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The British Influence on the Hawaiian Islands

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The state flag of Hawaii is unique among the flags of the United States. It has flown over Hawaii while the state was a kingdom and a republic, then a territory of the United States, and finally a state. It is older than many states that were added to the United States of America before Hawaii was.<sup>1</sup> But most peculiar is what appears in the upper left corner of the flag; the Union Jack, better known as the flag of the United Kingdom.

The story of how Hawaii came to be a part of the United States is well known, but what about the connections between Great Britain and the kingdom of Hawaii? The state flag is a representation of Anglo-centrism among the elites of Hawaii that goes back to the first visits to the islands by Europeans. Hawaiians took Anglicized names and even offered the kingdom itself to the British. What caused the royalty of Hawaii to be so obsessed with the British rather than the Americans that eventually gained control of the islands? Was it the actions of the British that pulled the Hawaiians in their direction, or did the attitudes of the other foreign powers in Hawaii push them there?

### **Royal Fraternity**

Perhaps the most interesting facet of the relationship between Hawaii and Great Britain is the sense of royal fraternity that existed in the Hawaiian royal family.

The islands were not united under a single government until after the Europeans discovered them. The unification process was greatly influenced by both the British and European weaponry, although this influence was not always intentional. The British presence during the formative years of the Kingdom of Hawaii had a lasting effect on the

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<sup>1</sup> "Flag of Hawaii," <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Hawaii](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Hawaii)>, 23 February 2006

tendencies of the royal family and other high ranking chiefs. Their love of British customs and their perception of their relationship with the British royal family guided their actions and manners in sometimes peculiar ways.

British relations in Hawaii had an inauspicious start in 1779 with the death of the famed discoverer Captain Cook in Kealakekua Bay. Although it is possible that Cook was not the first European to visit the islands<sup>2</sup>, it is his arrival that brought Hawaii into the world of the European powers. His appearance in the islands happened to coincide with the festival of Lono; the priests of Lono treated him as a representation of the god. Although there were a few instances of stealing and Cook's men managed to infect many of the more than willing native women with venereal disease<sup>3</sup>, for the most part there were no problems in his initial visit.

Three days after Cook left the islands the mast of one of his ships, the *Resolution*, was broken during a storm. There was no choice but to return to Hawaii to attempt to repair it. The festival of Lono was over by the time they returned, and there would be no joyous welcome for Cook this time. During the repair operation a boat was stolen from the *Discovery*. Captain Cook was stabbed to death on the beach of Kealakekua while attempting to bring back one of the Hawaiian chiefs, Kalaniopuu, to question him about the theft.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this bad beginning it was one of the men who helped kill Cook that would unify Hawaii and place the Union Jack in the country's flag.<sup>5</sup> The future King

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<sup>2</sup> Erik Wilhelm Dahlgren, Were the Hawaiian Islands Visited by the Spaniards before their Discovery by Captain Cook in 1778? (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1917)

<sup>3</sup> Gavan Daws, Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 9

<sup>4</sup> Daws, 16-20

<sup>5</sup> Daws, 29

Kamehameha started his conquest of the Hawaiian Islands in 1782 by defeating his cousin Kiwalao at the battle of Mokuohai. His main rival in the war to unify the islands was Kahekili, the chief in command of Oahu and Maui, whose half-brother Kaeokulani ruled Kauai. Kamehameha and Kahekili began a Hawaiian arms race to see who could possess the most foreign artillery as quickly as possible. Kamehameha's men captured a schooner called the *Fair American* and a small cannon that the Hawaiians named Lopaka. To use this bounty two westerners were taken and impressed into service: Isaac Davis and John Young.<sup>6</sup> Kahekili responded with his own foreign gunner, a man named Mare Amara.<sup>7</sup>

