

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – EAU CLAIRE

“LIVING ON THE CRUST OF A VOLCANO”

THE OVERTHROW OF THE HAWAIIAN MONARCHY AND THE UNITED STATES’
INVOLVEMENT

HISTORY 489

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ABSTRACT

The overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy took place on January 17, 1893. One of the debates surrounding this event is the involvement of the United States through its representative, Minister John L. Stevens. 1874-1894 was an unstable period in Hawaii. This paper discusses the reign of King Kalakaua (1874-1891), the economic relationship between Hawaii and the United States after the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876, the Revolution of 1887 that resulted in a new constitution, the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani in 1893, and the United States investigation of the events through the *Blount Report* and the *Morgan Report*. It shows that the United States was not a conspirator in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and that it was the result of the process of imperialism.

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INTRODUCTION

On November 23, 1993, the United States Congress issued an official apology to the Native Hawaiians for the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy that took place on January 17, 1893. The apology was based on two reports that had been submitted to Congress in 1893 and 1894, the *Blount Report* and the *Morgan Report*. After the overthrow in January 1893, President Grover Cleveland sent James H. Blount on a secret mission to Hawaii to determine what had happened and what the involvement of the United States was through its representative, Minister John L. Stevens. After collecting information, Blount made his report and determined that the United States was responsible for the overthrow that had occurred earlier that year, 1893. His main argument was that Stevens and the commander of the *U.S.S. Boston* had abused their power when they landed troops in Honolulu on January 16, the day before the overthrow. Upon receiving this report, President Cleveland was determined to have the Provisional Government that was in place in Hawaii removed and the ex-queen, Liliuokalani, returned to the throne. However, the Provisional Government refused to step down and convinced the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Senate to conduct another investigation. This time an official investigation was carried out that had more time and manpower. Between December 27, 1893 and February 26, 1894 people involved in the overthrow gave testimonies to the committee.¹ After this investigation it was determined that the United States was *not* directly involved in the overthrow in 1893. This second report, the *Morgan Report*, contradicted the conclusions made in the *Blount Report*. After its submission to Congress, the United States halted its efforts to

¹ Joint Congress, United States Public Law 103-150 Resolution 19, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., 1993. The “Apology Resolution.”

reinstate the Hawaiian Monarchy. On July 4, 1894, the Provisional Government declared themselves the head of the Republic of Hawaii.²

If it had been determined in 1894 that the United States was not responsible for the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy, why did Congress issue an apology one hundred years later? What really happened in Hawaii at the end of the nineteenth century and was the United States at fault? Disagreement remains on both sides as to what actually happened. This paper examines the political situation in Hawaii beginning with the election of David Kalakaua in 1874 until the declaration of the Republic of Hawaii in 1894. The focus is on Kalakaua's reign, the economic relationship between Hawaii and the United States after the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876, the events of the overthrow in January 1893, and the actions of the United States following the overthrow. It shows that the United States did not conspire in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy that took place on January 17, 1893. This act was inevitable because of the shift in political and economic influences that coincided with a change in the demographics of Hawaii because of the process of imperialism.³

The period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century is referred to by scholars as the "age of imperialism." Prior to this era the world had seen numerous empires created by countries such as Greece, France, and Great Britain. This new era focused on economics as a process of imperialism. Richard Koebner in his article "The Concept of Economic Imperialism" defines imperialism as men representing the capital of a western country gaining control over a weaker country through economics and politics. By the end of the nineteenth century, most European countries were participating in this process of expansion and

² Joint Congress, United States Public Law 103-150 Resolution 19, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., 1993. The "Apology Resolution."

³ Refer to Appendices A and B for a timeline of events and a list of people.

the United States would soon join.⁴ The notion that the United States would annex Hawaii was not a farfetched idea for many people in both countries even before the overthrow in 1893. At this time the process of imperialism had already begun in Hawaii. Hawaii was economically dependent on the United States after the Reciprocity Treaty in 1876. When American businessmen brought the sugar industry to Hawaii, the demographics of the Islands changed to include more part-Hawaiians and others of foreign blood and fewer Native Hawaiians. This also brought a shift in political power to favor those with foreign interests. As these events unfolded in Hawaii, the question became whether the United States would take advantage of this situation or risk losing its influence to another power. The United States continued to have a presence in Hawaii. It was this presence, not a conspiracy between revolutionists and the American representative, Minister Stevens, that led to the overthrow in 1893.

Before considering the government and demographics in Hawaii during the late 1800s, it is important to understand that the United States had an influence that began with the arrival of missionaries in 1820. The next generation of these missionaries remained in Hawaii and became wealthy by entering into business and politics. Even though they neglected efforts to “Christianize,” they would be referred to as the “Missionary Party.” This group of people came to dominate the politics of the Islands. A significant gap emerged between the “Missionary Party” along with other part-Hawaiians and the Native Hawaiians. Despite their differences, intermarriage frequently occurred and before long the part-Hawaiians, or *haole*, began to have more political influence than the Native Hawaiians. The *haole* were often swayed by the authority of foreign influence held by the “Missionary Party.” These descendants of the first

⁴ Richard Koebner, “The Concept of Economic Imperialism,” *The Economic History Review* 2.1 (1949): 1-3.

missionaries played a leading role in the Revolution of 1887 and the overthrow of the Monarchy in 1893.⁵

The overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy is a popular topic of scholarly research. What most historians do not address is United States involvement. In that age of imperialism, many countries were overrun by more dominant powers. Hawaii was no different. The research for this paper was impelled by the questions: Why did the overthrow take place? Should the United States take responsibility? Many historians have attempted to portray the events of the overthrow in an unbiased manner. This is a difficult task because it is easy for someone to develop a biased opinion about this debate and it often shows in their scholarship. An author who made the best effort to remain unbiased is one of the leading scholars of Hawaiian history, Ralph S. Kuykendall. He wrote many books and articles on Hawaii and the overthrow. The most useful of his books for this piece of scholarship was the final volume in a set of three entitled, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*. Each volume covers a specific period of Hawaiian history. The last volume, *The Kalakaua Dynasty*, covers the years from 1874 to 1893. Many other accounts of the overthrow and the Hawaiian government were helpful; particularly those by Elizabeth Buck, Gavan Daws, Edward Joesting, Gerrit P. Judd, William Russ, and Merze Tate.

Several primary sources including government documents, books, and newspaper articles, were also relied upon in framing the events in Hawaiian history. The government document that was the most helpful was the *Morgan Report*, which includes testimonies from the men involved in the overthrow and texts of Hawaiian constitutions and treaties. The book *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* written by ex-queen Liliuokalani and published in 1898 offered a critical perspective. A major limitation for this book was her obvious bias. The

⁵ William Adam Russ Jr., *The Hawaiian Revolution (1893-1894)* (Selinsgrove, Penn: Susquehanna University Press, 1959), 3-5; Elvi Whittaker, *The Mainland Haole: The White Experience in Hawaii* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 204. The definition of haole is, "white person; foreign to Hawaii."

newspaper articles used came from the *New York Times* and provided an excellent perspective of American opinion. Together, these sources tell the story of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and what precipitated those events.

PART I. KING KALAKAUA

Constitutional Monarchy

The King is Sovereign of all the Chiefs and of all the People; the Kingdom is His.

Constitution of 1864

The government in place under the Constitution of 1864, signed by Kamehameha V, was described as a “Constitutional Monarchy.” All subsequent constitutions in Hawaii followed this model and was the government in place when Kalakaua took the throne in 1874. The 1864 Constitution divided the government into three branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial, and the King had the ultimate authority in each of these branches. The Executive branch consisted of the King and a Cabinet of Advisors. The King was allowed to select his Cabinet, consisting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Finance, and the Attorney General of the Kingdom. These were the King’s advisors and he had the right to dissolve his Cabinet in the event of a disagreement. The Legislative branch was made up of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly consisted of a House of Nobles selected by the King and a House of Representatives elected by the people. The Judicial branch included both the Supreme Court, comprised of Justices selected by the King, and a number of smaller courts located throughout the Islands. This was how the government was set up when King Lunalio (January 8, 1873 through February 3, 1874) was near death and had not yet declared an heir to the throne. The government then had to look at the 1864 Constitution to determine who would be the next king.⁶

⁶ Senate, Reports 227, 53 cong., 1 sess., Washington, 1894. *Morgan Report*. Text of the Constitution of 1864: Article 21, 524; Article 42, 526; Article 28, 525; Article 45, 526; Article 64, 528; Article 71, 529.

