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AN UNJUST LEGALITY: THE SETTLER COLONIZATION OF HAWAII,
TOLD THROUGH THE BLOUNT REPORT OF 1893

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Abstract

The Blount Report of 1893 is a comprehensive exposé of the American-led overthrow of Hawai'i's Queen Lili'uokalani and subsequent seizure of the Hawaiian government. Ordered by President Grover Cleveland and composed by Georgia Congressman James Blount, the Blount Report includes numerous first-hand observations of the overthrow unparalleled in credibility and specificity, which shed light on the influence of sugar fortune, the political power of missionaries and their descendants, and the role of American imperial interests. Ultimately, the Blount Report implicates the United States, exposing the active support of the U.S. Minister to Hawai'i and U.S. Marines in the 1893 coup d'état. By extension, the U.S. government is also incriminated by knowingly legitimating this unjust seizure of power, through annexation of Hawai'i as a territory and eventually as a State.

This paper uses the Blount Report to reveal the nature of the evolving American colonizer in Hawai'i—from religious missionary to prosperous oligarch. The events occurring in Hawai'i between 1820, when missionaries arrived, and 1893, when Queen Lili'uokalani was overthrown, mark the transformation from a colonial project based on civilization and christianization to the materialization of a settler colonial structure, with the ultimate goal of annexing to the United States. Settler colonization, unlike classic colonization, seeks permanency and invisibility, whereby the settler fully defines and assumes the identity of the colony. For Hawai'i, Queen Lili'uokalani's overthrow formed the foundation for the ongoing settler structure upon which the American State of Hawai'i is built. By using the Blount Report to illuminate the underlying structure of Hawai'i's settler colonial state, this paper intends to contribute to the project of Hawai'i's anti-colonial settler deconstruction.

I. Introduction

In January of 1893, a group of wealthy white businessmen launched a coup d'état against Hawai'i's sovereign ruler Queen Lili'uokalani. Backed by the U.S. Minister and U.S. Marines, they proclaimed themselves to rule as the Provisional Government until such time as Hawai'i should be annexed to the United States. More wealth was the inspiration—a recent tariff had limited the abundance of riches accessible to the sugar plantationers, and they had exhausted opportunities to consolidate power to themselves within the Kingdom of Hawai'i. Addressing Congress on the matter, President Grover Cleveland condemned the overthrow as an “act of war” and the Provisional Government as an “oligarchy, set up without the assent of the people.”¹ Despite this critique, Hawai'i remains occupied by the United States over a century later. The islands function as America's premier Pacific military outpost and vacation destination, while Native Hawaiians struggle to find affordable housing and face the ongoing depletion of Hawai'i's natural resources.

The United States now comfortably calls Hawai'i its own, with the overthrow and pre-existing Kingdom all but written out of history. Exercising its “sovereign prerogative,” the United States has continually imposed its law, language, military, economic, and political structures on Hawai'i, and in exchange, takes for itself the land and resources of Hawai'i.² The uninterrupted control that the United States exercises over Hawai'i and its

¹ U.S. Congress, *President's Message Relating to the Hawaiian Islands*, 53rd Cong., 2d sess, 1893, 443-1150, 456. (Cleveland's Message to Congress).

² Natsu Taylor Saito, “Tales of Color and Colonialism: Racial Realism and Settler Colonial Theory,” *Florida A&M Univ. Law Review*, 10, no. 11 (2014): 26-27; Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 103. Trask states, “The relationship between [indigenous peoples] and those who want control of us *and* our resources is not a *formerly* colonial relationship but an *ongoing* colonial relationship.”; Haunani-Kay Trask, “The Color of Violence,” *Social Justice*, 31, no. 4 (2004): 10. “Our people are in prison, are homeless, and undereducated. Is this a violent situation? Of course. Is this a result of American colonization? Of course. ... There must be a dominant language, a dominant legal system, a

indigenous residents exemplifies the observation that settler colonization is a “structure, not an event.”³ In the settler colonial structure of Hawai‘i, the overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani is the foundation.

To explicate the foundations of Hawai‘i’s settler colonial structure, this paper critically examines the Blount Report of 1893.⁴ This Report, ordered by President Grover Cleveland, is a comprehensive exposé of the overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani, recorded by a U.S. Senator from Georgia. Using the Blount Report, this paper has one primary goal: to reveal the series of colonial events taken strategically by wealthy Americans to seize power from the Hawaiian monarchy, and the relation that those events have to Hawai‘i’s ongoing settler colonial structure. The existence of the Blount Report in federal and public records well before decision-makers moved to annex the Kingdom proves the intent to commit a wrong and belies any claim that the United States acted with clean hands, rather than pure imperial ambition. Moreover, this exploration of the Blount Report demonstrates how the United States played an indispensable role in legitimating the unjust seizure of power during and after the coup.

Finally, this examination of the Blount Report elucidates the distinctions between colonizing *events* and the eventual settler colonial *structure* as they are reflected in the evolving goals of Americans in Hawai‘i. While the two processes of colonization and settler colonization often intertwine (and do, in the case of Hawai‘i), the two are

dominant educational system, and so on and so on. In other words, there must be dominance and subordination.”

³ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

⁴ 53rd Cong., 2d sess, 1893, 443-1150. This congressional document includes Cleveland’s Message to Congress; Correspondences (primarily between Secretary of State Gresham and James Blount) (Part I); Affidavits submitted to James Blount in Hawai‘i (Part II); Interviews and Statements Given to Blount (Part III); and “Miscellaneous” submissions (Part IV). Blount’s Report documenting his conclusions for President Cleveland is found in Part I: No. 17, at pages 567-606.

fundamentally different, and should be examined independently.⁵ Whereas the goal of colonialism is to *reinforce* a relationship between the colonizer and colonized based on difference, the goal of settler colonialism is to *erase* the distinction between between Native and settler.⁶ Settler colonialism strives negatively to dissolve Native societies, and positively to replace the indigenous society with a new colonial society on the same land base.⁷ These different colonial structures prompt different decolonizing responses.⁸ Because settler colonialism pursues an endpoint—wherein the structure becomes permanent, and therefore invisible—decolonizing work in a settler context requires insistence on the existence of the structure.⁹ Examining the Blount Report is one way to bring visibility to the settler foundations of Hawai’i, and through this process, decolonization is rendered “thinkable.”¹⁰

II. The Blount Report: Background

A. President Grover Cleveland

President Grover Cleveland’s primary mark on history arises of his being the only U.S. President to serve two non-consecutive terms, but at the time he served as President, he was known for anti-imperialist views and fiscal conservatism. A democrat from New Jersey, he was touted by his party as being for “America first.”

