become a useful partner rather than an obstacle to ever increasing commercial interests.⁹¹

Greater acceptance of the mission among the islanders led to greater feelings of personal safety within the group. By 1824, mission wives felt safe walking alone through local villages. Lucy Thurston recognized such amazement at this changed situation that she wrote, "Whence this freedom? Where am I? I can identify the scenery. The trees and the mountains are the same, but the people, —how different!" Increased Hawaiian disdain of rum and those who drank excessively reduced the likelihood of encounters with unruly, drunken ex-priests. In this the people did not follow Liholiho's lead, rather choosing to follow those chiefs who proposed that alcohol did more harm than good. American men and women benefited from the popularity of schools and the endorsements of the nobles, eventually reaching the point at which more Hawaiians supported their cause than opposed it. New laws provided more uniform justice, punishing crimes committed without consideration of the social rank of the offender. At the same time, high-level punishments generally became more merciful as the ali'i

⁹¹ Journal of the mission, 29 March 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.3, 225.

internalized teachings of forgiveness. The mission's former charge, Humehume—known to the proselytizers as George Tamoree—soon tested the lengths of Christian leniency.⁹²

Kaumualii, King of Kauai, took his son Humehume back into his court immediately upon the young man's return aboard the *Thaddeus*. Under Kamehameha's grand unification, Kaumualii agreed to position himself as the conqueror's vassal while remaining king of his island. This placed Kaumualii in a unique position as both equal and inferior to Kamehameha, the only king to retain his rank upon entering service to the new ruler. After intercepting a letter to Kaumualii addressed to "King of the Windward Islands," the jealous Liholiho incorporated Kauai by forcing its king to marry Kaahumanu, his father's wife, bringing the western island into direct control. Kaahumanu's conversion led to the ending of all of her marriages, freeing Kaumualii from his requisite familial subservience to the islands' sovereign.⁹³

Kauai's king embraced the mission station at Waimea, providing for the missionaries there and encouraging their message of Christian morality and learning. In return for his kindness and support, Charles Stewart called Kaumualii "more civilized, more dignified, more like a Christian, than any of his fellows." His eagerness to adopt Christian principals gave him immense popularity among the missionaries, making his protracted death from disease in May of 1824 more tragic to the ABCFM than earlier deaths among the ali'i. Kaahumanu provided her home for Christian funerary rites and as a place of gathering for the Hawaiian governors and the missionaries who traveled to Kauai to pay their final respects. While burial rituals helped further unite the nobility and the mission, the passing of Kaumualii also held the potential to endanger the mission as

⁹² Thurston, 80, quotation.

⁹³ Wyndette, 91. Stewart, 105.

his son, Prince George, reviled all that Liholiho represented. Open warfare, the traditional result of high-ranking deaths, seemed imminent to Hiram Bingham, who immediately sought out Humehume upon learning of Kaumualii's death.⁹⁴

Kaumualii failed to appoint an heir before his death, leaving several rival chiefs vying for support in their bids for ascension to Kauai's throne. Despite the king's personal example, traditional beliefs and practices still dominated the island. The power vacuum combined with the popularity of the old ways to create a powder keg in the western end of the archipelago. ABCFM representatives feared the situation would spiral into a violent confrontation between chiefs seeking control of the island. Humehume saw things differently. In his view, the time was ripe for his ascension above all other claimants.

Hiram Bingham found Prince George in a situation far removed from their shared New England experiences, "living much in the original native style, in a dingy, dirty, thatched house at the sea-side." During a two-hour discussion, the Hawaiian revealed his suspicion that some of the more powerful ali'i, including Kaahumanu, poisoned both he and his father. Bingham tried to convince the man that Kaumualii died a natural death, but Humehume remained stalwart in his conviction that Liholiho's followers murdered his father. After failing to convince his host that no one sought the prince's death, the mission leader left the angry would-be monarch sitting in his jungle hut and made his way back to the station. Prime Minister Kalanimoku, who put down an attempted insurrection after Kamehameha's death, and a detachment of royal troops wasted no time in arriving on the island in an attempt to preempt any treasonous overtures made by

⁹⁴ Ibid., 291, quotation. Bingham, *Residence*, 223-230.