As both men were already quite familiar with European weaponry and its effects in battle, they knew exactly what to ask for when foreigners showed up, and they were prepared to barter the most valuable things they had to get it. Honolulu harbor was discovered by a British merchant named William Brown in either 1792 or 1793, when each of the two warring chiefs had one cannon. Brown had a thirty gun frigate named *Butterworth*. He used his position to negotiate with Kahekili; the chief ceded Honolulu harbor and possibly the entirety of the island of Oahu in exchange for Brown's promise of military support.<sup>8</sup>

A more important contribution to the British relationship with Hawaii was made by Captain George Vancouver in 1794. It is from this visit that Kamehameha's feelings towards the British formed. Vancouver had been in the islands with Captain Cook when he was murdered. Kamehameha approached Vancouver as a friend, and Vancouver put

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<sup>6</sup> Daws, 33-34

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<sup>8</sup> Daws, 37-38

aside his own distaste at working with someone partially responsible for Cook's death.<sup>9</sup> Kamehameha wanted a large armed vessel out of Vancouver; Vancouver wanted to end the fight between the chiefs peacefully. However, the Captain also felt he had an obligation to the British Empire.<sup>10</sup> Although "my promises...were not sufficient to remove his suspicions,"<sup>11</sup> Vancouver did succeed in getting Kamehameha to cede the islands to Great Britain as a protectorate. No weapons or ships were given at the time, only a vague promise that one would come soon. Vancouver would not directly aid Kamehameha or any other Hawaiian chief militarily.<sup>12</sup> Although the immediate effects of this agreement were few, the deal between Kamehameha and Vancouver established a precedent for a British protectorate in the islands, an issue that would be brought up repeatedly in the future.

Kamehameha did not finish his conquest of the Hawaiian Islands until 1805. For his last battle foreign shipwrights built him fleets of schooners and he purchased as much artillery from merchants as he could manage. He obsessed over having a grand fleet of European ships. His armada was never put to use due to an epidemic that cut his last campaign short. Instead of conquering Kauai, the last island holdout, he merely accepted tribute from the chief in charge of it, Kaumualii.<sup>13</sup>

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the success of Honolulu harbor in particular and the islands' trade in general was showing in interesting ways. The American and British influence could be seen in the Anglicized names the Hawaiian chiefs were tattooing on themselves; everything from Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to Tom Paine could

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<sup>9</sup> George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean*, vol. 5 (London: 1801), 55

<sup>10</sup> Daws, 38

<sup>11</sup> Vancouver, 57

<sup>12</sup> Daws, 38

<sup>13</sup> Daws, 41-43

be found at Honolulu. Kamehameha's own Prime Minister, Kalanimoku, had the name "Billy Pitt" on his arm.<sup>14</sup>

The feeling of royal fraternity with Great Britain did not disappear when the Americans came. Kamehameha continued to feel a close connection with the British even though the United States quickly became Hawaii's largest trading partner. In 1816 he created the Ka Hae Hawai'i, the flag of Hawaii, which incorporated the Union Jack in the upper left corner; before the Ka Hae Hawai'i Kamehameha simply flew the British flag itself over his boats and compounds.<sup>15</sup> He wrote letters of good will to the Hanoverian royal family and requests for British ships until his death. Kaumualii, his tributary chief on Kauai, went even further in his obsession with the British, referring to himself as "King George." He gave his family names from the British royal house as well, including his son, also named George Kaumualii, who would later visit America and then lead a drunken rebellion against the government while King Kamehameha II was away in London.<sup>16</sup>

When the mood struck him Kamehameha would dress himself up as a European monarch. Merchants brought him the clothes he needed to fit the part, and when a ship came into port the king would sometimes come out seated on a gun chest with a silver sword at his side. However, a vessel entering port was just as likely to be greeted by the king dressed in nothing more than a loin cloth.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship with Great Britain did not end with Kamehameha's death, either. His son Liholiho, or Kamehameha II, had the same feelings towards the British. When

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<sup>14</sup> Daws, 48

<sup>15</sup> "Flag of Hawaii"