When Grover Cleveland took office for the second time in March of 1893, two months after Queen Lili’uokalani’s overthrow, he was presented with a Republican-

⁵ Lorenzo Veracini, “Introducing Settler Colonial Studies,” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1, no.1 (2011): 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, at 3.

⁷ Wolfe, “Elimination of the Native,” 388.

⁸ Veracini, “Settler Colonial Studies,” 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 103.

sponsored proposed treaty for annexation of Hawai'i.¹¹ He learned that an American-led Provisional Government had been established in Hawai'i, and subsequently had been recognized as legitimate by U.S. Minister to Hawai'i, John L. Stevens and other foreign diplomats on the islands.

Two elements related to the treaty attracted his concern. First, Cleveland noted the precipitancy characterizing all the actions connected the treaty—from the original events leading to the formation of the provisional government to the submission of the annexation treaty, only 32 days had passed, and 15 of those days were the Commissioners' travel time from Hawai'i to Washington.¹² Additionally, Cleveland noted that Queen Lili'uokalani had acceded her throne to the government on the condition that a protest be sent to Washington.¹³ The Queen's protest indicated that she yielded only because the U.S. Minister had landed U.S. troops in Honolulu in support of the insurrectionist government.¹⁴ This was at odds with documents accompanying the treaty in the Senate, which claimed that the Minister recognized the new government only *after* the Queen abdicated her throne, and no U.S. troops were involved.¹⁵

For Cleveland, the political consequences were obvious: to reject the treaty would be to thwart the Republicans and cast himself as an anti-imperialist, and to accept the treaty would be to sanction a reputed American coup.¹⁶ His decision, then, was to collect more facts before making a decision. Cleveland's cabinet recommended Congressman James

¹¹ Cleveland's Message to Congress, 446.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 446-47.

¹⁶ Tennant S. McWilliams, "James H. Blount, the South, and Hawaiian Annexation," *Pacific Historical Review*, 57, no. 1 (1988): 29.

Henderson Blount as an envoy to Hawai'i to collect the details of what actually had happened.¹⁷

Less than a week after Cleveland took office, his Secretary of State Walter Gresham called on James Blount, asking for his service on the matter of Hawai'i. The official request from Cleveland to Blount was to investigate and to fully report upon “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 towards existing authority, and in general, all that can fully enlighten the President touching the subjects of your mission.”¹⁸

B. Congressman James Henderson Blount & His Report

James Blount was a leading advocate for the New South, having a strong reputation in his home state of Georgia as an attorney “devoted to his southland [and]...valiant in its defense.”¹⁹ Prior to his tenure in federal government, Blount served the Confederacy as a soldier with the Floyd Rifles in the Civil War, was elected as lieutenant colonel of the First Battalion of the Georgia Reserve Cavalry, and served as a delegate to Georgia’s constitutional convention in 1865.²⁰ Blount made a name for himself opposing Yankee occupation and “Republican rule” in the south.²¹ In 1873, following Georgia’s reentry to the Union, Blount was elected to the House of Representatives, where he remained for 20 years. From 1890-1892, he chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee.²²

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Correspondence from Gresham to Blount, March 11, 1893. (Part I: No. 1), 467.

¹⁹ McWilliams, “Blount, the South, and Annexation,” 26-27 (citing *Atlanta Constitution*, March 9, 1903).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 (internal cites).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²² *Ibid.*

Blount, though generally recognized as “one of the ablest members of the House,” with a “sturdy integrity [and] logical turn of mind,”²³ espoused a particular set of Democratic partisan values which reveal an intentional choice on the part of Cleveland and his cabinet to frame the Hawai’i investigation. Blount’s record reflects dedication to a homogenous Anglo-American ideal not dissimilar to prominent American political figures in 2018—arguing against civil rights acts in the 1870s “with delicately phrased arguments based on black inferiority,” and opposing expansion into Venezuela with the straightforward assertion of difference: “We have nothing in common with those people.”²⁴ Whether Blount’s views emerged out of overt personal racism or a “preoccupation about Yankee expansionism” is unclear and presently irrelevant.²⁵ Though Cleveland stated no “position” regarding Hawaiian annexation at the beginning of his presidential term, his selection of Blount to create the Report suggests a preference in the outcome.²⁶

Whatever his political affiliations or personal biases, Blount’s methods of investigation from the outset of his arrival in Hawai’i reflect an intention to gather all the pertinent facts, seeking information from persons of “all shades of political opinion” and nationalities.²⁷ He took statements from wealthy businessmen and sugar farmers, officials of the court system, pro-Hawaiian sovereignty members of the Hawaiian Patriotic League, eyewitnesses to the military occupation, as well as the key players—U.S. Minister Stevens and Queen Lili’uokalani—themselves. Early letters sent to Secretary Gresham reflected no clear formation of Blount’s opinion—in one instance, alluding to the “perverted

²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴ McWilliams, “Blount, the South, and Annexation,” 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁷ Correspondence from Blount to Gresham, April 8, 1893. (Part I: No. 5), 475.

influence²⁸ of the presence of the U.S. military in Hawai'i, and shortly thereafter, critiquing the traditional Hawaiian governance system's "blind devotion to arbitrary power."²⁹

Tennant McWilliams, a scholar on the South, discusses that the situation in Hawai'i of a minority group seizing power and exercising it over a majority resonated with Blount in two adverse ways: on one hand, as a white Southern political elite who had attempted to and sometimes succeeded in exercising concentrated political power over Southern blacks and poor whites,³⁰ and on the other, as a white southerner of the Reconstruction days subject to the unwanted authority of invading Yankee soldiers and politicians.³¹

Blount's final report shows that he exercised his "paramount" authority in the Hawaiian Islands with care.³² In his own words, "I have discharged my duty the best I could considering I was surrounded by persons interested in misleading me."³³ What resulted was indeed a comprehensive report (of more than 700 pages, including all attendant correspondences, interviews, and appendices) disparaging the actions leading up to the overthrow, and effectively documenting the case against *any* American administration from ever annexing Hawai'i.³⁴ In the end, his Report laid out numerical data, public documents, and statements from at least 50 people³⁵, and concluded that prior

²⁸ Blount to Gresham, April 8, 1893 (Part I: No. 5), 476.

²⁹ Blount to Gresham, April 26, 1893. (Part I: No. 6). 486.