Kauai's chiefs. On August 8, 1824, Humehume's insurgent forces assaulted the fort in Waimea. Chaos briefly reigned as Humehume's followers stormed the fort and climbed the walls, calling for the citizens to join them in their fight against Liholiho's authority. The four missionaries in Kauai at the time—the Bingham and the Whitney—fled the scene in a canoe, not stopping even to collect fresh clothing for themselves or their two infants. Kalanimoku's forces swiftly counterattacked, storming the fort and driving their opponents out of the village. The prime minister avoided direct participation in the battle, but other ranking ali'i, both men and women, entered the fray, winning back the fort in a matter of hours.⁹⁵

Open rebelliousness faded as regal reinforcements arrived. Humehume's failure to regroup and press the attack allowed his opponents time to bolster their forces in the fort as word of the Prince's assault quickly spread throughout the islands. Ten days after the insurrection began, loyalist troops massed in Waimea, where men and women from Oahu joined loyal Kauaiians preparing an inland assault. Chief Hoapili, the royal guardian of Kamehameha's household, led the eight-mile march towards the rival encampment, stopping only to observe the Sabbath on the 22nd. The following day, the Hawaiian soldiers offered prayers to Jehovah and launched their attack. Humehume's men fled as their opponents drew near, some forty or fifty dying in their retreat. Prince George fled into the mountains with his wife and child, avoiding capture for several weeks. The fighting immediately stopped and the revolt died out completely with its

⁹⁵ Ibid., 229, quotation, 233-235. Kaumualii built the fort in 1815 to fend off a Russian attempt to take the island as a winter anchorage. Porteus, 197-198. Stewart, 313. Journal of the mission, 10 August 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.3, 232. Prince George's revolt appears in two journal entries completely devoid of editorializing or moralizing. Full coverage of the event first appeared in Hiram Bingham's letter to the Prudential Committee dated 9 September 1824.

leader's eventual arrest and deportation to Honolulu, cementing Liholiho's hold on the island.⁹⁶

Bewildering surprises faced the missionaries during both the rebellion and its aftermath. Relative stability dominated the government throughout the first five years of the mission. The foreigners' writings from when fighting broke out, in mid-1824, convey a sense of amazement at the resurfacing of the old patterns of behavior. Christian hopes that their teachings could prevent successionary wars proved futile, leaving them prayerful that not only would God protect the faithful but grant mercy to the king's opponents. Loyalist reactions partially answered those prayers. After his capture, Humehume spent the rest of his life in a state of "open arrest" in Honolulu. The would-be king remained free to roam Oahu as he wished, but the royal guards ensured he never returned to Kauai. He died in his public prison a few years after his failed coup attempt.⁹⁷

Hawaiian history held no precedent for this punishment. Successionary losers tended to lose their heads, not just their opportunity to rule. Kamakakini, one of Prince George's closest supporters, graphically exemplified the continuation of the old methods for dealing with captives. Captured during the loyalist counter-attack that retook the fort, Kamakakini's battle ended with the Prince's lieutenant bound hand and foot and locked in a below decks holding cell on one of Liholiho's brigs. The next morning, Hiram Bingham descended into the hold to talk with the prisoner, finding only an empty cell. The shocked missionary soon learned that sometime in the night the ship's captain brought Kamakakini on deck, stabbed him, and threw his still-bound body overboard.

⁹⁶ Bingham, *Residence*, 236-239. Stewart, 313, 319.

⁹⁷ Bingham, *Residence*, 239. Daws, 72.

The mission teachings had influence, but not to the extent the missionaries desired. Individual leaders still occasionally took swift judiciary action on their own without regard to new concepts of protocol and mercy. Despite this legacy of brutality, the winds of change blew stronger than tradition could withstand; high-ranking officials began rethinking their usual punishments, instead following Asa Thurston's merciful model from the mission's early months. Humehume's remarkable survival marked another turning point in the mission's status; the uppermost authority present in the islands not only verbally endorsed Christian teachings but also acted in a manner that reflected those teachings. Ali'i in the highest levels of leadership became an effective tool of the mission in its effort to convert the nation.⁹⁸

Despite four years of first-hand experience with female empowerment, the wartime role of the Hawaiian women also stunned the mission. American women often suffered during wartime, directly through the loss of their homes and property or indirectly through the loss of fathers, sons, and husbands, but rarely engaged directly in the fighting. Even in the comparative equality of modern America, women rarely enter into direct military combat. Hawaiian women knew that war directly involved their safety; odds were good that if a rival group overran their village everyone left alive would not remain that way for long. The sight of the middle-aged Kaahumanu running with a sword, fully capable of using it effectively, startled the missionaries but appeared perfectly normal, if somewhat disconcerting, to the Hawaiians. While a minor feature of the rebellion in Hawaiian eyes, the sight of women in combat presented the mission company with an astonishing experience. Even more unexpected situations bracketed the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 236.