<sup>16</sup> Daws, 50 & 72

<sup>17</sup> Daws, 44

the first American missionaries arrived in 1820 Liholiho accepted their gifts but kept them waiting for several days before meeting them, partially because he was worried that they would offend the British.<sup>18</sup> The new Kamehameha even offered up the islands themselves to King George IV in a letter, begging “leave to place them under the protection of your most excellent Majesty.”<sup>19</sup>

So much did Liholiho love the British that he would die in London. Preparations for his visit to England began in 1823. The American missionaries in the islands, led by Hiram Bingham, were adamantly against this and tried to convince the king to visit America instead. He would have none of it. Liholiho arrived in London in 1824, but he never met George IV. Soon after arriving the entire Hawaiian party was afflicted with measles. Liholiho’s wife died on July 8<sup>th</sup>; the king himself on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The bodies returned to Hawaii in 1825.<sup>20</sup>

Although the kings of Hawaii wrote to those in Great Britain as friends, it is important to note that the appreciation never went both ways. This was never more apparent than during and after Liholiho’s disastrous visit to England. Liholiho’s “friend” George IV referred to the Hawaiian king and queen as a “pair of damned cannibals” and had no desire to meet with them. The British aristocracy was even more brutal, and the comical and awkward appearance of the royal party was attacked in every newspaper.<sup>21</sup>

The British disrespect for the Hawaiian monarchy was on display again when the bodies of Liholiho and his wife were returned to the islands by the HMS *Blonde*, commanded by Lord Byron. Liholiho’s younger brother Kaiuikaouli was now King

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<sup>18</sup> Daws, 64

<sup>19</sup> Chris Cook, “The British in Hawaii,” *Islander Magazine*, <<http://www.islander-magazine.com/british.html>>, 23 February 2006

<sup>20</sup> Daws, 71-74

<sup>21</sup> Daws, 73

Kamehameha III, and as a gift to the new king and a gesture of sorrow for the loss of the old, George IV sent Byron with a full dress uniform. But once the captain had paid the well-dressed young king his respects and saluted him in front of the assembled chiefs of the islands, Byron patted Kauikeaouli on the head and told him to be a good boy.<sup>22</sup> This was a matter of great disrespect to the head of state of any nation, and it was clear that Byron did not consider the king to truly be royalty.

Perhaps the single greatest slight by Great Britain against the Kingdom of Hawaii after the death of Liholiho was the appointment of Richard Charlton as British consul in the islands. Charlton was “rough, obtuse, foul-mouthed, and choleric...he spoke widely of killing [the queen regent] and tearing down the fort at Honolulu...he gratuitously and publicly accused a British merchant of sodomy, and when he was convicted of slander he broadened the accusation to include the jurymen.”<sup>23</sup> Worse yet, when his excesses and insanities finally caught up with him after nearly twenty years as consul he brought about the brief hostile conquest of the Kingdom of Hawaii itself. Upon leaving in 1842 Charlton’s replacement sent a message that the British subjects in Honolulu were at risk from the Americans, the French, and the Hawaiian government. Lord George Paulet responded eagerly, against the standing orders of the British government, and took over the islands, which will be discussed below.<sup>24</sup>

The brief and unofficial conquest of the islands by agents of Great Britain did little to reduce the dynastic affection felt by the Hawaiian royal family. Kauikeaouli’s successor was Alexander Liholiho, or King Kamehameha IV, and he was as big an

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<sup>22</sup> Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 64

<sup>23</sup> Daws, 77

<sup>24</sup> Samson, 44

Anglophile as the kingdom had ever seen. He kept his love for the British over the Americans on open display. During his youth Alexander spent time in London. He named his son Prince Albert and requested that Queen Victoria act as the godmother; she accepted. He also subscribed to *Times* and other British newspapers and actually read them.<sup>25</sup>