³⁰ For discussion on the exercise of the minority group of white Southerners over the majority group of African Americans, see Gabriel Chin and Randy Wagner, "The Tyranny of the Minority: Jim Crow and the Counter-Majoritarian Difficulty," *Harvard Civil Rights & Civil Liberties Law Review*, 43, (2008).

³¹ McWilliams, "Blount, the South, and Annexation," 37.

³² See e.g. Blount to Gresham (Part I: No. 5), 475; Blount to Gresham July 19, 1893, Part I: No. 18), 605 ("[This Report] ...is based upon the statements of individuals and the examination of public documents...The partisan feeling naturally attaching to witnesses made it necessary for me to take time for forming a correct judgment as to their character.").

³³ Blount to Gresham, July 31, 1893. (Part I, No: 17, following the Report) 630.

³⁴ McWilliams, "Blount, the South, and Annexation," 39 ("The conclusion was not necessarily what Cleveland had in mind.")

³⁵ List of Affidavits Statements (Part II), 630, and List of Statements and Interviews (Part III), 643.

to the overthrow in January 1893, “[t]he American minister and the revolutionary leaders had determined on annexation to the United States.”³⁶

The Blount Report and its related appendices serves as a useful tool for understanding Hawai‘i’s settler colonial structure, in part, because of the rich diversity of first-hand perspectives on the overthrow and surrounding events, providing detailed insights on the foundation of the settler colonial structure. In this way, the statements and interviews provided to Blount function as a primary source for the story of the overthrow and its significant preceding events. At the same time, the Report and its documents provide unique clarity in terms of retrospective ability to understand exactly what information formed the basis for the action of the United States. While the conclusions in Blount’s Report clearly failed to control America’s subsequent actions, its continued existence functions importantly to shed light on America’s tactics in securing the islands as a state. The Report in its entirety has been described by Hawaiian sovereignty activists as the “single most damaging document against the United States.”³⁷

III. Colonial Foundations to a Settler Colonial State

The Blount Report describes the “remote and proximate” causes of the revolution and eventual dethronement of Queen Lili‘uokalani, and provides a historical glimpse of the structuring of a settler colonial society.³⁸ The more “remote” events leading up to the overthrow as recounted by Blount are a series of colonial events—events that, taken alone, functioned to reinforce a relationship of difference between the white foreigner and the

³⁶ Blount’s Report, 594.

³⁷ Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 13.

³⁸ Blount’s Report, 569.

Native Hawaiian.³⁹ The events more “proximate” to the 1893 overthrow demonstrate the intentions of Americans in Hawai’i to create a settler structure, whereby a white population and American way of life would replace the Native population and Hawaiian way of life. The overthrow itself is the culmination of a movement growing in favor of annexation to America.

A. Missionaries to Oligarchs: Evolution of the American Colonizer in Hawai’i

Following initial contact of British sailors in the late 1700s, Americans arrived in Hawai’i around the 1820s, largely as missionaries embodying the “civilizing mission” central to classic colonial ideology.⁴⁰ Early stages of American Exceptionalism fueled missionaries who saw themselves as having “special obligations toward foreign missions” linked to the ideas of Manifest Destiny⁴¹ and territorial expansion, biblical commands to spread their superior culture, and “a fitful concern about the Indians.”⁴² The concomitant processes of “civilization” and “christianization” worked together in the missionaries’ assimilationist project.⁴³ Capitalizing on Native Hawaiians’ interest in learning to read and write, missionaries provided reading materials based on religion, and ultimately used newspapers to “proselytize, to civilize, and to promote [American] ideals, such as farming for profit rather than subsistence.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Veracini “Settler Colonial Studies,” 3.

⁴⁰ Blount’s Report, 572; Saito, “Racial Realism,” 23.

⁴¹ The term “manifest destiny” was coined in 1845. Julius W. Pratt, “The Origin of Manifest Destiny,” *American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 796.

⁴² Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*, (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2004): 31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, citing William Hutchinson, (“Hutchinson quotes the missionaries’ objectives as ‘civilizing and christianizing, in that order,’ and as assimilationist in vision.)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33, 35.

According to the historical summary provided by Charles Gulick, one of the few missionary-descendants to side with the Queen during the overthrow, to Blount (the “Gulick History”), the reception of missionaries in Hawai’i “furnishes no parallel.”⁴⁵ While colonization in other parts of the world has been “vigorously resented and repelled by force of arms,” the Native Hawaiian largely “welcomed his white visitor, encouraged to remain, adopted his religion and dress . . . sought his instruction, and finally asked his assistance in framing a government on a civilized model.”⁴⁶ The earliest laws passed with the assistance of missionaries were Western in form, but still embodied principles fundamental to Native Hawaiian society and ways of life.⁴⁷ While these missionaries sought to impose their “superior” language, culture, and systems on Native Hawaiians, their identities as colonizers and colonized remained fundamentally distinct, and their interests were perceived by neither side as fundamentally at odds.

But over time, “[t]he revered missionary disappeared, [and] in his stead there came the Anglo-Saxon in the person of his son, ambitious to acquire wealth and to continue that political control reverently conceded to his pious ancestor.”⁴⁸ These secular, politically ambitious white men born in Hawai’i to American evangelizing parents were still termed, satirically, as “missionaries” by Native Hawaiians to distinguish them from other foreign

⁴⁵ Statement of Charles Gulick, “A footnote to Hawaiian History,” (hereinafter “Gulick History”) May 8, 1893. (Part III: No. 23), 749. Gulick was born to missionaries in Hawai’i, and was one of the few members of missionary families to side with the Queen after the overthrow.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 240, (Early laws “reflected Kanaka Maoli ideas of what was *pono* in government” *Pono* is “goodness, uprightness, morality . . . correct or property procedure, excellence, well-being, prosperity, welfare, benefit, sake . . . just, virtuous fair.”

⁴⁸ Blount’s Report, 572.

whites.⁴⁹ To describe the missionary-descendants' proclivity toward political power, they were often referred to as the "missionary party."⁵⁰

Several factors are important to describe the situation of these missionary-descendants and contextualize their impact on the formation of the settler colonial state. First, the missionary-descendants were born with a sense of superiority to Native Hawaiians, emerging from the "civilizing" project of their missionary ancestors.⁵¹ Describing their view, Blount poses the question: "was it not natural for the white race to vaunt their wealth and intelligence, their Christian success in rescuing the native from barbarism?" Second, because they were born in Hawai'i (many in Honolulu), the missionary descendants possessed a deeply held sense of sovereign entitlement to the land and political system in Hawai'i, and lacked a genuine connection with America as "home." Finally, as Noenoe Silva points out, many of the missionary descendants traveled to the East Coast of the United States for higher education, where "racism...was the norm."⁵² By the 1870s, the missionary descendants had taken over key roles in the government, and occupied positions to advise and instruct the Crown in all political matters.⁵³

During the missionary period, other white foreigners from America and Europe also arrived to Hawai'i, but "as a rule, did not become naturalized and participate in the voting franchise."⁵⁴ What the white foreigners and missionary descendants had in common was hopes for development of sugar plantations throughout the islands.⁵⁵ Thus, operations

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Statement of W.D. Alexander, (Part III: No. 1), 660 (example of "missionary party" used to describe the white faction with sugar interests).