Kauaiian rebellion, situations that served to define Hawaii's theopolitical path for the rest of the century.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Sources disagree about Kaahumanu's birth date, but all place her in her forties or fifties at the time of the Kauaiian revolt.

Royal Assistance

Ironically, the two greatest breakthroughs for the ABCFM came from its most powerful resistor, King Liholiho. Two years after the missionaries' arrival, Liholiho pledged to their leader that his wicked licentiousness prevented him from focusing on learning the new religion and that he needed time to adjust to their new ideas. While he permitted others to receive instruction, the king insisted that he would allow Bingham and the others to personally instruct him after five additional years passed, setting the date of his first genuine lesson sometime in 1827. In late 1823, Liholiho decided to visit England with the goal of increasing his politico-commercial power. A new avenue to convince the Hawaiian sovereign of the importance of conversion manifested during the preparations for the royal voyage: Liholiho needed a trustworthy translator. William Ellis volunteered himself for the role, seeking not only a captive audience with the monarch but also a reprieve for his ailing wife. The plan passed mission and ali'i muster, falling short only when the captain of the planned vessel—Capt. Valentine Starbuck of the *L'Aigle*—refused the missionaries room aboard his ship, first claiming a dearth of room then, when his ship's surgeon offered up his own stateroom and the King proffered payment, declared he could not take on paying passengers. The missionaries mourned this loss of access, but much native pomp and circumstance, as well as sporadic outbursts of wailing, accompanied the deputation's embarkation. On November 27, the king and

his six-person retinue, including the mission-advocating Boki, departed their tropical Pacific kingdom for the northern Atlantic island.¹⁰⁰

Despite Rev. Ellis's inability to join the suite, the mission ecstatically encouraged the voyage for the simple reason that it took Liholiho out of their proselytic path. The most powerful man in Hawaii also proved himself the greatest roadblock to mission success in their plan to convert the nation. Liholiho spent a great deal of time drunk and preferred the company of women to the rigors of scholarship, the antithesis of conduct desirable to the mission. Having just put down one religion, supporting a new belief system held little interest for him. During the king's absence, Prime Minister Kalanimoku and the dowager queen Kaahumanu ran the government in his stead. These close friends of the ABCFM provided superior role models for the ideals the mission sought to spread. The gathering of chiefs on Oahu honoring the king's departure allowed them a rare opportunity to discuss current events and ideas as chiefs from Hawai'i rarely conferenced with their Kauaiian counterparts. Among the topics discussed, several ali'i presented positive views of the mission schools and the Christian faith. In so doing, they planted the seeds of curiosity even as they failed to gain greater immediate support.¹⁰¹

Liholiho's absence improved the morale of the ABCFM. Having monogamous, tee-totaling individuals running the country suited the New Englanders far better than did rule by an amoral king. The interim leadership's declaration of strict adherence to Christian instruction, including increased legislation of Sabbath observation among their subjects, overjoyed the ABCFM. Reported occurrences illustrate the spread of this

¹⁰⁰ Silva, 34. Stewart, 237. Zwiép, 154. Bingham, *Residence*, 202. Judd, 19, 90. Stewart, 238.

¹⁰¹ Smith, 106. Thurston, 36. Bingham, 205.

particular law. In one such instance, William Ellis came across three men working on a house during the day of rest. When the reverend asked why they willingly violated local legislation, the three men explained that they came from far away and did not know the law. Informed that they remained guilt free due to their ignorance but must cease working now that they knew the law, the men replied, “why then did you tell us.” After further discussion, the men agreed to postpone completion of their work until the next day. To many Hawaiians, the law came across as a rebirth of the kapu system, but it spread with only marginal reported opposition. That Kaahumanu, the driving force behind the abolition of the kapus, supported the new prohibitions signaled the seriousness of the leader’s devotion.¹⁰²