New Stirps for a Royal Family

If ever there was a man who was pure in spirit, if ever there was a mortal who had perfect charity, he was that man.

Queen Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*

In the year before Lunalio's death, his Cabinet attempted to convince him to declare an heir. The decision had been narrowed to three people: David Kalakaua, Queen Emma, and Bernice Pauahi. Before the king died, he decided not to declare Kalakaua his heir. Many speculated that he would have chosen Queen Emma, but he never declared it formally. Lunalio died on February 3, 1874.⁷ The Constitution of 1864 stated that:

...should there be no such appointment and proclamation [of an heir], and the Throne should become vacant, then the Cabinet Council, immediately after the occurring of such vacancy, shall cause a meeting of the Legislative Assembly, who shall elect by ballot some native Alii of the Kingdom as Successor so elected shall become a new Stirps for a Royal Family.⁸

The Legislative Assembly thus met at noon on February 12, 1874 to decide who would become the next King. The members voted in favor of Kalakaua, thirty-nine to six. The Assembly announced its decision to Kalakaua and departed later that afternoon.⁹

Earlier that morning, hundreds of Queen Emma's supporters joined the crowd of spectators outside the courthouse. When the committee came out of the building and announced Kalakaua's succession, a riot ensued. At that time three foreign ships were in Honolulu Harbor, two American (*Tuscarora* and *Portsmouth*) and one British (*Tenedos*). The American Minister, Henry A. Peirce, and British Commissioner, James H. Wodehouse, made arrangements with the

⁷ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), Vol. 3, *The Kalakaua Dynasty*, 4, 8.

⁸ *Morgan Report*, Text of the Constitution of 1864: Article 22, 524; Elvi Whittaker, *The Mainland Haole*, 203. The definition of alii is, "chief, king, the nobility, or aristocracy."

⁹ Gerrit P. Judd IV, *Hawaii: An Informal History* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 93.

ships the day before for use of the 150 men on board in anticipation of a hostile reaction to Kalakaua's election. After the riot had been going on for half an hour, the ships were signaled and the American soldiers were deployed first. They attempted to break up the riot and were assisted within minutes by the British soldiers. The riot was calmed, but it resulted in damage to the roof of Iolani Palace and numerous injuries to the representatives who voted for Kalakaua. The riot showed the weakness of this new Monarchy and foreshadowed future political problems. At the end of the day, Kalakaua was recognized as King on February 12, 1874, but his popularity was questionable. The use of foreign troops would set a precedent for the landing of troops during the overthrow of 1893. This initial opposition to his rule did not stop Kalakaua from pursuing negotiations with the United States for a Reciprocity Treaty early in his reign.¹⁰

¹⁰ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 9-10, 14; Judd, *Hawaii*, 94.

The Reciprocity Treaty

Corrupt speculative influences were at work in favor of the Hawaiian treaty, for a group of American sugar growers were buying lands in the islands and exercising a constantly increasing influence upon the Hawaiian government.

New York Times, July 4, 1903

People in Hawaii, particularly the planters and other businessmen of foreign descent, had been working to pass a Reciprocity Treaty with the United States for many years. Reciprocity Treaties were approved by the Hawaiian government in both 1855 and 1867, but did not receive a majority vote in the United States Senate. Kalakaua's ascent to the throne provided a new opportunity for them to push this issue. A Reciprocity Treaty would allow Hawaii to trade with the United States at little to no cost. Kalakaua approved of the idea with the caveat that the United States would not have permanent naval access to Pearl Harbor, which was one of the United States' demands. Kalakaua and several representatives traveled to the United States in November 1874 for a visit and used the occasion to campaign for the treaty. This was the first time that a King from any country had ever visited the United States and he was given a warm welcome. However, some concern arose about the timing of Kalakaua's trip because he had been in office for less than one year. According to Merze Tate, author of *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation*, "...the majority of the King's subjects disapproved of his leaving his Islands so soon after the riots attending his election, for they believed it better for him to remain home and endeavor to strengthen the foundations of his Kingdom." Nevertheless, because of his amiable personality, Kalakaua took a tour of the United States that proved to be beneficial for the treaty

negotiations. The treaty was drafted the following year and went through various stages of ratification in Congress.¹¹

One argument by the United States in support of such a treaty was that it would provide America with a more prominent presence in Hawaii and the Pacific. This presence would lead to beneficial economic opportunities in the Pacific and Asia since Hawaii is conveniently located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. There was fear that if the United States rejected the treaty Hawaii would go to another power for an economic partnership. Talk had already begun in the United States about possible annexation of Hawaii. People on both sides of the annexation debate thought that the treaty could be beneficial for their cause. Annexation supporters believed it would bring the United States closer to Hawaii and allow for more influence, which could someday lead to annexation. Those who opposed annexation felt that denying the treaty would result in annexationists seeking annexation more actively, which could lead to the United States government giving in to those demands rather than avoiding the issue by agreeing to the Reciprocity Treaty.

A major argument against the treaty in the United States was the amount of revenue that would be lost, estimated to be almost half a million dollars per year. Without the treaty, Hawaii, like any other country, had to pay extra fees in order to have their products imported into the United States. If the treaty was ratified, the United States would not charge for the import of certain products, therefore, losing revenue.¹²

Despite the debate, the Reciprocity Treaty was ratified and officially put into effect on September 9, 1876. It identified numerous products from Hawaii that would be allowed into the

¹¹ Merze Tate, *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 108-109.

¹² Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 35-36.

United States free of duty. Article IV was included to ensure that Hawaii would not seek favor from another power. It stated:

It is agreed, on the part of His Hawaiian Majesty, that, so long as this Treaty shall remain in force, he will not lease or otherwise dispose of or create any lien upon any port, harbor, or other territory in his dominions, or grant so special privilege or right of use therein, to any other power, state, or government, nor make any treaty by which any other nation shall obtain the same privileges, relative to the admission of any articles free of duty hereby secured to the United States.

The treaty did not, however, provide the United States access to Pearl Harbor. This access would be granted at a later date.¹³

¹³ *Morgan Report*, Text of the Reciprocity Treaty: Article I, 407; Article IV, 408. Quote from page 407.

Results of the Treaty

From [the Reciprocity Treaty] there came to the islands and intoxicating increase of wealth, a new labor system, an Asiatic population, an alienation between the native and the white races, an impoverishment of the former, [and] an enrichment of the latter....

James H. Blount, *The Blount Report*

An immediate result of the Reciprocity Treaty for Hawaii was a substantial increase in the export of sugar and rice. It brought Hawaii out of a depression and, according to Tate, “Reciprocity transformed a million-dollar [sugar] industry into a multi-million-dollar enterprise.”¹⁴ Most of those exports went to the United States. The treaty also resulted in a rise in the number of prominent sugar planters, which illustrated a shift of power in Hawaii towards non-Natives. Tate states, “Ratification of the Reciprocity Treaty fostered the emergence of the largest, most conspicuous, and notorious of the Hawaiian sugar planters, processors, shippers, and agents – Claus Spreckels.”¹⁵ After the treaty was ratified Spreckels, an American, went to Hawaii and bought 26,000 acres of land, including a plantation in central Maui that would be involved in a bribery scandal with Kalakaua to be described later.¹⁶ Spreckels bought several plantations across the Islands and at one point controlled one-third of all the sugar exports in Hawaii. When he became a partner in W.G. Irwin & Company in 1880, he monopolized the sugar industry. This was a concern for the people who lived on the western coast of the United States where Spreckels’ monopoly had forced sugar prices to skyrocket.¹⁷

Another result of the Reciprocity Treaty was an increase in population and a dramatic change in the demographics of the Islands. With the rise of the sugar industry came the need for

¹⁴ Tate, *Hawaii*, 118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶ *New York Times* (New York), 12 April 1882, p. 1.