The most glaringly obvious bit of Anglophilia by Alexander Liholiho was his, and the rest of the royal family's, conversion to the Church of England in the early 1860s. This was a calculated move on the part of the king and his brother. Prince Lot wrote to Alexander's wife Queen Emma that "[we would] get England to be interested in us by means of her Church...[and] she will begin to learn more of us and take more interest in us which well fostered will ripen into a great friendship."<sup>26</sup>

The fascination with the British never entirely subsided even as the islands were being increasingly absorbed by the Americans after 1876. The Hawaiian royals continued to refer to their kingdom as the Sandwich Islands<sup>27</sup>, the name given to them by Captain Cook, and the Union Jack still flew proudly in the Ka Hae Hawai'i. However, royal fraternity alone cannot explain why the Hawaiian kingdom was willingly offered to the British on more than one occasion; there were other issues on the Kings' minds that led to those offers.

## **Power Plays**

In April of 1840 Richard Charlton, the malignant British consul to the Hawaiian Islands, produced a contract that established him as the owner of a valuable stretch of

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<sup>25</sup> Daws, 158-160

<sup>26</sup> Daws, 160

<sup>27</sup> Scott B. Cook, Colonial Encounters in the Age of High Imperialism (New York: Longman, 1996), 98

property on Oahu known as Pulaholaho. The contract was most likely forged, as it dated back to 1826 when land was exchanged mostly by verbal agreement. Even if it were real the lease was worthless; it was signed by officials who had no power to give him the land. King Kamehameha and the legislature informed Charlton that the lease was worthless. Because of this, added to the rest of his mistakes and deliberate transgressions of the law, Charlton fled the islands in 1842 for London, vowing to get justice for himself and all of the other British subjects.<sup>28</sup> Charlton had threatened the Hawaiian government with British intervention before, but this time he would actually lead to the overthrow of King Kamehameha.

While he was still fighting over the invalid lease with the Hawaiian government, Charlton sent to London for a warship to protect British interests in the islands. One never came. Upon leaving the islands he placed his deputy Alexander Simpson in charge as acting consul. Simpson was a rabid imperialist and never tried to hide his desire to annex the islands into the British Empire. When Kamehameha refused to recognize him as the new consul Simpson added the offense to Charlton's list of grievances and again sent for aid to protect British interests in the Hawaiian Islands. This time the message reached the receptive ears of the British Pacific fleet, and Admiral Sir Richard Thomas sent the HMS *Carysfort*, under the command of Lord George Paulet, to the islands.<sup>29</sup>

The official policy of Great Britain in the Pacific at this point was one of non-interference. Disputes were to be resolved by the authorities on the islands themselves, even going so far as to refer to them as "powers." The government of Great Britain also wished to maintain a balance of power, assuring that no other European power gained a

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<sup>28</sup> Daws, 112-113

<sup>29</sup> Daws, 113-114

greater level of influence in the independent islands than Britain had.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately Paulet left before the orders from the Foreign Office reached the Pacific, and he had no knowledge of the policy or that his actions were well outside of it.<sup>31</sup>

The *Carysfort* reached Honolulu on February 10, 1843 and Paulet immediately began making demands backed by the force of the ship's guns. Simpson was to be recognized as consul. British citizens were to be tried only by juries appointed by the consulate. Charlton's disputes were to be resolved and his property returned to him. The demands built up until it became apparent that Paulet was going to stop and nothing short of the abdication of King Kamehameha and the annexation of Hawaii.<sup>32</sup>

In desperation the king decided to give up the kingdom on his own terms before he had to submit to Paulet. Contracts were prepared that would place Hawaii jointly under the protection and authority of the United States and France, but Kamehameha's ministers balked before they could be signed. The Hawaiian government gave in to Paulet's demands on February 25.<sup>33</sup> Hawaii was British.