In opposition to the rejoicing that accompanied Liholiho’s departure, March 9, 1825, marked one of the most frightening days in the short life of the mission. On that day, the American whaler *Almira* sailed into Honolulu with news of Liholiho and Queen Kamehamaru’s deaths in London, a report that ultimately provided one of the greatest shocks the mission experienced in all of its time in Hawaii. Word of his death not only startled the missionaries but it stunned the native population. Both groups immediately imagined the worst—open warfare between chiefs seeking their own elevation in rank and power. Much of this terror stemmed from Liholiho’s heir, the 11-year-old Kauikeaouli, who held no authority beyond his older brother’s nomination. Tension built over the days immediately following the whaler’s report, but soon eased as it became apparent that none of the ali’i sought to contest Kauikeaouli’s right to eventually assume

¹⁰² Howe, 171. Journal of the mission, 27 June 1824, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.3, 232, quotation.

the throne. Kaahumanu and Kalanimoku, the effective leaders in Liholiho's absence, maintained their regency and, upon hearing the news of the king's demise, wrote to the most powerful chiefs asking for a season of prayer and quietude. Miraculously, the ali'i agreed. Thus the first shock encountered during the successionary period manifested itself in the total lack of violence immediately following news of the king's death. Manoa Valley echoed with voices raised in Christian mourning, led by the missionaries, instead of the cries of warriors on the march.¹⁰³

Liholiho's death during a period of regency came as a happy accident, one that allowed a peaceful transition of official authority. Because two elder ali'i already held power, and because both Kaahumanu and Kalanimoku previously possessed great influence in the king's administration, there was no jarring transition of control. In a sense, nothing actually changed with the death of Kamehameha the Great's successor. While it is possible that the lesser chiefs chose to wait for proof of the events reported before deciding to rebel or remain loyal, it is more likely that any who sought to claim power for themselves would act in the immediate instability following the arrival of the sad report. Either choice would prove problematic for power-hungry ali'i. If they opted to strike immediately, they faced two formidable foes that had swiftly crushed an insurgency less than a year earlier. If the news proved false and Liholiho still lived, the attempted power struggle turned into treason, ensuring the full brunt of royal retaliation. Additionally, anyone choosing to wait until the king's body returned to Hawaii risked facing a fight against warriors passionately driven by their grief. These variables worked

¹⁰³ Bingham, 203, 260-261. Smith, 121. Stewart, 334. Charles Stewart's journal reports the *Almira* arrived on March 10, while Judd and Lind make no mention of that ship ever putting in to port in Hawaii. Wyndette, 113.

against any power hungry chiefs, effectively preventing any rebellious action at all, a scenario welcomed by the concerned missionaries.

Additional surprises arrived alongside the king's mortal remains. Boki, the senior member of the returning delegation, returned to Lahaina May 4, 1825. As he rowed ashore, throngs of Hawaiians massed around his landing point, some wailing as he reached land. Hoapili and the other chiefs from the region rose from their seats to greet Boki with a mighty roar and then supplicated themselves in the sand to mourn Liholiho. After several minutes of this traditional display, Boki halted it with the simple question, "Where shall we pray?" Two days later the party re-embarked for Oahu, where they met Kaahumanu and four of the mission men, including Hiram Bingham and Charles Stewart. After another display of wailing and Christian prayer, Boki spoke on the truthfulness and importance of Christianity. During this profession of faith, Boki told how King George instructed him, saying "take good care of the missionaries, for they were sent to teach the nation the good word of God, and to enlighten and do them good."¹⁰⁴

Boki never supported the mission to the same extent as the Prime Minister and Queen Regent, yet his revelation of King George's support for the Americans not only improved morale among the whites but also helped convince the converted Hawaiian Christians that they chose the right path. The King of England held prestige even in these tiny islands far removed from his own. If he drew power from his Christian roots, many converts felt, then it must be a worthy religion for all. Further aid for the ABCFM effort came from Boki's insistence on Christian prayer immediately upon his return. After only five years of effort, the Hawaiian leadership now placed Christianity over their ancient

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 262, first quotation, 264. Journal of the mission, 6 May 1825, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 234, second quotation.