⁵¹ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 126.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Blount's Report, 572.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 125.

of business and race occasioned “sympathy and cooperation” between missionary descendants and white foreign visitors.⁵⁶ Eventually, these two groups together formed the “Reform Party,” intent on overcoming barriers to foreign trade with hopes of annexation to the United States.⁵⁷

The Blount Report directs our attention to two primary means of colonization leading up to the overthrow of Queen Lili’uokalani. First, the transformation of Hawaiian legal structures via the implementation (and subsequent amendment) of Western-style constitutions, the terms of which increasingly favored American interests over Native Hawaiian. Second, the gradual consolidation of land ownership and, by extension, wealth to white foreigners. As the goals of Americans in Hawai’i evolved, changes in legal and economic structures began to pave the way for a settler structure to take root.

B. Colonization through the Law: Constitutional Changes

The Blount Report’s documentation of the white-influenced constitutional changes occurring between 1852 and 1893 reflects the steady construction of foundations for a settler colonial society—white foreigners arrogated more power to themselves, while transforming the governmental structures of Hawai’i to accommodate their interests. This process of “colonial domination” was justified by the idea that white foreigners were spreading “civilization,” and therefore, any incidental subordination of Hawaiian interest was worthwhile.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Blount’s Report, 572.

⁵⁷ Blount to Gresham, April 26, 1893. (Part I: No. 6), 467. (“The white race, or what may be termed the Reform party, constitute the intelligence and own most of the property in these islands and are desperately eager to be a part of the United States on any terms rather than take the chances of being subject to the control of the natives.”).

⁵⁸ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 24.

The passage of Hawai'i's first Constitution took place in 1840 under the rule of King Kamehameha III (1825-1854), emerging out of widespread concern that Hawai'i was vulnerable to colonization and could not be recognized as a nation-state without one.⁵⁹ Following the passage of the Constitution, diplomats from Hawai'i were able to secure recognition of Hawai'i's independence and sovereignty from the United States, Britain, and France, and further, were included as a member of the family of nations.⁶⁰ This Constitution had two overarching goals: to preserve Hawai'i's sovereignty, and to refute the accusations that Hawaiians were savage and uncivilized peoples.⁶¹

The promulgation of a new Constitution in 1852, still under King Kamehameha III, begins Blount's presentation of the remote causes of the 1893 coup d'état and dethronement of Queen Lili'uokalani. Under this constitutional system, Hawai'i had two legislative bodies: a House of Representatives, elected annually, and a House of Nobles, appointed by the King to serve life terms.⁶² Any male aged twenty or older who had resided in Hawai'i for at least one year and had paid taxes during that year was permitted to vote for or serve as the representative of his district.⁶³ This instrument remained the governing law of Hawai'i for 12 years.

The "property qualification" was first introduced in the Constitution of 1864, through proclamation by King Kamehameha V (1863-1872). This clause limited eligibility for legislative representatives to wealthy, property-owning men, for which white men were at a distinct advantage. Only in the preceding decades had the concept of privately owned

⁵⁹ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 35-37.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁶² Blount's Report, 569-70.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 570.

lands been introduced to Hawaiian society, with the passage of the Māhele law of 1848.⁶⁴ Consequently, Blount found, “the lands were so distributed between the Crown, the Government, the chiefs, and the people so as to leave the latter with an insignificant interest in the lands.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, the chiefs became largely indebted to white foreigners, leading to disproportionate land occupation by white foreigners.⁶⁶ In 1850 foreigners were authorized to purchase land in fee simple, resulting in “by far the larger part [of land] in the hands of foreigners,” used mostly for “sugar culture” and grazing.⁶⁷ At the same time, non-royal Native Hawaiians were being alienated from traditional lands.⁶⁸

Eligibility to be a representative required one to be a male, aged at least twenty-one, with the ability to read and write, having lived in Hawai’i for at least three years, and “who shall own real estate of at least five hundred dollars of value, or who shall have an annual income of at least \$250 from any property or lawful employment.”⁶⁹ White advisors to the King attempted to introduce a property qualification for voters as well (possession of real property valuing over \$150, or income of at least \$75 annually), but the King overruled this provision.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Constitution of 1864 merged the elected Representatives and the appointed House of Nobles, a move “designed to strengthen the power of the Crown by removing a body distinctly representative,” thereby strengthening the power of white

⁶⁴ Statement of W.D. Alexander (Hawai’i’s Surveyor General and land title historian, who Blount at 552 describes on as the “highest authority” on Hawaiian land holdings) (providing a brief statement on the title of Crown lands), April 12, 1893 (Part III: No. 3), 666.

⁶⁵ Blount’s Report, 572.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Interview with Albert B. Lobenstein (surveyor and civil engineer), April 11, 1893. (Part III: No. 3), 872. See also Interview with Curtis Lyons (assistant on government survey and member of missionary family in Honolulu), April 12, 1893. (Part III: No. 35), 880, “The mahele was, in one sense, a revolution. In another sense it was most eminently a conservative movement.”; J Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood, Colonialism and the Politics of Indigeneity*, (Duke Univ. Press, 2008): 75.

⁶⁸ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 43.