The conquest was brief. Admiral Richard Thomas did receive the new policy on Pacific relations from the Foreign Office; his ship the HMS *Dublin* arrived in the Islands on July 26<sup>th</sup>, and on July 31<sup>st</sup> the kingdom officially belonged to Kamehameha again. Following Thomas was a joint declaration of Hawaiian sovereignty signed by the governments of Great Britain and France, as well as a separate statement by the United States.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Samson, 44-45

<sup>31</sup> Daws, 116

<sup>32</sup> Daws, 114-115

<sup>33</sup> Daws, 115

<sup>34</sup> Daws, 115-117

But why was there such resistance to the idea of being a protectorate of the British Empire now? A generation before Liholiho had been willing to sign over the whole kingdom to Great Britain on more than one occasion. Kauikeaouli's father, the great Kamehameha, had done the same. What had changed?

The tendency of the Hawaiians to look up to the Hanoverians was not as strong in Kauikeaouli as it was in his brother Liholiho or his father, but that is only part of the story. Kamehameha would never have given up part of the kingdom he worked so hard to create just because he liked someone. Royal fraternity certainly influenced the decisions of the kings when it came to picking the European power to appeal to, but the desire to place Hawaii under foreign protection was entirely separate from the Kamehameha dynasty being Anglophiles.

When Kamehameha signed over the islands to George Vancouver he was in a bad position. His conquest of the islands was going well, but Kahekili had more foreign weapons than him and had a broader base of support. Every move Kamehameha made was designed to increase the control he had over the islands, or at the very least preserve the power he already had. If Kahekili won the war, Kamehameha had nothing, not even his life. Although he might give up some of his authority to the British, Kamehameha knew that with their help and weapons he could unite the islands and be rid of Kahekili. Giving the islands to the British was just a way of ensuring his own power. When Kahekili gave the island of Oahu to William Brown he had the same desires at heart.

The British Empire was never a strictly established set of territories. The local governments and most of the laws of the territories it controlled were left in place, merely managed by British "advisors." The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London

assured that the laws were fairly applied, if not uniform. There were even more informal parts of the Empire where control was maintained simply by economic means.<sup>35</sup>

Kamehameha and Liholiho knew that by becoming a British protectorate they would be forfeiting some of their authority, but at the same time assuring that the entirety of it was not usurped by some other power. The Paulet situation with Kauikeaouli was different. Instead of being added to the Empire on their own terms the royal family was to be effectively removed from any position of authority. Kauikeaouli's desperate bid to put the kingdom under the protection of the Americans and the French formed from the desire to preserve as much of the royal family's personal power as possible.

Unfortunately there were many threats to the independence of the Kingdom of Hawaii to worry about. David Malo wrote to Liholiho that "The white man's ships have arrived with clever men from the big countries, they know our people are few in number and our country is small, they will devour us."<sup>36</sup> Paulet's annexation of the islands aside, the British proved themselves more willing to defend the islands' independence than others.

The foreign plots to take Hawaii began early. A Russian man named Schäffer conspired with Kamehameha's tributary chief on Kauai, Kaumualii, to take over the kingdom and give large portions of it to Russia in 1815. Schäffer never actually had the support of Russia, but that did not stop him from claiming he did.<sup>37</sup>

No matter how low his station in the nation he originated in, most foreigners were not afraid to threaten the kingdom with retaliation whenever they were

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<sup>35</sup> Clayton Roberts, David Roberts, and Douglas R. Bisson, *A History of England*, vol. 2 (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002), 656-658

<sup>36</sup> Daws, 106

<sup>37</sup> Daws, 49-53

inconvenienced. The mere threat of a gunboat from France, Great Britain, or the United States showing up was enough to elevate the station of foreign nationals above that of the natives with regards to the law. Native Hawaiians were increasingly frustrated with this situation. Thousands of signatures were put to petitions against foreigners in government posts. Some threatened rebellion.<sup>38</sup>

The pressure from foreigners to change the way the islands were run was so great that King Kamehameha III capitulated and in 1840 Hawaii became a constitutional monarchy with guaranteed rights for citizens and a representative government.<sup>39</sup> This was not enough to satisfy the whites on the islands; they continued to simply ignore the government whenever it suited them. The courts were a laughing stock and their decisions ignored.<sup>40</sup> Any small slight could explode into an international incident, as Richard Charlton proved.