¹⁷ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 60.

more labor on the plantations. A concern when Kalakaua came to the throne was the already decreasing number of Native, or full-blood, Hawaiians. They were the source of a permanent, non-foreign population and could have supplied the much needed labor. The issues of the need for labor and the need to increase the permanent population in Hawaii were solved by importation of foreign laborers, mostly from China and Japan.¹⁸ This aided the power shift in Hawaii because the laborers were not politically powerful. In 1872, Hawaiian-born Natives made up 92% of the total population, with 3.4% from China and 1.6% from the United States. By 1890, the population of Hawaiian-born natives accounted for 53.5% of the population, with the Chinese population at 17%, the Japanese population at 14%, and the American population at 2.1%. Foreign labor came to Hawaii mostly in the form of contract labor. Once their contracts with the plantations expired, many of the foreign workers moved to more urban areas where they competed for employment with the Natives.¹⁹ One reason for the decrease in the Native Hawaiian population was their susceptibility to disease, particularly small pox. The small pox epidemic arrived in Hawaii from China on ships carrying laborers. As previously mentioned, the total population increase after the Reciprocity Treaty was dramatic. In 1876 the population of Hawaii was about 55,500. Only twenty-four years later in 1900, the population increased to around 154,000. “The decrease of the native population was ultimately changed to an increase,” historian Kuykendall explains, “but only by the process of mingling with Hawaiian blood that of Caucasians and Orientals. Persons of all-Hawaiian blood continued to decrease in number, while those of part-Hawaiian blood increased....” Thus, the number of part-Hawaiians was increasing

¹⁸ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 116-118.

¹⁹ Sumner J. La Croix and Christopher Grandy, “The Political Instability of Reciprocal Trade and the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom” *The Journal of Economic History* 57.1 (March 1997): 173-174. Percentage numbers refer to the place of birth.

and they had begun to represent “Hawaiians.”²⁰ This was an important component in the process of imperialism.

Another outcome of the Reciprocity Treaty for Hawaii was a closer economic relationship with the United States. An 1883 *New York Times* article declared that, “For all commercial purposes this treaty made the Hawaiian Islands part of the United States.”²¹ The treaty itself was not as economically beneficial for the United States as it was for Hawaii. Many people in the United States supported the treaty more for the political consequences than the economic outcomes. As Gerrit P. Judd states in *Hawaii: An Informal History*, “The reciprocity treaty removed the possibility of a Hawaiian alignment with Britain or France and put Hawaii firmly within the political and economic orbit of the United States.” The threat of other powers taking control of Hawaii was a major reason that the United States retained a close relationship with the Islands. The fact that the United States was not benefitting to a great extent economically spurred interest in gaining access to Pearl Harbor. This was initially refused by the Hawaiian government because it did not want to give up any land in fear that doing so would lead to more conquests. After a few years the treaty was a success in Hawaii and the United States had more bargaining power for Pearl Harbor. When the treaty was amended in 1887, an article was added that gave the United States access to the harbor at Pearl River. The United States then had a naval base in Hawaii.²²

Many historians argue that the ratification of this Treaty put Hawaii on a path to annexation to the United States. It is important to note is that it was not the United States government that drafted and pushed for the ratification of the Reciprocity Treaty, but the people in Hawaii who

²⁰ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 136-137, 116-117. Quote from page 117.

²¹ *New York Times* (New York), 6 January 1883, p. 4.

²² Judd, *Hawaii*, 96. Even though they did not take full advantage of this access until annexation in 1898, it linked them to Hawaii even more. Quote from page 96.

had an interest in the sugar industry. This, in combination with Kalakaua's ability to be manipulated (which will be discussed later), shows that it was not the United States government that set Hawaii down a road to annexation, but the wealthy Hawaiian residents of European and American descent who were gaining more and more power.

The Merry Monarchy

Kalakaua's reign was, in a material sense, the golden age of Hawaiian history.

Queen Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*

On January 20, 1881, Kalakaua departed on a trip around the world that lasted until October 29 of the same year.²³ While he was gone, he appointed his sister and heir to the throne, Liliuokalani, as regent. It was a very expensive and highly publicized tour. There were stops in Japan, China, Singapore, India, Egypt, Italy, Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, and several cities in the United States including New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco.²⁴ In his absence rumors spread in newspapers around the globe as to the purpose for the trip. Some journalists believed Kalakaua's intent was to search for a country that would be willing to purchase the Hawaiian Islands from Kalakaua. An article from July 13, 1881, in the *New York Times* titled "A Kingdom for Sale" stated, "It is an open secret that Kalakaua, King of the Hawaiian Islands, is on a voyage around the world for the purpose of selling his kingdom."²⁵ This was later denied by Kalakaua, but the media did not stop tracking his movements and speculating about his intentions.

While he was gone, Liliuokalani was faced with a number of situations that she handled well, which earned her respect from the Hawaiian people. As Kuykendall states, "The Princess Regent Liliuokalani won praise by the prudence and tact of her course and made friends by the simple dignity of her style and by her accessibility to the people in public receptions and otherwise."²⁶ Her first challenge was an outbreak of small pox in Honolulu that came from the

²³ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 228, 235.

²⁴ Judd, *Hawaii*, 97.

²⁵ *New York Times* (New York), 13 July 1881, p. 4.

²⁶ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 235.

Chinese labor ships. She stopped communication between the Islands until the situation was contained. This showed her ability to think fast and control a serious situation. Another disaster that occurred was lava flows coming from the volcano Mauna Loa, which had begun erupting in 1880. The flows were coming dangerously close to the highly populated city of Hilo. Rumors spread that the cause was the anger of the ancient Hawaiian goddess, Pele, who was said to have lived in the crater of Mauna Loa. Liliuokalani rejected this interpretation and asked the Christian churches to hold prayer meetings, one of which she actually attended in Hilo where she led prayers to stop the flows. The lava stopped flowing within the next week just miles from Hilo. This added to the initial foreign support of Liliuokalani because people took note of her Christian values and the dismissal of ancient Hawaiian mythology.

Another notable action that distinguished Liliuokalani's regency during her brother's trip around the world was her tours around the Islands to visit the people. This contrasted with her brother in that while he was visiting people in many other countries, Liliuokalani remained at home with her people. Liliuokalani's acts during these times of stress were recognized by the people of Hawaii and her popularity increased. As Helena G. Allen states in her biography of Liliuokalani, "In 1881 Liliuokalani completed her regency, well liked by Hawaiians and *haole* alike." Despite her popularity during this time, when Liliuokalani finally took the throne in 1891, the reputation of the Monarchy had already been tainted by Kalakaua's actions.²⁷

When Kalakaua returned from his trip around the world on October 29, 1881, he arranged for a very extravagant coronation ceremony set for February 12, 1883 in front of the newly remodeled Iolani palace.²⁸ The event lasted for two weeks. For the ceremony, Kalakaua purchased two expensive crowns for himself and Queen Kapiolani. The event was not of great

²⁷ Helena G Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1982), 156, 157, 159. Quote from page 159.

²⁸ Judd, *Hawaii*, 98.

international interest, although it was referred to several times in the *New York Times*. Some people, mainly *haole*, were concerned about the amount of money spent on the events.

According to Kuykendall, “To them [the local residents, both of native and foreign blood] it seemed ridiculous to hold such a ceremony after Kalakaua had been on the throne, fully recognized, for nine years; they considered it to be a waste of the tax payers’ money.”²⁹

Liliuokalani supported the events and stated in her book *Hawaii’s Story By Hawaii’s Queen* that the coronation was important in order to establish the new family line and that, “It was wise and patriotic to spend money to awaken in the people a national pride.”³⁰ This event serves as an example of the kind of lavishness that Kalakaua promoted. The planters and other businessmen in Hawaii were becoming increasingly concerned with Kalakaua’s spending habits.

²⁹ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 264.

³⁰ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1898), 104-105.

Kalakaua's Government

Kalakaua was a good sort of King in his way, but the Government business was not exactly in his line. The civilization that was brought to his domain was a little too much for him.

New York Times, January 29, 1893

Kalakaua's government was not a stable one. It was the constitutional right of the King to dismiss and replace his Cabinet as he saw fit.³¹ Kalakaua took advantage of this for the first time in 1876. He again replaced the Cabinet in 1878 after a gift of \$10,000 and a loan of \$40,000 were given to him by Claus Spreckles, the sugar baron. At this time, Spreckles was getting his Maui plantation in order and needed access to the streams north of the plantation for irrigation. This access would require a permit or a grant from the government. Having already become friendly with Kalakaua, Spreckels submitted a request to the Cabinet for the grant. After hearing rumors that he might not receive it, Spreckels met with Kalakaua and made an offer of \$10,000. Kalakaua immediately dismissed his Ministers and replaced them with a new Cabinet. The first action of this new Cabinet was to grant Claus Spreckels access to the streams of Northern Maui.³² Kalakaua's relationship with Claus Spreckels exemplifies of the kind of men with whom he associated with, thus showing his integrity as a leader.