religion. Wailing did not disappear, but it took on a different meaning of a secular nature. No longer did the people cry out to the gods and make a spiritual link with their wails. Now the raised voices of the people signified their sorrow over their loss, but the spiritual aspect left with the retreating tide. The mission discovered a new level of authority, bolstered by Boki, Kaahumanu, Kalanimoku, and the other converted ali'i as they announced their intent to follow mission teachings in all aspects of their lives. The public display of Christian mourning showed that even in the islands' darkest hour, the foreign religion held fast against the old beliefs and traditions.¹⁰⁵

Further proof of Christianity's inroads came with the delivery of Liholiho's body to Honolulu. Unlike the king's departure, his return contained little of the uproarious celebration traditionally associated with a royal voyage. Mission members appeared relieved at the subdued reception that greeted Liholiho's remains. The body arrived in the islands on May 3, 1825, aboard the *Blonde*, a British frigate under the command of Lord Byron. Liholiho's disembarkation on May 11 required great planning, involving ten different groups—ranging from the new king and his sister to a group of one hundred sailors from the *Blonde*—processing along the funeral route from the port to the mausoleum. Mission leaders processed immediately before the coffins and presided over a Christian memorial service. This last act, the Christian remembrance of a heathen king, perhaps best symbolizes the mission's ultimate triumph over the Hawaiian royalty.¹⁰⁶

Hiram Bingham morbidly rejoiced in the king's return, noting the “vanity of the mirth and wine, the pomp and pride, the distinction and power, of which these departed

¹⁰⁵ Bradley, 144.

¹⁰⁶ Journal of the mission, 6 May 1825, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v. 3, 234. Capt. George A. Byron, the famed poet's immediate successor, held the title of Lord Byron at this time. Judd, 20. Stewart, 348-350.

ones, for a brief period, could once boast.” In the mission’s eyes, Liholiho’s tragic death served notice to the islanders that not even the most powerful man in the islands could escape ultimate judgment at the foot of God. Additional joy stemmed from the dearth of non-Christian observances during the mourning period following interment. The wailing that accompanied Boki’s arrival is conspicuously absent from mission recollections of the royal funeral. Instead, Godly observances of humility dominated the mourners, at least in the area immediately around Honolulu Bay. Perhaps mission writers selectively omitted any mention of the traditional means of lamentation, but records from only days earlier detail the native methods of marking loss making intentional omission appear unlikely. Regardless of record keeping, Christianity showed the full extent of its influence in the aftermath of Liholiho and Kamehamaru’s funeral.¹⁰⁷

A minor conflict that arose during preparations for the procession also highlighted the changes brought about during the societal shift towards Christianity. Liholiho’s sister played a vital role in the funerary proceedings, escorting Kauikeaouli throughout the funeral events, a highly visible role that called for clothing appropriate to the situation. Several of the chiefs suggested that she wear the traditional dress designed for the return of the king from a long journey. Charles Stewart described the article as “a splendid garment of yellow feathers, edged with the vandyke pattern, points alternate black and red, and lined with crimson satin.” Measuring nine yards long and intricately sewn, it impressed the missionary as it lay spread out in view. Despite the traditional gown’s beauty, the princess balked at the suggestion she wear it in the procession. Her complaint stemmed from the nature of the outfit: the garment reached the floor from the waist,

¹⁰⁷ Bingham, *Residence*, 267.

leaving the wearer's upper body fully exposed. Christian modesty learned in the mission school prevented her from accepting the traditional fashion, regardless of symbolic importance. As the procession time drew near, the girl fled the mission house, returning to take her place in European dress with the Hawaiian gown draped over her. A simple gesture no one would have contested five years before sparked a minor controversy in the name of the new religion. The missionaries admired the traditional wrap, but admired the young woman's determination, the embodiment of their teachings, more.¹⁰⁸

Less than a month after the funeral, Kaahumanu, Kalanimoku, Kapiolani, and several other leading ali'i notified the mission of their desire to be baptized, the crowning symbolic act of Christian transformation. This request not only signified agreement with the mission's theology, it also showed a willingness to accept the integration of New England culture into Hawaiian society. In order to learn the tenets of Christianity well enough to pass the examinations required of adult baptismal candidates, prospective members needed a firm grasp on English language and customs, including manners and dress. Mission preachers expected their followers to maintain polite levels of decorum during worship services; under no circumstance would the mission leaders agree to baptize a topless woman, even if she possessed perfect ability to recite scripture. With all of their own conceptions of what made a person a Christian, Bingham and the other evangelical decision-makers initially balked at the leaders' request, deferring the mission's official response to the end of a proposed six-month probationary period.¹⁰⁹

With this request the mission discovered a measure of control over the ali'i. Worldly gain is useful, even desirable, but to believers, eternal blessings from the throne

¹⁰⁸ Stewart, 343. The specific princess is not named in Stewart's narrative.