⁶⁹ Blount’s Report, 570.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 570.

influence.⁷¹ According to W.D. Alexander (a missionary-descendant and surveyor-general of Hawai'i), the constitutional amendments of 1864 had two purposes: "making Ministers responsible only to people through the legislature, and to widen the suffrage by extending it to foreigners, who until then had been practically barred from naturalization."⁷²

Through the constitutional changes up to 1864, there was some opposition from Native Hawaiians to the growing power of white missionaries and foreigners,⁷³ but the Crown was mostly stable. Many Hawaiians, especially those who were Royal, bought into the idea that the changes suggested by white advisors were for the benefit of Hawai'i, and were comfortable with the distribution of power. As a result, it was rare that any King changed his ministry or cabinet of advisors, and many of the advisors had a "long lease on political life," allowing them to systematically advance their own interests.⁷⁴ At this point, "[t]he Crown appointed the nobles generally from white men of property and intelligence."⁷⁵

At the convergence of the missionary generation and the missionary-descendant generation, the "dynamic of difference" between American and Hawaiian was consistently reinforced, where colonizers effectively cast their own culture as "universal" and civilized and Hawaiian culture as "particular" and uncivilized.⁷⁶ The missionaries had "devoted themselves to the improvement of the native"⁷⁷ and spread their civilizing message for four

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 573

⁷² Statement from W.D. Alexander, (Part III: No. 1), 660.

⁷³ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 38, (Published protest – Petitions of the maka'ainana – petition to dismiss foreign officers and disallow foreigners' ability to become naturalized subjects, and to prevent any further land being sold to foreigners.)

⁷⁴ Blount's report, 572, excerpting from Interview with Chief Justice Judd, discussing Judd's own father.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 573.

⁷⁶ Saito, "Racial Realism," 24.

⁷⁷ Blount's Report, 572.

decades, and throughout that time still maintained a connection to America as the metropole.⁷⁸ Also, the Crown still maintained power; the missionaries had neither desire nor incentive to seize complete governmental control. Blount marks 1866 as the end of the Missionary Period, after which the sons of the missionaries (i.e. the ‘Missionary Party’) “sought to succeed to the political control exercised by their fathers.”⁷⁹

The Missionary Party and The Bayonet Constitution

Balance between American influence and the Crown’s legitimate authority was curtailed as the Missionary Party gained power. King Kalākaua (1874-1891) reigned during this period, after prevailing in an election against Kamehameha IV’s widow, Queen Dowager Emma (the choice among Native Hawaiians).⁸⁰ Despite reservations about Kalākaua, the Missionary Party and foreign sugar plantationers backed him during the election with hopes that he would help secure a reciprocity treaty with the United States, allowing them to sell their sugar to the U.S. market duty-free.⁸¹ Volney V. Ashford, an American soldier and member of the Missionary Party, who later helped orchestrate the overthrow, conceded that, “Kalākaua was not selected for his virtues, but simply because he could be controlled.”⁸² The reciprocity treaty was secured in 1876.⁸³

⁷⁸ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 24.

⁷⁹ Blount’s Report, 572.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 573.

⁸¹ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 26.

⁸² Statement of Volney V. Ashford, March 8, 1893, (Part III: No. 5), 668. Gulick History, (Kalākaua would “prove a willing tool to act their bidding.”) 733.

⁸³ Statement of W.D. Alexander, (Part III: No. 1), 647. The treaty of reciprocity was ratified in Washington in June of 1875, but did not pass in the Hawaiian Legislature until July of 1876 given staunch opposition “chiefly from the English members of the house and the partisans of Queen Emma, who denounced it as a step toward annexation.”

Political instability increased greatly under Kalākaua, who had 26 different cabinets during his time (where previous monarchs rarely changed cabinets at all).⁸⁴ Legislative issues, including an opium bribe and a failed effort to unite the Samoan Islands with the Kingdom of Hawai'i, brought critique of Kalākaua from both his supporters and opposition.⁸⁵

The unpredictability of Kalākaua led the Missionary Party and supporters to this conclusion: “The native is unfit for government and his power must be curtailed.”⁸⁶ Consequently, two factions prevailed among the white foreigners: those in favor of restraining the King’s power, and those in favor of dethroning the King and establishing a Republic, under which Natives would not be allowed to vote at all.⁸⁷ For the time being, the more conservative view prevailed.

All of this leads to the “Bayonet Constitution” in 1887, a drastic constitutional change implemented without a popular vote, and indeed, without the support of King Kalākaua himself.⁸⁸ The term “Bayonet Constitution” refers to the fact that the King was practically forced at gunpoint to accept its terms. Prior to this revolutionary move, “large quantities of arms had been brought by a secret league from San Francisco and placed amongst its members.”⁸⁹ Chief Justice Judd recounted to Blount, “I knew that [the King]

⁸⁴ Blount’s Report, 573.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 574-75. Portraying him more favorably, Noenoe Silva has described Kalākaua as “caught by the demands for profit and economic well-being on one hand, and the necessity of retaining the sovereignty of [Native Hawaiians] on the other.” *Aloha Betrayed*, 89.

⁸⁶ Blount’s Report, 574; See also Interview with Curtis J. Lyons, (Part III: No. 35), 879 (“The revolution of 1887 was the spontaneous rising of the better elements here against the ultramonarchical government of Kalākaua...By the better element I mean the leading element in society and business...[the] Americans, English, and Germans.”).

⁸⁷ Blount’s Report, 576, (excerpt from interview with Chief Justice Judd).

⁸⁸ Statement of the Hawaiian Patriotic League, “Memorial on the Hawaiian Crisis,” July 15, 1893, (Part III: No. 41), 924. (calling the Bayonet Constitution the “pet offspring of the reform party”).

⁸⁹ Blount’s Report, 579; Statement from W.D. Alexander, (Part I: No. 1), 661.

felt it would be very dangerous to refuse to promulgate the new constitution.”⁹⁰ When pressed further by Blount, Judd explained that the Kalākaua was intimidated by the “large and well-drilled force” ordered by Volney Ashford (known as the Honolulu Rifles), as well as the threat that he might be forced by the same group to abdicate the throne altogether if he did not concede to the new Constitution.⁹¹

Under this Constitution, almost all executive power was stripped from the Crown—the King could no longer take any action without approval of his cabinet. The right to appoint nobles was taken away from the King and instead decided by a vote, with a property qualification of \$3,000 worth of property, or an annual income of \$600, thus primarily empowering white Americans and Europeans. Whites had around three-fourths of the vote and Natives had around one-fourth.⁹² The number of representatives and nobles was equalized, such that legislative power of the elected representatives was diluted by the appointed nobles, and the nobles were granted veto power over decisions made by the representatives. While the King was able to appoint a cabinet, cabinet members could not be removed except “at the pleasure of the legislature, or, to speak practically, on the favor of certain foreigners, Americans and Europeans.”⁹³

In addition to removing power from the King and legislature, the Bayonet Constitution and its proponents sought to “neutralize” the Native vote as much as possible, which satiated the aforementioned faction wanting to eliminate the Native vote.⁹⁴ In pursuit of this, certain unnaturalized foreigners were granted the right to vote for

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 575. (excerpt from interview with Chief Justice Judd).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 577; Interview with Curtis Lyons (Part III: No. 35), 880. But see Interview with Antone Rosa, April 17, 1893, (Part III: No. 45), 941 (“I should presume three-fifths of the voters were foreigners and two-fifths natives; perhaps less. The foreigners became much stronger.”).