With the extreme amount of wealth that Spreckels had amassed through the sugar industry, he was able to give loans to Kalakaua to finance his expensive habits. Because of this large debt, Spreckels virtually controlled the government. As historian Gavin Daws states in *Shoal of Time*, "In the end the finances of the kingdom fell into the hands of Claus Spreckels.... Spreckels was not a Hawaiian citizen, and he never held an official post in the government. He did not need to: he was a law unto himself." Because of his control over the money in Hawaii and, therefore,

³¹ *Morgan Report*, Text of the Constitution of 1864: Article 28, 525.

³² Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 199-201.

over the King, people often wondered who was actually the King of Hawaii, Kalakaua or Spreckels? This did not sit well with Kalakaua, which made it easier for him to part ways with Spreckels at the end of 1886.³³

In 1880, Kalakaua granted a license to the Chinese for the sale of opium in Hawaii. This scandal resulted in another dismissal of the Cabinet and the appointment of Celso Caesar Moreno as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreno was an American of Italian decent. He had connections in China and was trying to expand Chinese trade to Hawaii and the United States.³⁴ Upon his arrival to the Islands in 1879 Moreno became close to King Kalakaua and proved to have a lot of influence over him, but the other Ministers did not trust Moreno. This sparked unrest among the foreigners and Natives in Hawaii. A small committee was formed to discuss this alliance and the members presented their case to the King, who considered it and withdrew Moreno's appointment.³⁵ This is another example of Kalakaua's lack of ability to judge people's character. It is also an example of how political problems were often solved in Hawaii. When people were not satisfied with the government, they would meet as a group without the King and decide what they thought was the right thing to do. They would then give the ruling monarch an ultimatum. This will be seen again in 1887 and 1893.

Another important person involved in the politics of the Islands from 1882-1887 was Walter Murray Gibson, an American interested in gaining political power. He came to Honolulu in 1861 and was not popular with the planters because he did not like to deal with them directly. He was elected to the Legislature in 1878, 1880, and 1882. In 1882 he was approached by Kalakaua who offered to make him Minister of Foreign Affairs, which he accepted. This was the

³³ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 226, 233-234. Quote from page 226.

³⁴ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 210-214, 207-210.

³⁵ Judd, *Hawaii*, 97.

beginning of his influence in Hawaii. Kalakaua was frequently changing Cabinets in the years between 1882 and 1887, but Gibson always stayed. It was this alliance between Gibson and Kalakaua that would be challenged in the Revolution of 1887.³⁶

One of Gibson's ideas was that Kalakaua should be the head of a Polynesian Federation in which all the Islands in the Pacific with people of Polynesian descent would form one entity. One of the island chains that was still independent in the Pacific was the Samoan Islands, which became Kalakaua's target for the start of the Federation.³⁷ He sent an embassy to the Samoan Islands headed by John E. Bush, who was part-Hawaiian. The Samoan King gave him positive feedback. The great powers at this time, United States, Great Britain, and Germany, noticed Kalakaua's bold action and did not appreciate it. Gibson next arranged the first Hawaiian Navy, consisting of one boat named the *Kaimiloa*, meaning "the far seeker."³⁸ The gunboat was purchased and revamped to be used as a training vessel. Bush sailed this ship to the Samoan Islands to further the negotiations. The great powers met to address the situation in the Pacific and gave serious warnings to Kalakaua and Gibson to stop the negotiations. This intervention appeased the foreigners in Hawaii because they did not support any expansion by Kalakaua. Gibson and Kalakaua halted their efforts, but the situation in Hawaii was tense because the foreigners in power were still not happy with Kalakaua's abuse of power. Gibson and Kalakaua, in Daws' words, "...had subverted the legislature, purged the civil service of all but sycophants, and they were planning to pack the supreme court; and to top it all off they were on their way to bankrupting the kingdom." Another troublesome situation for Kalakaua and Gibson was Kalakaua's acceptance of \$71,000 in bribes in exchange for another license to sell opium in Hawaii. This did not sit well with the men in the Legislature and caused a lot of opposition

³⁶ Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 224-225.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

³⁸ Edward Joesting, *Hawaii: An Uncommon History* (New York: Norton, 1972), 217.

around the Islands. This, in addition to the threats from abroad, was the political situation when the Revolution of 1887 forced Kalakaua to sign a new constitution that took away most of his power.³⁹

³⁹ Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 237-240. Quote on page 240.

The Bayonet Constitution

In the revolution of 1887 which reduced the sovereign to very limited powers, Kalakaua only escaped dethronement by promptly acceding to the terms imposed upon him....

New York Times, January 29, 1893

Two men in the Legislature who had strong voices in opposition to the King were Lorrin A. Thurston and Sanford B. Dole, both sons of missionaries and members of the “Missionary Party.” In January 1887, they and a few others, mostly sons of missionaries and all of European or American descent, formed an organization to determine how to handle Kalakaua and the current Cabinet headed by Gibson. They called it the Hawaiian League. After the Samoan situation and the opium scandal, this group joined with the Honolulu Rifles, who were “the only well-organized military company” in Hawaii, and decided that they would use force if necessary to ensure stability in the government.⁴⁰

At 2 pm on June 30, 1887, the group of nearly four hundred members held a mass meeting in the armory of the Honolulu Rifles.⁴¹ Of major concern to the group were the King’s mismanagement of funds and his acceptance of a bribe of \$71,000 dollars in exchange for a license to sell opium in Hawaii. This meeting resulted in a list of demands and a new constitution that was given to Kalakaua to sign. The demands included the resignation of the current Cabinet (which had officially happened two days before out of Kalakaua’s fear of revolution), the resignation of Gibson and the assurance that he would no longer be involved in the affairs of the government (Gibson had also officially resigned two days before), the payment of \$71,000 by Kalakaua for his illegal acceptance of a bribe earlier that year, and his agreement

⁴⁰ Ibid., 243, 246.

⁴¹ Ibid., 244.

to stop interfering with elections of Legislatures.⁴² He accepted the terms taking away most of his power and signed the new Constitution, often called the “Bayonet Constitution,” on June 30, 1887.

Liliuokalani did not agree with the way that her brother gave in to these demands. She believed that he had been betrayed and that he feared for his life. In response to questions about why Kalakaua would sign a constitution that took away his power, Liliuokalani replied, “...because he had discovered traitors among his most trusted friends, and knew not in whom he could trust; and because he had every assurance, short of actual demonstration, that the conspirators were ripe for revolution, and had taken measures to have him assassinated if he refused.”⁴³

The Constitution of 1887 made Kalakaua a ceremonial figure with little power and increased voting restrictions for the residents of the Islands. The King was still allowed to appoint the Cabinet members, but they would now answer to the Legislature instead of the King himself. Kalakaua was no longer able to dismiss any of the members of the Cabinet without a majority vote from the Legislature. The King had the power to veto, but it could be overruled by a two thirds vote from the Legislature.

In order to vote for the House of Nobles, residents needed to own either \$3,000 worth of property or earn at least \$600 a year, which were the same requirements to run for election in the House of Nobles. The requirements for the Representatives were similar, but with lesser value. The 1887 Constitution excluded Asians from voting altogether. Article 59, which defined the voting restrictions, began with the statement, “Every male resident of the Hawaiian Islands of

⁴² Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 360.

⁴³ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*, 181.