The French were among the worst offenders. The sovereignty of the islands came under threat from France multiple times. Captain Laplace of the French frigate *L'Artémise* arrived in the islands in 1839 to investigate claims of wrongdoing towards Frenchmen. He demanded equal treatment for Catholics and a \$20,000 bond to ensure compliance, and he threatened to bombard Honolulu if his demands were not met. The chiefs had no choice but to comply with all of Laplace's demands, which also included saluting the French flag and writing into law that French merchandise would be subject to no more than a 5% tariff.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Daws, 107-110

<sup>39</sup> "1840 Constitution of Hawaii,"

<[en.wikisource.org/wiki/1840\\_Constitution\\_of\\_the\\_Kingdom\\_of\\_Hawaii](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1840_Constitution_of_the_Kingdom_of_Hawaii)>, 1840, 10 April 2006

<sup>40</sup> Daws, 107-110

<sup>41</sup> Daws, 102-103

An even greater problem with the French began in 1849. Hawaii was still operating under the lopsided treaty established by Laplace a decade before when the commander of the French Pacific Fleet, Rear Admiral Legoarrant de Tromelin, arrived in the islands and started listening to the complaints of French consul Guillaume Dillon. At the time of the Admiral's visit there were only twelve French citizens in the whole of the Hawaiian Islands. All the same, De Tromelin heard the grievances and decided to defend French honor. He threatened to destroy the fort at Honolulu, and this time the threat was carried out. On the afternoon of August 25, 1849 French sailors attacked. All of the prisoners were set free, munitions were destroyed, and the king's yacht was stolen and never returned.<sup>42</sup>

This time the Hawaiian government appealed to the British and Americans to save them. The British consul William Miller could do nothing, but the American warship *Glyn* was in Honolulu harbor and was ready to engage the French ships if they opened fire on the town. They did not, and on September 5<sup>th</sup> De Tromelin and Dillon both left for France.<sup>43</sup>

The troubles with the French were not over and the Hawaiians knew it. An agent of the government named Gerrit Judd was sent to the United States and Europe to attempt to drum up support for the kingdom. He had permission in the event of an emergency to turn over the protection of the kingdom to a foreign power, or even sell the country outright if necessary. The United States was receptive of Hawaiian independence, as was Great Britain, and both signed new treaties.<sup>44</sup> Although they considered themselves friends of the kingdom, the overall opinion of the Hawaiian nation was still low. It was

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<sup>42</sup> Daws 133-136

<sup>43</sup> Daws 133-134

<sup>44</sup> Daws, 134

referred to as a “[that] feeble Island State” in the *New York Daily Times* during the French crises<sup>45</sup>, and not much more highly elsewhere.

The French would not sign any new treaty. Judd went home to the islands after spending almost three months in Paris accomplishing nothing. Trouble quickly followed in the form of the new French consul Emile Perrin, who arrived in December 1850 on the warship *Sérieuse*.<sup>46</sup> The new demands included that all official correspondence in the islands be carried out in French as well as English and Hawaiian,<sup>47</sup> as well as the continued support of the special low tariffs on French goods. Perrin threatened to use the *Sérieuse* if necessary to get what he wanted. Again Kamehameha III had no choice but to ask the British consul and the Americans for help. The king placed his possessions under the protection of the United States until the French threat was over. The USS *Vandalia* was in Honolulu harbor and prepared to fire on the *Sérieuse* if it became necessary. The threat was enough to cause Perrin to back down, and he left for France in May 1851. The trade treaties were still unfair for many years to come, but the French military threat to the islands was ended for good. In 1853 France finally issued a statement that they had no desire to possess the kingdom.<sup>48</sup>