⁹³ Interview with with Chief Justice A. F. Judge, (Part III: No. 28), May 16, 1893, 836.

⁹⁴ Blount’s Report, 579.

representatives of the district in which they resided after swearing to a certified oath. A specially crafted exception to the two provisions limiting the right to vote permitted imported laborers from Portugal to vote as well, and on election day, they were taken from cane fields by their overseer, administered the oath to support the Constitution, and directed to the polls.⁹⁵ Generally not able to speak or write in English, the Portuguese were essentially guaranteed to “vote according to the will of the plantation manager” and therefore “balance the native vote.”⁹⁶

The first election under this Constitution took place with the Ashford’s Honolulu Rifles stationed all around the island, and the “troops hostile to the crown.”⁹⁷

Blount marks the Bayonet Constitution as a turning point in Hawai’i, after which the people could be divided by “native and foreigner.”⁹⁸ He clarifies that “race hostility” itself was not the basis for division, but rather the “attempted control of the country by a population of foreign origin . . . zealously holding allegiance to foreign powers.”⁹⁹

According to the *Hui Kalai’ana’s* (a Hawaiian Political Association), statement to Blount, there were five reasons that Native Hawaiians opposed the terms of the Bayonet Constitution: (1) It deprived the Crown of the Hawaiian Islands of its ancient prerogatives; (2) it based the principles of government on the forms and spirit of republican governments; (3) it opens the way to a republican government; (4) it took the sovereign power and vested it outside of the King sitting on the throne; and (5) it limited the

⁹⁵ Blount’s Report, 579. Provisos allowing unnaturalized Europeans and Portuguese laborers to vote via Articles 59 and 62 at Blount’s Report, 578.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 579. “This same purpose is admitted by all persons here.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Blount’s Report, 579-80. See Wolfe, “Elimination of the Native,” 388. “Whatever settlers may say . . . the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.), but territoriality.”

franchise of the Native Hawaiians.¹⁰⁰ On these bases, King Kalākaua and, later, Lili'uokalani were petitioned to revise the Constitution.¹⁰¹

The Bayonet Constitution foreshadows the structuring of a true settler colonial society. In the earlier iterations of Hawai'i's Constitution, missionaries concentrated power to the Crown, but with the Bayonet Constitution, the missionary-descendants took power from the Crown and vested it directly into a body comprised of themselves. This transformation marks a change from Americans imposing their structures on the Hawaiian government toward acting as settlers, directly ruling over Native Hawaiians, with the view of dissolving the Native Hawaiian society completely.¹⁰² The fundamental difference between the Missionary Party and their predecessors is that they had no inclination to leave. In order to protect their interests in perpetuity, they strove to eliminate the Native power altogether.¹⁰³

Settler states establish, maintain, and protect their hegemony by exercising virtually complete control over Indigenous peoples . . . Settlers presume a prerogative to determine...which peoples will be accorded particular civil or political rights, and the extent to which settler privilege will be promoted and protected by the state.¹⁰⁴

C. Colonizing the Land: Sugar Plantations in Hawai'i

Occupation of land and use of resources is central to colonial and settler colonial societies alike. Classic colonial regimes tend to involve “exploitation of the land, labor, and natural resources of territories where, for the most part, the colonists do not intend to

¹⁰⁰ Statement from *Hui Kalaiaina* (Hawaiian Political Association) in Correspondence from Blount to Gresham, (Part I: No. 6), April 26, 1893, 483-84.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 484.

¹⁰² Wolfe, “Elimination of the Native,” 388.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, “Elimination is an organizing principal of settler colonial society rather than a one-off occurrence.”

¹⁰⁴ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 27.

settle permanently,” unlike settler colonial regimes.¹⁰⁵ Early American missionaries, arriving in Hawai’i for their civilizing mission, seized on opportunities to gain personal wealth from sugar profits, and leveraged their contacts in the government to buy large tracts of land.¹⁰⁶ Under Kamehameha III, the Māhele system of land privatization was introduced, and shortly thereafter, white foreigners were allowed to purchase land in fee simple. As a result, “[s]ometimes the line between mission work and establishing plantations became indistinguishable.”¹⁰⁷

While missionaries arrived to the islands to pursue civilizing missions, they (and especially their descendants) stayed for the sugar profit. Through the legal changes enacted under the influence of the missionaries, their descendants and other white foreigners seized so much land that it only made sense for them to stay, giving rise to the settler colonial structure. For settler colonizers, a “primary purpose is to establish a territorial base, for this is what allows them to create and control a society of their own imagining, and to generate the profits that enable them to consolidate and expand their sovereign prerogative.”¹⁰⁸

By 1870, the civilizing work of the missionaries had been almost entirely abandoned and the political Missionary Party became driven by a desire for more sugar wealth.¹⁰⁹ The American tariff on imported goods stood as the primary barrier to otherwise accessible “opulence.”¹¹⁰ According to the Gulick History, three methods for

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 50, (as an example, “Edward Bailey arrived in Hawai’i in 1837 to join the mission, but left it in 1850 to start a sugar plantation.”)

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 26.

¹⁰⁹ Statement of C.M. Hyde (one of only three remaining American religious missionaries remaining in Hawai’i by 1893), April 3, 1893, (Part III: No. 26), 825; Gulick History, 751.

¹¹⁰ Gulick History, 751.

overcoming the tariff were considered: annexation, reciprocity, or a remission of duties on Hawaiian products entering American markets.¹¹¹ But annexation was generally unpopular in Hawai'i, and remission of duties seemed impossible from the American standpoint, so the focus turned toward consummating a treaty of reciprocity with America.¹¹² As discussed above, Americans found the candidate most likely to secure the treaty in the election of 1874 in David Kalākaua.