Hawaiian, American, or European birth or decent...shall be entitled to vote....”⁴⁴ The wording of this article disenfranchised anybody of Asian descent, who were the majority of the laborers. The result of these voting restrictions was the loss of voting rights for most Native Hawaiians because of their failure to meet property and income restrictions, and for foreign laborers because of the lack of inclusion in the terms. This loss of voting rights for the Natives would continue to be a significant problem. This constitution sped up the process of imperialism, bringing more power to the *haole* on the Islands. As William Russ states in *The Hawaiian Revolution*, “Foreigners also owned most of the land; in fact the natives were almost landless. Out of 4,695 landholders in the Kingdom in 1891-1892 the largest part was non-native.”⁴⁵ Because of this, Liliuokalani described the 1887 Constitution as, “...a document which deprived the sovereign of all power, made him a tool in their [the missionary party’s] hands, and practically took away the franchise from the Hawaiian race.”⁴⁶ Liliuokalani clearly did not support this constitution, which explains why she pushed to draft a new constitution when she became Queen in 1891. This would cause serious conflict because it was the Reform Party that had forced this constitution upon Kalakaua, and when it was challenged a few years later by Liliuokalani, they did not trust her.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Morgan Report*, Text of the 1887 Constitution, Articles 41, 48, 59. Quote from Article 59.

⁴⁵ Russ, *The Hawaiian Revolution*, 30.

⁴⁶ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story*, 180-181.

⁴⁷ The people who were not in support of the Monarchy, who were mostly men of missionary descent and the economic leaders of the Islands, formed the Reform Party in the government. They were initially opposed to annexation, but supported it just prior to the overthrow in 1893.

1887-1891: An Attempted Revolution and the Death of the King

And so my poor brother said good-bye to us all, and bade farewell to his beautiful Islands, which he was never to look on again.

Queen Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*

The promulgation of the 1887 Constitution was difficult for Kalakaua. He could no longer be the ruler that he wanted to be. This contributed to the deterioration of his health and his eventual death in 1891. Liliuokalani stated that, "...although the conspirators [of the 1887 Revolution] had not directly assassinated him; he died soon after."⁴⁸ She went on to declare that, "His Majesty Kalakaua died in reality of a broken heart, - broken by the base ingratitude of the very persons whose fortunes he had made."⁴⁹ However, some Hawaiians still supported the Monarchy. In 1889, two years before Kalakaua died, Robert Wilcox attempted a revolution to return him to power.

Wilcox was born on the island of Maui in 1855 to an American sailor and a Hawaiian chiefess. He was sent to Italy by the Hawaiian government for a military education and returned home in 1887 with a new wife. He was not happy with the situation in Hawaii after the passing of the new constitution. Wilcox believed in the power of the Monarchy and formed a secret organization in 1889 whose goal was to rid the government of the 1887 Constitution. Kalakaua heard about these plans and informed the Cabinet. Nobody thought it was much of a threat, but Wilcox and eighty others marched on the Palace steps armed with guns and cannons and demanded that Kalakaua sign the constitution they had drafted that would restore his power. Kalakaua was not at the Palace and ignored Wilcox's messengers. In the end, shots were fired

⁴⁸ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*, 184.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

and fighting ensued resulting in seven of Wilcox's men being killed and twelve wounded.⁵⁰ The attempt had failed, but importantly neither Kalakaua nor Liliuokalani supported Wilcox in his attempt to restore their power. They were more concerned in keeping what little power they still had. Neither one of them would use force. This resistance to the use of force would be seen again in the overthrow in 1893 that deposed Liliuokalani.

In 1890, Kalakaua fell ill during a visit to the United States and suffered a stroke while in San Francisco. After being put on bed rest, Kalakaua died at 2:35 pm on January 20, 1891. A service was held for him in San Francisco where an estimated 100,000 people lined the streets to mourn the King's death.⁵¹ The things that killed Kalakaua were, according to Joesting in *Hawaii: An Uncommon History*, "...cirrhosis of the liver, uraemia, and cerebral damage from strokes." Joesting also went on to say, "His enemies said he killed himself with drink, and his friends said the reformers killed him through persecution."⁵² After Kalakaua died, his sister Liliuokalani became Queen of the Hawaiian Islands.

⁵⁰ Joesting, *Hawaii*, 229-230.

⁵¹ *New York Times* (New York), 23 January 1891, p. 1.

⁵² Joesting, *Hawaii*, 232.

PART II. QUEEN LILIUOKALANI

The King is Dead: Long Live the Queen!

I was so overcome by the death of my dear brother, so dazed with the suddenness of the news which had come upon us in a moment, that I hardly realized what was going on about me, nor did I at all appreciate for the moment my situation.

Queen Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*

When Liliuokalani came to the throne, the Islands were in a state of depression. One of the causes of this was the passage of the McKinley Tariff Bill in the United States during the summer of 1890. This bill was one of the reasons for Kalakaua's last trip to the United States that ended in his death. He was going to argue against the passage of the bill on behalf of the planters in Hawaii. Liliuokalani stated in her book that, "...the king went cheerfully and patiently to work for the cause of those who had been and were his enemies. He sacrificed himself in the interests of the very people who had done him so much wrong, and given him such constant suffering."⁵³ Despite his efforts, the bill was passed and Hawaiian sugar no longer had an advantage in the United States over sugar produced elsewhere. The economic crisis that persisted after the Tariff Bill was passed showed how economically dependent Hawaii was on the United States. It was clear that significant changes would need to be made if Hawaii were to remain stable.

At this time the Reform Party was trying to gain control of the government. They thought they would have achieved control after the Constitution of 1887, but they did not have control of the Legislature so it was still out of their hands. At this point the Legislature was comprised of three parties: the Reform Party, the National Reform Party (which supported the Queen), and the

⁵³ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*, 206.

Liberal Party (which was created by Wilcox.)⁵⁴ In order to increase their power, the Reform Party and the Liberal Party joined forces against the Queen. Under Article 41 of the 1887 Constitution, the Legislature could dismiss the Cabinet at their discretion. After the Legislature rejected the Queen's selection for a Cabinet three times between August 1892 and January 1893, Liliuokalani finally ended up with a Cabinet made up of members from the National Reform Party that the Reform Party found favorable.⁵⁵ This led her to believe that she would have the support of her Cabinet.

Because of economic unrest from the McKinley Tariff and turbulence from losing the King, a need for change was on people's minds. The businessmen attempted to have the Reciprocity Treaty revised to allow free-trade with the United States so that the Hawaiian economy could get back on the right track. People in both Hawaii and the United States talked about this revision, but it was not publically addressed. Some began to seriously consider an idea that had been a topic of interest for many years: annexation to the United States.⁵⁶

Many people felt that annexation would be the only way for Hawaii to become prosperous once again. It was known that the Natives in Hawaii were generally opposed to annexation, but there were some who favored it. Talk about annexation increased in 1891 and 1892. Some of the reasons for this were that the Natives and other laborers on the Islands were greatly influenced by Wilcox and the Liberal Party who were in support of annexation, but only if Hawaii would be equal to the other States and not just a colony. The Liberal Party gained support from the working people on the Islands with slogans like, "Hawaii for the Hawaiians."⁵⁷

Another reason for the increased interest in annexation was the drop in support for the Reform

⁵⁴ When Liliuokalani came to power Wilcox went to her asking for a position in the government, which she denied. He then formed the Liberal Party which was not in support of the Queen or the Reformers.

⁵⁵ Ralph S. Kuykendall and A. Grove Day, *Hawaii: A History* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 176.

⁵⁶ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 499.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 515.

Party, which had promised change in the government but had not delivered it. Many of their supporters thought that annexation may be the answer. The economic depression experienced after the McKinley Tariff provided another reason for increased support for annexation. In response to this increased interest in annexation to the United States, a few Native Hawaiians formed their own party, called *Native Sons of Hawaii*, which took a firm stance against annexation.⁵⁸ This, however, was not enough to stop the more powerful foreign powers from pursuing their interests.

After the election of 1892, members of the Reform Party thought that annexation was the answer to their problems. However, there were complications. When Liliuokalani came to the throne she began receiving petitions from all over Hawaii encouraging her to draft a new constitution to replace the 1887 Constitution that had taken away most of the Monarchy's power.⁵⁹ Liliuokalani stated in her book, "Petitions poured in from every part of the Islands for a new constitution; these were addressed to myself as the reigning sovereign.... To have ignored or disregarded so general a request I must have been deaf to the voice of the people, which tradition tells us is the voice of God."⁶⁰ Liliuokalani was under the impression that this was what the majority of the people in Hawaii wanted and that she had the support of her Cabinet. After receiving these messages, she worked on the request while the *haole* continued to focus on annexation.

Those who shared the belief that it was inevitable that Hawaii would be annexed to the United States created a secret organization called the Annexation Club in early 1892.⁶¹ One of the founders was Lorrin A. Thurston, who was a member of the Reform Party and had previously

⁵⁸ Ibid., 509-511.