¹⁰⁹ Bingham, *Residence*, 267-268. Smith, 125.

of God trump earthly comforts. By imposing the six-month wait, the proselytizers made it clear that they held the power to grant full acceptance into Christian and, by extension, Western society. Liholiho sought his own entry into industrialized society through his monarchical rank as his nation's sovereign. Sadly, status at home rarely translated to status abroad. King George never viewed the Hawaiian as his equal, his offer of protectorate status to the newly kingless nation reveals as much. Through religion, all people became nominally equal, opening doors otherwise closed to non-believers. Acceptance of Christianity proved learning ability and showed a level of civilization whites denied to outside cultures, especially uneducated heathens. Presented to the ali'i as a means of integration into the powerful ranks of respected nations, Christianity offered more than salvation; it offered equality to those nations, an impressive mark of national success.

Conclusions

The erroneous expectations of the first group of American missionaries sent to Hawaii directly led to immense initial skepticism and worry on the part of the proselytizers, but fears and reservations gradually fell away as progress slowly emerged from the troubled effort. Christian emissaries expected to find a nation unified under a strong king who utilized the kapu system to maintain his control over a heathen people. What they found—a sophisticated, kapu-less government in transition away from its old theology—confounded them and rendered moot many of their preparations. Through a combination of religious conviction, ali'i support, and sheer force of will, the ABCFM ultimately succeeded in firmly establishing a Protestant beachhead in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

The published histories of Hawaii and of the missionaries mention different aspects of life the missionaries found surprising—food, language, and morality chief among them—but they fail to provide analysis of either the causes or the outcomes of the surprises. This prevents a fuller view of the situation and the missionaries' actions; understanding why they felt a certain way about a situation allows understanding of their reaction. It is easy to oversimplify, even vilify, the missionaries' deeds without comprehending the motivations behind their actions. The evolution of Hawaiian historical study and commentary follows the same pattern as the studies of other elements of American—and European—history: praise the “discoverers” almost unquestioningly, canonize the “civilized” followers who imposed their own notions of propriety, question the accuracy of earlier accounts, begin balancing American and indigenous accounts, and

finally, lament the deliberate destruction of a native culture by the interlopers. In the case of the Hawaiian ABCFM effort, the truth lies in this middle ground; the missionaries do not deserve sainthood, but they did not set out with the explicit goal of forcing the Hawaiians to completely adopt New England's ways. The goal of this study is to help bridge the gap between savior and destroyer by correlating unexpected happenings and the reactions to those events. Scholars must appreciate that the missionaries were neither saints nor devils; their presence in Hawaiian history is far too complicated to strip down to sound-bite status.

The Arminian theology of the ABCFM spurred the effort to convert the islands, not a desire to remake Kamehameha's kingdom into a mirror of nineteenth century Bostonian culture. Blind devotion to the goal of conversion prevented consideration of the larger impact the importation of Christian morality and legalism might have on the established culture. Hiram Bingham did not sail with the intention of ridding the islands of the hula, but his own moral code led to his conclusion that Christianity and the long, sexually charged celebrations could not coexist. The mission's divine interpretation of the abandonment of the kapu system convinced it of the justness of its intentions. Wholesale cultural change came as a product of the effort, not the driving purpose.

Early in the voyage, individual members of the ABCFM delegation began realigning their priorities and shifting their focus, temporarily, onto concerns of the flesh. Cramped quarters, bad weather, and seasickness brought noble ideals down to earth, as physical discomfort tends to draw ones' thoughts away from the divine. The length of the journey also provided time to reconsider individual desires. Some members seemed to initially enjoy the challenge of remaining resolute in times of trial. Others took the

opposite approach, using the journey to reassure themselves of impending misery. Regardless of their individual outlook, every member of the group found their expectations shattered upon arriving in Kawaihae. Months of preparation for their assault on Kamehameha's kapu became confused within mere moments as they learned of the dramatic changes sweeping through the islands.