King Kalākaua's reign led to the passage of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875. Per the treaty, there would be free importation into the United States all forms of sugar, sugar cane, and molasses produced in Hawai'i.¹¹³ Blount summarizes the result:

From it, there came to the islands an intoxicating increase of wealth, a new labor system, an Asiatic population, an alienation between the native and white races, an impoverishment of the former, an enrichment of the latter, and the many so-called revolutions, which are the foundation for the opinion that stable government cannot be maintained.¹¹⁴

Ten years after the 1875 Treaty, imported labor had reached striking proportions. Of 14,439 laborers on plantations, only 2,136 were Native Hawaiians and the remainder were imported—immigrants of the “poor and ignorant classes.”¹¹⁵ The importance of labor prompted almost exclusively by white sugar planters was an early test of the “sovereign prerogative” and an indication that these missionary-descendants were entrenched in Hawai'i with no plans to leave. Moreover, this prefaced a complicated relationship between Native Hawaiians and non-settler (i.e. non-property owning) migrants. With the presence of the new working classes, Native Hawaiians were (and still are) left unemployed. This is described by the term “conceptual displacement.” Having

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Blount's Report, 571.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 572.

had both positions of power and labor taken from them and replaced by foreign populations, Native Hawaiians were beginning to be conceptually “eliminated” from their own society.¹¹⁶

The McKinley Tariff of 1890 limited the sugar plantationers’ access to extreme wealth by removing the preferential treatment of Hawaiian sugar in the American market and granting domestic producers a bounty of two cents per pound.¹¹⁷ Framed by Ohio Congressman William McKinley (who later succeeded Cleveland to the Presidency), the Act was passed to protect American business interests.¹¹⁸ As a result, the price of sugar dropped from 100 to 60 dollars a ton, and it is estimated that the tariff cost sugar planters \$12,000,000 in depreciation.¹¹⁹ The sugar planters thus recognized that the manipulation of legal structures within the Kingdom of Hawai’i would be insufficient to protect their profit increases.

In sum, over half a century, Americans manipulated the Hawaiian government to introduce private land ownership, secured a treaty that benefitted themselves exclusively at cost of Hawaiian’s natural resources, excluded Hawaiians from the jobs thus created—and when Hawaiians protested, concluded that they were so unstable as to not be capable of self-government.

¹¹⁶ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 49.

¹¹⁷ Richard D. Weigle, “Sugar and the Hawaiian Revolution,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Feb. 1947), 41.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41, 46.

IV. Settler Colonial Structure & the Role of the United States

Annexation to the United States became the primary goal of the Missionary Party around the passage of the McKinley Tariff of 1890, marking clearly the transformation of their intentions from colonization to a permanent settler structure. The formative colonial events laid out above, and the gradual, generational evolution from missionary to Reformer, took place over several decades; by contrast, the institution of a settler colonial structure was as abrupt and explosive as might have been the volcanic eruptions that created the islands of Hawai'i millions of years ago.¹²⁰

Blount explains, “[t]he repeal of the duty on sugar in the McKinley act was regarded as a severe blow to their interests . . . Annexation has for its charm the complete abolition of all duties on their exports to the United States.”¹²¹ Moreover, through annexation, the Missionary Party would be able to “supersede the conditions of its operation” by no longer having to bet on the success of obtaining a majority in the monarch’s cabinet.¹²² The Reformers would secure their positions of power by replacing the Kingdom of Hawai'i (to which they would always be foreigners) with the American Territory Hawai'i (which they would rule as sovereigns).¹²³ The distinction between “native and foreigner,” so prevalent since the Bayonet Constitution, would be replaced by a uniform “American identity.”

The U.S. Minister to Hawai'i, John L. Stevens, “zealously promoted” annexation and would play a critical role in the overthrow.¹²⁴ Prior to the overthrow, he independently declared favor of annexation, as early as 1889 when he assumed the role as U.S. Minister to

¹²⁰ See <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/what-were-still-learning-about-hawaii-74730/>.

¹²¹ Blount’s Report, 599.

¹²² Veracini, “Settler Colonial Studies,” 3.

¹²³ Wolfe, “Elimination of the Native,” 388. “Settler colonialism destroys to replace.”

¹²⁴ Cleveland’s Message to Congress, 448.

Hawai'i.¹²⁵ According to Charles Gulick, Stevens made it known shortly after his arrival to the Kingdom, that “he considered annexation to the United States as not only the ultimate manifest destiny of the little country, but that it would be just as well to hasten the event.”¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly, this was not well-received by most in the Hawaiian government. In his very first meeting with King Kalākaua (who was in power at the time he came to Hawai'i as Minister), he hinted at annexation in such an “offensive” way that Kalākaua nearly demanded his recall.¹²⁷

Stevens's inclination toward annexation appears to be backed by the dual bases of American business and military interests—an 1890 letter to Secretary of State James Blaine reads:

Shall American civilization ultimately prevail here? The near future is to show conclusively that only the strong pressure and continual vigilance of the United States can enable American men and American ideas to hold ascendancy here and make these islands as prosperous and valuable to American *commerce*, and to American *marine supremacy* in the North Pacific, as the isles of the Mediterranean have been and are to its adjacent nations.¹²⁸

Moreover, Stevens's advocacy for annexation was consistently reinforced by the necessity of “civilization” and critiques of the Hawaiian's ability to run an effective government. In a November 20, 1892 letter to John W. Foster, Secretary of State in President Harrison's administration, he described the Hawaiian monarchy as an “absurd anachronism” and articulated the absolute necessity of annexation or at the very least extending an American

¹²⁵ James Andrew Gillis, “The Hawaiian Incident: An Examination of Mr. Cleveland's Attitude Toward the Revolution of 1893,” (Lee and Shepard: Hawaii, 1897): 5-6. In 1889, not even two weeks after arriving to Honolulu, Stevens wrote to Secretary of State James Blaine “I am much impressed by the strong American feeling pervading the best portion of the population, and which is especially manifest among the men of business and property.”

¹²⁶ Statement of Charles T. Gulick, (Part III No. 24), 818 (internal quotations omitted).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 817.

¹²⁸ Gillis, “The Hawaiian Incident,” 6 (emphasis added).

protectorate over the islands.¹²⁹ By this point (only three months before the overthrow), in Stevens's view, Hawai'i had reached a "parting of the ways" at which "[s]he must now take the road which leads to Asia, or the other, which outlets her in America, gives her an American civilization, and binds her to the care of American destiny."¹³⁰ That letter concluded: "I cannot refrain from expressing the opinion with the emphasis that the golden hour is near at hand."¹³¹ A few weeks after the overthrow, he confirmed his continuing support for the cause: "The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it."¹³²

As to Stevens's role in the overthrow, Blount concludes: "The American minister and the revolutionary leaders had determined on annexation to the United States, and had agreed on the part each was to act to the very end."¹³³ President Cleveland appeared to accept Blount's portrayal of Stevens's role, stating in his letter to Congress that "[Stevens] evidently had an ardent desire that [annexation] should become a fact accomplished by his agency and during his ministry, and was not inconveniently scrupulous as to the means employed to that end."¹³⁴

A. The Overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani

As a man who, for years, has taken an active part in Hawaiian politics, and as a practical sugar planter of many years' experience, it is not difficult for me to realize the true cause for the late revolution and for the subsequent desire for

¹²⁹ Cleveland's Message, 448, citing from Stevens' letter. ("[I]t certainly cannot be chimerical or unwise to expend \$100,000 to secure annexation in the near future. Today the United States has five times the wealth she possessed in 1854, and the reasons for annexation are much stronger than they were then.")