⁵⁹ Ruth Tabrah, *Hawaii* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 99.

⁶⁰ Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story*, 230-231.

⁶¹ Kuykendall and Day, *Hawaii: A History*, 175.

supported Hawaiian independence. In light of the economic situation and his negative views of the current government, he decided that annexation was the only choice.⁶² He and several others formed the secret organization with the intent of being prepared in case annexation became a viable option. According to Thurston, they would not do anything to force annexation; they would merely be ready. Kuykendall quotes Thurston as saying, “[the object of the club] was not to promote annexation, but to be ready to act quickly and intelligently, should Liliuokalani precipitate the necessity by some move against the constitution, tending to revert to absolutism or anything of the nature.”⁶³ The Annexation Club was then ready for action when Liliuokalani prepared to submit a copy of a new constitution to her Cabinet for approval right after the close of the Legislative session on Saturday, January 14, 1893.

Right before the close of the Legislative session of 1892, the quick passage of an Opium Bill and a Lottery Bill in addition to a motion to have the current Cabinet dismissed proved fatal for Liliuokalani. Many members of the Legislature were absent because it appeared that the political situation was calm and that these bills were dead. The American Minister Stevens and the warship *U.S.S Boston* were also absent from Honolulu at this time.⁶⁴ However, on January 12, 1893 (two days before start of the Revolution) to the surprise of everybody, the current Cabinet was dismissed by Liliuokalani and the Opium and Lottery Bills were passed. The Queen appointed a new Cabinet and announced on the morning of January 13 that she had signed the two bills. These controversial actions brought the revolution even closer. Russ states in *The Hawaiian Revolution*, “The selection of the [new] Cabinet and the enactment of the lottery-opium laws set the white party seething with discontent. One last straw was needed, and this

⁶² Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 532-533.

⁶³ Thurston, in *Ibid.*, 533.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 579. The fact that Stevens and the troops that would be landed a few days later were not present during the beginning of the Revolution provides evidence that they were not part of a conspiracy to overthrow the Queen.

was provided on the following day.”⁶⁵ It would take only one more action by Liliuokalani to set the Reformers in motion, an attempt to promulgate a new constitution.

⁶⁵ Russ, *The Hawaiian Revolution*, 65.

The Overthrow: January 14-17

For over twelve years we have been living on the crust of a volcano under the rule of both Kalakaua and Liliuokalani.

W.C. Castle, *New York Times*, 1893

In a meeting with her Cabinet at 12 p.m., January 14, 1893, Liliuokalani announced her plans to proclaim a new constitution that would restore the power the Crown had prior to the Constitution of 1887.⁶⁶ She was under the impression that this was what the people in Hawaii wanted, because of the number of petitions she received. She also believed that she had the support of her Cabinet since they were members of the supportive party that she had selected. The announcement of a new constitution alarmed members of the Reform Party. Under the Constitution of 1887, the reigning sovereign was not permitted to form a new constitution. Liliuokalani was only able to submit proposed amendments to the Legislature for approval.⁶⁷ When she presented the new constitution to her Cabinet, two members refused to sign it in fear that it might spark a revolution.⁶⁸ She was then forced to announce that her plans would be postponed to the crowd that had gathered to hear the announcement of the promulgation of the new constitution. Her supporters were upset by this because they supported a new constitution and did not understand why Liliuokalani was not able to follow through with her plans. Because of the large crowd and the meetings taking place around town by both Reformers and Royalists, the government feared a revolution.⁶⁹ The Reformers were disturbed by the announcement because Liliuokalani claimed that her plans would be continued at a later date.

⁶⁶ Joesting, *Hawaii*, 235.

⁶⁷ *Morgan Report*, Text of the Constitution of 1887, article 82.

⁶⁸ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *A History of Hawaii* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1927), 277.

⁶⁹ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 586.

Believing the Queen's attempt to overturn the Constitution of 1887 to be revolutionary, the leaders of the Reform Party decided that it was time to take charge of the government. On that same day, Saturday, January 14, thirteen men formed a Committee of Public Safety; the members consisted mostly of members of the Annexation Club.⁷⁰ In a public meeting two days later on January 16 they announced that the Committee of Public Safety would do whatever was necessary to secure the protection of life, liberty, and property in Hawaii. Liliuokalani was alarmed by the news of this meeting and promised that she would not change the current constitution. As Kuykendall explains in *A History of Hawaii*, "...on Monday morning they [the Queen and her Cabinet] issued a proclamation, saying that no change would be made in the constitution except in the manner provided by law."⁷¹ Despite this effort to halt the actions of the Committee of Public Safety, it was too late.

The Committee of Public Safety occupied the government office building on Tuesday January 17 and read a proclamation from the steps that abrogated the Monarchy and set up the Provisional Government that was to be in place until a union was formally established with the United States.⁷² That morning, former judge of the Supreme Court, Sanford B. Dole, joined the Revolutionists. He added more legitimacy to the movement because he had been a member of the Queen's government.⁷³ The day before, the Committee of Public Safety had requested that the United States Minister John L. Stevens land troops from the *U.S.S. Boston*, which had just returned to Honolulu from a brief trip to Hilo, in order to protect United States citizens and their property in case of hostility from either side. This request was granted and the troops were

⁷⁰ Kuykendall and Day, *Hawaii*, 177.

⁷¹ Kuykendall, *A History of Hawaii*, 278.

⁷² Kuykendall and Day, *Hawaii*, 178.

⁷³ Russ, *The Hawaiian Revolution*, 85.

gathered near the court house on Monday January 16.⁷⁴ When the troops landed, Liliuokalani was under the impression that they were in support of the Provisional Government. She then surrendered to its authority on January 17, 1893.

⁷⁴ Joesting, *Hawaii*, 236.

PART III. WHO IS AT FAULT?

The Blount Report and the Morgan Report

You will investigate and fully report to the President all the facts you can learn respecting the condition of affairs in the Hawaiian Islands, the causes of the revolution by which the Queen's Government was overthrown, the sentiment of the people toward existing authority, and, in general, all that can fully enlighten the President touching subjects of your mission.

Instructions to James H. Blount

One of the most important questions surrounding the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy is whether or not it was encouraged or aided by the United States through its representative in Hawaii, Minister John L. Stevens. On March 11, 1893, President Cleveland sent James H. Blount to Hawaii to conduct an investigation into what had happened and the United States' level of responsibility. Blount testified in the *Morgan Report* that his mission was to gather information.⁷⁵ He was given one stenographer, who was the only person with him on the covert assignment. Blount did not reveal to anyone on either side of these historic events his reason for the visit. He did not want to prejudge anyone. One reason for possible inaccuracies in his report was a lack of people with whom to consult. Blount was sent alone with no clear knowledge of the situation. He then had to draw his own conclusions about the incident. Blount stated in the *Morgan Report*, "I felt that I was alone, without anybody on earth to consult with, and I often felt the need of somebody to advise with. But there was no impartial person to whom I could talk at all, and so the responsibility I felt the greater, and went on in that groove to the end."⁷⁶ Clearly Blount felt a lot of pressure. After hearing testimonies from people in Hawaii on both sides of

⁷⁵ The Morgan Report was the second investigation of the overthrow conducted by a committee from the Senate in 1894.

⁷⁶ *Morgan Report*, Testimony of James H. Blount, 749.

the conflict, he made his report, and concluded that the overthrow was the result of a conspiracy between the Committee of Public Safety and Minister Stevens.

After receiving the *Blount Report*, President Cleveland attempted to reinstate Liliuokalani. The Provisional Government refused to step down and sought another investigation from the Committee on Foreign Relations in the United States Senate. This was granted and Senator John Morgan conducted another investigation. Numerous testimonies were taken in Washington and the Committee reached the conclusion that Minister Stevens was *not* involved in a conspiracy to overthrow Liliuokalani. This rest of this section will examine some of the events that took place from January 14-17 in more detail.