The problems with the Americans were far more lasting than those with the French. Americans made up the majority of the foreigners in the islands. Trouble started with the very first warship from the United States to visit Honolulu. In February of 1826 sailors from the USS *Dolphin* formed a mob and threatened the missionary Hiram

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<sup>45</sup> “The Sandwich Islands,” *New York Daily Times*, 3 May 1853, 3

<sup>46</sup> Daws, 135

<sup>47</sup> “The Sandwich Islands,” *News of the World*, 8 June 1851, 2

<sup>48</sup> Daws, 135-136

Bingham; they were beaten back into line before any serious damage could be done.<sup>49</sup>

The gold rush in California opened the flood gates for more intervention by Americans. A bunch of men from California seeking their own island kingdom showed up in 1847 on the *Game Cock*, believing that King Kamehameha III was willing to sell Hawaii so he could get on with his life. Upon realizing how wrong they really were the men left, but they were merely the advance party of a greater movement concerned with the American annexation of the islands.<sup>50</sup>

Americans in the islands felt that annexation by the United States was preferable to being consumed by the French or the British, and were not afraid of saying so. Manifest destiny reared its head again in the form of United States Commissioner David Gregg, who began to openly work towards the annexation of the islands in the 1850s, and he had the support of several Hawaiian ministers. British consul and rabid anti-American William Miller did his best to publicly embarrass Gregg and worked with the nativists against him.

In 1854 Gregg started work on legislation that would transfer sovereignty to the Americans on a provisional basis and threatened Hawaiian Foreign Minister Robert Wyllie with violence if the kingdom did not submit immediately. He claimed that the Californians already in Honolulu would set the port afire if the government failed to give up control. Also backing up his threat was Captain Dorin of the USS *Portsmouth*; there were several other American warships in the port at the time as well. The crisis was narrowly averted when Wyllie contacted all of the foreign representatives and asked for aid against the possible riots. With the HMS *Trincomalee* in port and the British consul

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<sup>49</sup> Daws 78-79

<sup>50</sup> Daws, 137-138

more than willing to help thwart the Americans, Gregg had no choice but to offer his aid to the Hawaiian government as well. Annexation was staved off for the moment.<sup>51</sup>

It was impossible to hold off the Americans forever. Ships from New England dominated the whaling industry that ruled the islands from the 1820s to the 1850s. After the heyday of whaling came to an end sugar became the new driving force of the Hawaiian economy, and American businessmen were in control of it as well.<sup>52</sup>

The money from sugarcane was so important that King Kalakaua gave up the kingdom's main bargaining chip when dealing with foreign powers in order to support it. Under the reciprocity treaty signed in 1876 import duties on Hawaiian goods entering the United States were abolished, but Hawaii agreed to not cede its territory or grant reciprocity rights to any other power.<sup>53</sup> There would be no more playing one against the other. The fate of Hawaii was now tied to America.

In 1887 a white militia formed and forced Kalakaua to accept a new constitution that curbed his rights and gave the vote to white non-citizens while denying it to some native Hawaiians. Kalakaua hated this new constitution and tried to fight against it to no avail. His successor Queen Liliuokalani would lose the kingdom over it.

The popularity of the Americans among native Hawaiians was low. Natives attempted coups against the government in order to turn back time and bring back their control of the islands. They were unsuccessful. Two thirds of the electorate signed petitions urging Liliuokalani to set aside the current constitution, and this show of support led her to attempt to do just that. This was all the ammunition the annexationists needed. United States marines and cannon were deployed near the capital, but they never fired a

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<sup>51</sup> Daws, 148-153

<sup>52</sup> Scott Cook, 83-84

<sup>53</sup> Scott Cook, 85

shot. The queen had no choice but to step down, although she made sure that the world knew she viewed it as a hostile action by the United States and not a revolution of her citizens.<sup>54</sup>

Liliuokalani did not go quietly. She made appeals to President Grover Cleveland of the United States for her restoration. Guns and other weaponry were imported into the islands for a revolt. Some of it was found on the former queen's property, enough that she was thrown into prison.<sup>55</sup> Liliuokalani claimed to have had no part in the attempted revolution, writing only that "I had occasion to scold my gardener for the disturbed condition in which I often found my plants. It seemed as though some persons had been digging up the ground, and replacing disturbed soil."<sup>56</sup> Whether she had anything to do with it or not, the attempts to restore Hawaii to the monarchy were futile. The days of playing the powers against one another were over, and Hawaii had lost.