Initial journal entries align with the negative reaction recorded in Bingham's memoirs. Despite the reported native abandonment of the indigenous religion, the Christians felt uneasy being in a land of "Mammons" and quickly realigned their priorities and expectations. All of the early responses to Hawaiian culture filtered through newly imported theology. From the drunkenness of the new king, Liholiho, to the unexpected authority of women, both Hawaiian and American, the missionaries tried to rationalize their findings through their biblical focus, further confusing an already surprising situation. The first days ashore brought new sources of anxiety as the newcomers began planning to adapt their plans to fit a situation far different from the one they expected to find.¹¹⁰

The first surprises ranged from the squalor of their provided residences a threatening encounter with a formerly powerful member of the Hawaiian priesthood. Outside influences brought by white merchants horrified the mission, especially the heavy consumption of alcohol and the utilization of sexual intercourse as a normal part of the trading process. Many of the sailors wanted nothing to do with the implementation of moral limitations like those left behind in their home countries. Proselytization among the islanders took priority, but the need to assault imported vices compounded their

¹¹⁰ Journal of the mission, 30 March 1820, ABCFM Archives, ABC 19.1 v.1, 9.

difficulties. Fortunately, a handful of powerful chiefs saw merit in the teachings of the missionaries and protected them from both ideological and physical attacks. As more ali'i sought foreign learning, the public took greater interest in mission offerings.

Unfortunately for the ABCFM, conversion traveled both ways, leading to the unexpected departure of William Kanui from their fold, a blow to both morale and membership.¹¹¹

A deeper rupture within the group brought about greater distress when Thomas and Lucia Holman found their contact shock too great to overcome and elected to depart the mission as soon as possible. Dr. Holman butted heads with several of his peers, particularly the group's ordained leadership; plans existed for responding to Hawaiian resistance, not internal discord. The ultimate excommunication of the two dissenters dampened spirits and medically left the station in dire straits. Official records and personal recollections downplay or omit the rupture, but the psychological impact cast a pall over the mission.

Spiritual surprises further confounded the mission ideals. Widespread practice of the old religion still lingered several years after its official abolition, requiring careful instruction of Christian ways at every possibility. The hula, once sacred but divorced from the spiritual realm when the kapus fell, stunned the mission observers with its blunt sexuality and enormous popularity. ABCFM records show a great admiration of the effort involved in the costuming and rehearsal coupled with enormous disappointment that so much Hawaiian energy went to the celebration rather than more noble, Christ-like pursuits. Mourning practices further befuddled the missionaries who could not

¹¹¹ Zwiép, 151.

comprehend the meanings behind seemingly bizarre funerary behaviors. Illness also took a harsh toll, tragically providing new opportunities to give Christian instruction.

Spring of 1823 brought the second wave of missionaries to the islands, their shock exceeding that of the trailblazers four years before. Rather than an idyllic Christian land, they found sickly American preachers and a king more interested in earthly wine than sacramental blood. It is reasonable to expect the second group to be more prepared than their forebears for the realities of island life due to four years worth of reports sent from the station. The ABCFM leadership's interest in increasing their island representation likely prevented a full accounting of events reaching the new recruits, increasing the effects of contact shock rather than lessening them.

Fortunately, not all surprises proved unpleasant for the missionaries. Natural beauty surrounded the effort, providing endless inspiration for the prayers of the faithful. After a few initial typographic shortages, the printing press proved more successful than anyone expected, providing both reading materials for the students and a link to the merchant captains in need of tracts. This new alliance led to increased support from whites and helped temper occasional bouts of open hostility from some of the more contemptuous sailors. Important ali'i, including Kaahumanu and Kaumualii, gave their full support to the mission and implemented radical changes to the Hawaiian justice system, as illustrated in the mercy shown to Prince George after his failed insurrection.

None of the unexpected events of the first four years—both good and bad—prepared the missionaries for the native reaction to Liholiho's sudden death abroad. The nation braced for the traditional successionary war, but no such challenge arose. Instead, the regents ruling in his place, both supporters of the Christian effort, maintained their

role and granted greater leeway to the proselytization movement. Assistance from the top levels of Hawaiian government gave a great boost to station morale and fuelled the beginning of Hawaii's wholesale conversion to not only Christianity, but to a distinctly non-Hawaiian way of life.