A notable opinion shown in the *Morgan Report* justified the United States' actions in Hawaii. When Liliuokalani announced her plan to promulgate a new constitution on January 14, she was in violation of the Constitution of 1887 and had, therefore, abdicated her rights as ruler. The following statement from the opening of the *Morgan Report* explained:

The action of the Queen in an effort to overturn the constitution of 1887, to which she had sworn obedience and support, had been accepted and treated by a large and powerful body of the people as a violation of her constitutional obligations, revolutionary in its character and purposes and that it amounted to an act of abdication on her part, so far as her powers and the rights of the people under the constitution of 1887 were concerned.⁷⁷

Many people in Hawaii believed that during the period from January 14-17 no government was in place. The Queen's only foundation for authority in Hawaii was her pledge of allegiance to the 1887 Constitution and they believed that by taking action against this oath, she had abdicated the throne.⁷⁸ The *Morgan Report* goes on to explain that Liliuokalani's actions were not supported by a majority of the Hawaiian people.

⁷⁷ *Morgan Report*, 365.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 365-366.

If the Hawaiian people did not support the Queen in her actions, then why did she receive petitions in support of a new constitution? The answer to this question rested with the “Hawaiians” who were in power at this time. As previously noted, the demographics in Hawaii, especially after the rise of the sugar industry because of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876, had changed significantly. The Native population was decreasing rapidly and they had very little power in the government after the Constitution of 1887 restricted their voting rights. The part-Hawaiians had gained enough power that even though they did not outnumber the Natives, they had significantly more influence in the government. In 1891-1892, the Natives in Hawaii owned only 13.89% of the land, despite making up almost 40% of the population.⁷⁹ Because of the land ownership requirements for voting in the 1887 Constitution, the Natives had little say in the actions of the government. It was predominantly the Native Hawaiians who petitioned the Queen for a new constitution. However, since they had little power in the government they did not have enough support for their cause. Because of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 and the Constitution of 1887, Hawaii was under the control of foreigners and therefore the overthrow could not have been prevented by the less powerful Natives.

A justification for the possible involvement of the United States in the 1893 overthrow was that they had intended to annex Hawaii. The idea of annexation was not new in 1893 and had both support and opposition in Hawaii and in the United States. Annexation was discussed during the debate over the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876, which resulted in a long lasting economic connection to the United States. The Hawaiian economy expanded greatly from the alliance. This was when the political power began shifting to non-Native people on the Islands, which is a critical element in the process of imperialism. The people who supported the Revolution of 1887 were the same people who supported the overthrow six years later in 1893. They supported

⁷⁹ Russ, *The Hawaiian Revolution*, 32.

annexation and this was not an idea that was officially supported by the United States government. The United States had not allowed annexation up to this point and the Senate refused to approve the Annexation Bill that was submitted by the Provisional Government in 1894. Also important in the United States' investigation of the events of the overthrow were the actions of Minister Stevens.

Minister Stevens

Here in Honolulu were two or three thousand men gathered together for the purpose of overturning the Government and dethroning the monarch, while near by a thousand others were gathered, nominally, at least, to protect the Government. Naturally and properly, I think, Minister Stevens decided that the condition of affairs warranted him in sending for a force of marines to protect American property and persons.

William Armstrong, *New York Times*, 1893

One controversy surrounding Stevens' actions during the Hawaiian Revolution was his landing of troops from the *U.S.S. Boston* on Monday, January 16 at the request of the Committee of Public Safety. His reason for landing the troops was concern for the safety of citizens on the Islands. He also claimed that he would have landed troops even if the request had not been made by the Committee of Public Safety because it was their (himself and the captain and soldiers of the *U.S.S. Boston*) duty, "for the security of American life and property and the maintenance of public order...."⁸⁰ An affidavit by the Committee of Public Safety in the *Morgan Report* corroborates the testimony of Stevens:

That at no time...did Mr Stevens ever recommend or urge us, or either of us, to dethrone the Queen or establish a Provisional Government. That at no time...did Mr. Stevens or Capt. Wiltse promise us, or either of us, that the United States troops would be used to assist in the overthrow of the Queen or the establishment of the Provisional Government, and such troops, in fact, were not so used.⁸¹

The affidavit goes on to claim that not only were the troops not intended to aid the revolutionists, but that the Committee of Public Safety would have commenced with their revolutionary actions whether or not the United States troops were present.

Also included in the *Morgan Report* were eight affidavits from Hawaiian residents, most of whom were born in the United States. All of the residents had the same message: that the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 881.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Affidavit of Committee of Safety, 950. The original spelling and punctuation have been left in. Captain Wiltse was the captain of the *U.S.S. Boston*.

landing of the troops from the *U.S.S. Boston* was in response to the fear of violence and the fact that there was not a stable government in place. The *Morgan Report* verified the belief that the period from Saturday January 14 until Monday January 16 was considered a time of “interregnum” where there was no real government in place. This interpretation was confirmed by Minister Stevens in his testimony in the *Morgan Report*.⁸² It was the peoples’ sentiment that there was a lack of order and that there was no control on either side. The affidavit of F. J. Lowrey, an American citizen who was living in Honolulu at the time of the overthrow, stated:

On Monday, the 16th, there was a general dread of incendiarism, and precautions were taken by himself and others for the protection of property; the feeling was so high that it was liable to break out into lawlessness and violence at any moment; that when he heard of the landing of the United States forces it was a great relief.⁸³

This is evidence of the fear of violence in the eyes of the people living in the area. This fear of violence was the reason Minister Stevens gave for having landed the troops from the *U.S.S. Boston*. Not only was this reason justified, there was already a precedent set of the use of foreign troops in Hawaii in a time of crisis.

When Kalakaua was elected King by the Legislative Assembly in 1874, American and British troops were landed for the protection of life and property. Not everybody supported Kalakaua and there was a large following for Queen Emma, many of whom had gathered in large numbers outside the courthouse that day. Because of this conflict of interest on the day before the election the American and British Ministers made arrangements with the captains of the ships to be on standby in case of a conflict. One occurred and troops were brought ashore where they calmed the situation. Because of this event, Stevens knew that there was a precedent set for troops that were already present in the area to be used in the case of a threat to lives and property. So, Stevens made arrangements with the captain of the *U.S.S. Boston* when there was

⁸² Ibid., Testimony of John L. Stevens, 899-900.

⁸³ Ibid., Affidavit of F.J. Lowrey, 954.

talk of revolution and informed him that he should be ready to land the troops in the case of a conflict, just as the United States Minister had done in 1874.

Another controversy with respect to Stevens' actions was that he was very quick to recognize the Provisional Government. He did so on the very day of the overthrow, January 17. When Stevens recognized the Provisional Government at around 4 or 5 p.m., Liliuokalani had not yet surrendered. This act may have been premature, but Stevens believed there was no real government in power at the time, so he recognized the Provisional Government quickly in order to avoid bloodshed. The fact that the United States had recognized the Provisional Government influenced Liliuokalani in her decision to surrender. Because the United States troops were brought ashore to prevent violence, the Queen was advised to give in to the demands of the Provisional Government. As a result of the circumstances and the continued desire to prevent violence, the Provisional Government allowed Liliuokalani to surrender to the United States so that she could appeal her protests to Washington. After Liliuokalani submitted her official surrender, a committee was sent to the United States by the Provisional Government to petition for annexation. The Provisional Government brought with them the letter of protest written by Liliuokalani and gave it to the President of the United States.⁸⁴ President Cleveland was sworn into office on March 4, 1893 and faced the decision of how to handle the Hawaiian situation. Upon hearing about the events that had transpired in Hawaii, Cleveland began his investigation by sending Blount to Hawaii. This was followed by the second investigation by Senator Morgan, which reached the conclusion that the United States was not a conspirator in the Revolution.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 94-99, 109. The orders given to the troops were to protect either side from bloodshed. Because of these instructions, the Queen was not able to resist the revolutionists without precipitating intervention by the United States troops. On these same terms if the revolutionists had shown any violence they would have forced the United States' troops to intervene on behalf of the Queen.

By allowing Blount and the committee headed by Morgan to investigate the situation in Hawaii, the United States fulfilled its promise to Liliuokalani when she surrendered on January 17, 1893. She made her appeal to the United States government and after investigation of the situation; evidence supported the conclusion that what happened in Hawaii was not the fault of the United States.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the information presented that the United States was not a conspirator in overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy. The overthrow happened as a result of the process of imperialism that had been developing in Hawaii for decades. This began with the economic connection to the United States because of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1876. The connection never disappeared and this ensured continued influence of American interests in Hawaii. The Monarchy had weakened during Kalakaua's reign leading to the Revolution of 1887. The reason for this revolution, which eliminated most of the King's power, was a lack of stability in the Monarchy during the reign of Kalakaua including his ability to be easily influenced, his spending habits, and his participation in scandals. After 1887, non-Natives gained even more power and distrusted the Monarchy when Liliuokalani came to the throne in 1891. Her efforts to return power to the throne in 1893 alarmed the Reform Party, which caused them to remove her from power and seek annexation to the United States.