## Conclusion

Regardless of how much help he actually received, Kamehameha would always associate Great Britain with his conquest of the islands. European weapons and gunners won the battles of unification, and European-style ships were the basis for the grand conquering fleet that never sailed. Kamehameha knew things could have gone another way without the help of the British. Either the conquest would not have happened, or he would have been on the losing side; his chief rival Kahekili also had European weaponry.

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<sup>54</sup> Scott Cook, 87-90

<sup>55</sup> Daws, 280-285

<sup>56</sup> Liliuokalani, Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen,  
<<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/liliuokalani/hawaii/hawaii.html>>, 1898, 263

The aid given to Kamehameha by the British during the unification gave them significant mindshare within the royal family for generations to come. Kamehameha and his heirs openly courted the British. It was not just the memory of those early days fueling the interest. Later members of the royal family spent time in London and grew personally enamored of English culture. But more important than that was that the Kamehameha dynasty continued to rely on the British to protect their place on the islands, and this kept the desire for friendship with Great Britain alive until the end.

At the time of the unification there was no other nation like Hawaii anywhere in the Pacific.<sup>57</sup> But as powerful as Kamehameha now was, he was not a stupid man. He had needed the British to secure his own power in the islands, and he knew he would need the help of European power to keep his throne as well. The great powers were gobbling up foreign lands left and right, and the new Hawaiian monarchy did not want to be next.

Offering the Hawaiian Islands to the British as a protectorate meant giving up some of their power but keeping the majority of it. The Hawaiians were not afraid to offer themselves to others when necessary. During the hostile takeover by Paulet the king courted the United States and France; the United States was also consulted and offered the islands when France became the major threat to the islands.

The United States was the single largest trading partner of Hawaii for most of its existence. If the Americans aided the Hawaiians in keeping their power as well as the British, why did the Hawaiian kingdom remain more interested in Great Britain? Part of the answer is the long history of the royal fraternity. The Union Jack had been flying over the Islands since their unification, and the mindset of the Kamehameha dynasty was well entrenched.

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<sup>57</sup> Daws, 42

Also important are the actions of the British towards the islands and the attitudes of the Americans living there. The policy of Great Britain in the Pacific was one of non-interference. French and American warships made themselves known on almost a regular basis; other than the notable exception of Paulet, who was acting outside of the standing orders of the British Foreign Office, British man-o-wars rarely threatened the islands. Richard Charlton was the exception that proved the rule of British actions in the islands. Despite his attitude, his presence there proved that Britain respected Hawaiian independence. Sending Charlton with the title of consul was tacit recognition that the ceding of Hawaii to Great Britain by George Vancouver was void.<sup>58</sup> Later consuls like William Miller actively attempted to thwart the designs of foreign powers, including the manifest destiny-fueled Americans in the islands. When France and the United States threatened Hawaii the British were quick to ratify treaties stressing the importance of its independence.

Finally, the relationship between the monarchy and Great Britain remained close because by the late 1800s the Hawaiian kingdom had little choice but to try to play the British against the Americans. Unlike the French, who were never numerous, the Americans were everywhere on the islands and the native population had declined to barely 60,000 by 1870. American businessmen owned the majority of land.<sup>59</sup> If the Hawaiian Islands were to remain independent appealing to the British was their only hope left; it was not enough. The relationship with Great Britain was cut short before it could fade away, and the Union Jack still flies in the Ka Hae Hawai'i.

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<sup>58</sup> Daws, 74

<sup>59</sup> Scott Cook, 81-83