In the face of all the surprises and discomforts the mission faced, the first half decade of the American mission effort in Hawaii shaped life and politics in the island kingdom through the end of the 19th century. Ideas and beliefs offered up to a skeptical king failed to alter his rule, but commanded the attention of the powerful subordinates to the throne. Mission interference with the existing trade patterns between Hawaii and the European and American merchants forced changes to the Hawaiian economic structure as morality collided with commerce. Practices once encouraged by the ali'i—heavy drinking, prostitution, and polygamy—fell into scorn as Christian ethics took root throughout the archipelago.

One of the most persistent puzzles facing students of Hawaiian history is the question of whether or not the missionaries intended to change native society to the extent they did. Based on their words, the first American missionaries desired Christian salvation for their charges, not total control for themselves. Nothing in the early texts gives any hint of selfish designs to wrest political control from the ali'i; the official records and personal memoirs display a single-minded devotion to religious conversion, a goal that surpassed all considerations beyond basic survival. Instead of creating focused political machinations, the mission likely failed to consider all the changes that conversion entailed. It is a simple matter to decide to inspire others to follow your own theology, but all of the other facets of life that change alongside one's religion make for a

much more complicated arrangement. Surprises that arose as the missionaries dealt with clothing, language, dance, idleness, and warfare all stemmed from their lack of forethought about the multitudinous peripheral matters that surround religious belief. Much like a clueless tourist ordering a ham and cheese sandwich in an Israeli deli, Hiram Bingham, Charles Stewart, Lucy Thurston, and the others simply failed to consider the ramifications of their decisions.

This larger failure led to the seemingly endless series of surprises encountered by the first two waves of proselytizers in the Hawaiian Islands. Missionary training and preparation focused on theological and spiritual concerns and the need for a spouse loomed far larger than the need for an intricate understanding of the American judicial system. At times the planning process appears clumsy at best, inept at worst. Changes in the Hawaiian power structure during the *Thaddeus's* voyage led to situations beyond the proselytizers' imaginations, placing the missionaries in a situation beyond even their well-intentioned preparations. Careful planning for Kamehameha's court left them unready to deal with Liholiho and Kaahumanu's abolition of the kapu system. The mental chaos of the islanders compounded the missionaries' own confusion, adding to the likelihood of encountering a situation they could not have previously conceived of. Drunk, naked priests lolling about in the mission house never factored into the plans laid out in Boston.

Within the context of the early 19th century American evangelical movement there existed no means of preparing for the vast cultural differences encountered in the missionary field. Stories recounted by sailors and sojourners failed to capture the enormity of the religious situation in the Hawaiian Islands. Fascinations with clothing—

or lack thereof—and profit potential dominated reports filtering back to the mainland. Nuance does not travel well, especially in the minds of sailors starved for female company. Just as Captain Cook's writings led to a false impression of Tahiti in the imagination of the London Missionary Society twenty years earlier, the tales of adventurers returning from the Pacific led to severe misconceptions within the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Surprise, while not inevitable, certainly appeared an obvious outcome of the endeavor. The mission organization focused so tightly on the conversion process that major considerations about living in a strange new land appeared almost inconsequential. As the Holmans' abandonment of mission ideals vividly illustrated, ignorance of the situation you insert yourself in rarely leads to a pleasant outcome. Mission documents and personal commentaries reveal the dangers inherent in making assumptions and neglecting vital components of a major overseas venture. Most surprising of all, the missionaries managed to overcome their mental and societal shocks, successfully achieving the delivery of God's light to those who lived in the darkness, even if the shadows that stretched across the Hawaiian Islands did not match the visitors' expectations.

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ABSTRACT

MISSION: IMPLAUSIBLE SURPRISE AND SUCCESS IN THE HAWAIIAN MISSION, 1819-1825

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The erroneous expectations of the first group of American missionaries sent to Hawaii directly led to immense initial skepticism and worry on the part of the proselytizers, but fears and reservations gradually fell away as progress slowly emerged from the troubled effort. New impressions collided with preconceived notions to shape decades of Christian / Hawaiian interaction as the first two groups of New England proselytizers grappled with an unceasing series of surprises. Many historians have written about this intersection of cultures, but few have analyzed the intentions behind the mission's actions, preferring to simplify the Christians as either saints or demons. This study seeks to find the reasons behind missionary surprise in Hawaii, using their own words to narrow the gap between hagiography and demonization.