The landing of United States troops during the overthrow in 1893 was acceptable because it was for the protection of American citizens on the Islands and there was a precedent set for this by the landing of troops after the riot following Kalakaua's election in 1874. After her surrender, Liliuokalani made a plea to the United States for help and upon investigation it was determined that Minister Stevens was not at fault and thus the United States had no interest in interfering with the Provisional Government. After the overthrow, President Cleveland denied attempts by the Provisional Government for annexation to the United States in 1894. Therefore, they declared themselves the head of the Republic of Hawaii on July 4, 1894, and continued on the path of self governance in hopes that doing so would prompt the United States to one day annex them. After William McKinley was elected President of the United States in 1897, he submitted

an annexation resolution to Congress for approval. The resolution passed on July 7, 1898 and completed the imperialistic journey the United States began in Hawaii almost 80 years earlier.

So, why did the United States apologize in 1993 for their role in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy 100 years earlier? They had a presence in Hawaii that began with the missionaries in 1820 and continued to influence the economics, politics, and demographics of the Islands and led to the overthrow in 1893. Although the United States did not precipitate the events that took place from January 14-17, it was active in the long process of imperialism that led to them.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 1820:** Arrival of the first Missionaries and the start of American influence in Hawaii
- 1864:** Constitution signed by Kamehameha V, described as a “Constitutional Monarchy”
- 1874:** January 8, 1873-February 3: Reign of Lunalilo
February 3: Lunalilo dies
February 12: Legislative Assembly meets to vote for the next King, hundreds of Queen Emma’s supporters gather outside the courthouse, a riot ensues upon announcement of Kalakaua’s victory, American and British troops landed, Kalakaua declared King
November: Kalakaua visits the United States to campaign for a Reciprocity Treaty, the first visit by a King from any county to the United States
- 1876:** September 9: The Reciprocity Treaty officially put into effect
- 1880:** Mauna Loa begins erupting
 Opium scandal involving Kalakaua and Moreno
- 1881:** January 20-October 29: Kalakaua takes a trip around the world
- 1882-1887:** Gibson greatly involved in the government of Hawaii
- 1883:** February 12: Beginning of the two week coronation ceremony for Kalakaua
- 1887:** January: The Hawaiian League is formed
January 28: Gibson and the current cabinet officially resign
June 30 (2 p.m.): Mass meeting led by the Hawaiian League in the armory of the Honolulu Rifles, Kalakaua signs the Constitution of 1887
 Reciprocity Treaty ratified to include an article granting the United States access to Pearl Harbor
- 1889:** Wilcox attempts a revolution to restore the Monarchy
- 1890:** Kalakaua travels to the United States to campaign against the McKinley Tariff Bill
- 1891:** January 20 (2:35 p.m.): Kalakaua dies, Liliuokalani is officially Queen of Hawaii
- 1892** (Spring): Annexation Club formed
- 1893:** January 12: Liliuokalani signs Opium and Lottery Bills, dismisses the current Cabinet, and declares a new Cabinet
January 14 (12 p.m.): Liliuokalani presents a draft of a new constitution to her Cabinet, two of the four members refuse to sign it, Committee of Public Safety formed
January 16: Public meeting led by the Committee of Public Safety, troops from the *U.S.S. Boston* landed
January 17: The Committee of Public Safety occupies the government office building and proclaims the end of the Monarchy and the establishment of the Provisional Government, Liliuokalani surrenders to said government
July 17: *Blount Report* submitted to President Cleveland, efforts begin to put Liliuokalani back on the throne
- 1894:** February 26: *Morgan Report* submitted to the United States Senate, efforts to put Liliuokalani back on the throne are stopped
July 4: Republic of Hawaii is declared
- 1898:** July 7: Hawaii is annexed by the United States

APPENDIX B: LIST OF PEOPLE

Annexation Club: A secret organization formed in 1892 to plan how to overthrow the Monarchy and gain annexation to the United States.

Blount Report: A report made to the United States Senate in 1893 of what happened in Hawaii in January of that year and what the United States involvement was.

Bush, John E.: Head of the Hawaiian Embassy sent to the Samoan Islands.

Committee of Public Safety: Formed on January 14, 1893 by members of the Annexation Club to protect the public from an anticipated revolution.

Dole, Sanford B.: Son of a missionary, member of the Legislature that opposed Kalakaua, co-founder of the Hawaiian League that forced Kalakaua to sign the 1887 constitution, eventually the head of the Provisional Government formed in 1893 after Liliuokalani was dethroned.

Gibson, Walter Murray: Important political figure from 1882-1887, close member of Kalakaua's cabinets, proposed the idea for a Polynesian Federation

Hawaiian League: An organization formed in January 1887, forced Kalakaua to sign the Constitution of 1887.

Honolulu Rifles: A military organization in Hawaii that joined the Hawaiian League to force Kalakaua to sign the Constitution of 1887.

Kalakaua, David: King of Hawaii from 1874-1891

Kamehameha V: Former King of the Hawaiian Islands who signed the Constitution of 1864 that was in place when Kalakaua took the throne in 1874.

Kapiolani (Queen): Wife of David Kalakaua.

Liberal Party: The Party in the legislature that was created by Wilcox in opposition to Liliuokalani.

Liliuokalani (Queen): Queen of Hawaii from 1891-1893.

Lunalio (King): King of Hawaii before Kalakaua was appointed to the throne.

Pauahi, Bernice: In the race against Kalakaua to be crowned in 1874.

Peirce, Henry A.: American Minister, made arrangements for foreign soldiers to be ready to intervene in case of violence following announcement of Kalakaua's victory in 1874.

Morgan Report: Report to the Senate in 1894 on the United States involvement in the 1893 overthrow, a follow-up of the Blount Report.

Moreno, Celso Caesar: Co-conspirator with Kalakaua in an opium scandal in 1880, shortly named Foreign Minister in Hawaii, then dismissed, had a close relationship with Kalakaua that other ministers did not trust.

National Reform Party: The party in the Legislature that supported Liliuokalani prior to her overthrow in 1893.

Pele: Ancient Hawaiian Goddess, thought to be the cause of the Mauna Loa eruption in 1880.

Provisional Government: The government that was put in place after Liliuokalani was dethroned with the mission of seeking annexation to the United States, headed by Sanford B. Dole.

Queen Emma: In the race against Kalakaua to be crowned in 1874, widow of former King Kamehameha IV

Reform Party: The party in the Legislature prior to the overthrow in 1893 that sought more power in order to gain annexation to the United States, its members were involved in the Revolutions of 1887 and 1893.

Spreckels, Claus: Sugar baron, ran plantations all over Hawaii and refineries in San Francisco, controlled a sugar monopoly in the Western United States in the late 1800s.

Stevens, John L.: Minister of the United States in Hawaii during the 1893 overthrow, people question his, and therefore the United States,' involvement.

Thurston, Lorrin A.: Son of a missionary, member of the Legislature and opposed Kalakaua, co-founder of the Hawaiian League that forced Kalakaua to sign the 1887 Constitution, co-founder of the Annexation Club and the Committee of Public Safety that was responsible for the overthrow of Liliuokalani in 1893.

U.S.S. Boston: The United States warship that was in Pearl Harbor during the 1893 overthrow and where the United States troops came from that were present.

W.G. Irwin & Company: The sugar company that Claus Spreckles became partner of in 1880 that insured a sugar monopoly.

Wilcox, Robert W.: Attempted a revolution to bring power back to Kalakaua in 1889 that failed, later was part of the Legislature and opposed Liliuokalani.

Wodehouse, James H.: British Commissioner, made arrangements for foreign soldiers to be ready to intervene in case of violence following announcement of Kalakaua's victory in 1874, also spoke to Liliuokalani in an attempt to dissuade her from promulgating a new constitution in 1893.

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