¹³⁰ Gillis, 8. (This section of the book provides full excerpts of Stevens's correspondence back to the United States.)

¹³¹ *Ibid.*; Cleveland's Message.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Blount's Report, 594.

¹³⁴ Cleveland's Message, 448.

annexation. The depression in the sugar business which, since the passage of the McKinley bill, has made havoc with the handsome dividends which we have enjoyed since 1875, and the loss of power by the reform party were the only true reasons for the revolution. *The prospects of the sugar bounty was and is the main motive for the desire to be annexed on the part of the handful of responsible men who still desire such step to be taken.*¹³⁵

Political Divisions in the Queen's Legislature

The events proximate to the overthrow reveal desperation and anxiety on the part of the Missionary Party, who for all its trouble to consolidate wealth and power to themselves, was failing to fully silence and disenfranchise Native Hawaiians. A decision by the Queen to act in favor of her subjects provided the missionaries an opportunity to scapegoat—consistent with colonial policy to “make war and call it self-defense.”¹³⁶

Queen Lili'uokalani took over as ruling monarch after the death of her brother King Kalākaua in 1891. At this time, the Missionary Party and other foreigners officially organized into the “Reform Party.” There were three prevailing political parties with balanced representation in the legislature: Liberal, National Reform and Reform.¹³⁷ Liberals wanted to revert to the pre-1887 mode of selecting nobles done exclusively by the monarch, and the National Reform Party wanted constitutional reform reducing the property qualification of voters for nobles.¹³⁸ The Reform Party, having initiated both changes, wanted neither, and had their sights set on annexation to the United States.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Statement from William H. Cornwell (minister of finance in the Queen's cabinet at the time of the overthrow and sugar planter in Hawai'i) April 24, 1893, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 5 in letter from Blount to Gresham), 494.

¹³⁶ Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2003), 42.

¹³⁷ Interview with Curtis Lyons, (Part III: No. 35), 879-80; Interview with Judge H.A. Widemann, (Part III: No. 57), May 20, 1893, 1003. According to Widemann, in 1892, there were nine National Reformers, 14 Reformers, 21 Liberals, and four independents. Widemann also provided that the Reform Party never had close to a majority during this legislature. 1004.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Between early 1891 and late 1892, at least six cabinets composed by the Queen were removed by a “resolution of want of confidence” from the legislature, as was the right reserved to the legislature by the 1887 Bayonet Constitution.¹⁴⁰ Each of these no-confidence votes were initiated by the Reform Party, but would not have been successful without support from members of the other two parties. One Reformer explains their stance—“to carry out their objective [to rule the cabinet] they would join hands with the devil if necessary.”¹⁴¹ According to members of the legislature at the time, the votes of the other parties were secured by offering bribes via periodic financial support to Native members of the legislatures, which were funded by “a large sugar plantation owner.”¹⁴² Apprehension about the cabinet and “struggles for power” intensified as the prorogation became more imminent—once the Queen prorogued the legislature, the legislature would not officially meet for two years, and whatever cabinet was in power at the time of had control of public affairs until the next assembly two years later.¹⁴³

The Reformers nearly succeeded in occupying the cabinet for the prorogation period. Queen Lili’uokalani appointed the “Wilcox Cabinet,” comprised exclusively of Reform Party members in November of 1892.¹⁴⁴ The Queen made this decision after consulting with local businessmen, unhappy with the reality that the legislature was

¹⁴⁰ Blount’s Report 576, (Article 41 of the Constitution).

¹⁴¹ Statement of A.P. Peterson, July 13, 1893 (Part III: No. 43), 932 (quoting Reform Party and overthrow leader Lorrin Thurston).

¹⁴² Statement from John F. Colburn (the Queen’s minister of the interior), April 15, 1893, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6 in letter from Blount to Gresham), 497.

¹⁴³ Interview with Fredrick Wundenberg, May 15, 1893, (Part I: No. 17: Inclosure 1 in letter from Blount to Gresham), 560. Wundenberg served in various capacities in the government, as deputy clerk at the Supreme Court and collector-general of customs. He was initially aligned with the annexationists, but ceased communication once the American flag was hoisted. Blount found his accounts to be “strongly corroborated.” (489).

¹⁴⁴ Blount’s Report, 580.

accomplishing nothing but the repeated turnover of cabinet members.¹⁴⁵ But on January 13, 1893, members of the other two parties, frustrated at the Reform Party's exclusion of them, voted out the Wilcox Cabinet.¹⁴⁶ Subsequently, Lili'uokalani appointed an anti-reform cabinet—two representatives from Hawai'i, and two foreign—and the next day, the legislature was prorogued before any successful attempt to reorganize the cabinet was made.¹⁴⁷

The removal of the Wilcox Cabinet and institution of the anti-reform cabinet produced as much excitement among the majority of people (especially Native Hawaiians) as it did discontentment among reformers—and for the reformers, this was a tipping point for making moves in favor of annexation.¹⁴⁸ Blount describes the situation for the reformers as “verging on . . . political crisis.” They knew that the cabinet change meant losing their power and influence in Hawai'i for years to come, and they were openly hostile.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, Native Hawaiians were encouraged by other Hawaiians serving on the Queen's cabinet and believed that “race prejudice . . . would wear away and the Hawaiians and foreigners would work together.”¹⁵⁰

Queen Lili'uokalani, responsive to innumerable requests from her Native subjects, perceived an opportunity to overhaul the Bayonet Constitution. Leading up to the prorogation, the Queen had received a petition signed by 9,000 of her native subjects asking for a new constitution, and “thought this was an opportune time to grant their

¹⁴⁵ Statement from Colburn, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 497.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Wundenberg, (Part I: No. 17: Inclosure 1), 560.

¹⁴⁷ Blount's Report, 580.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 581; Statement from Colburn (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 497.

¹⁴⁹ Statement from Colburn, 497. “[The reform party] openly said ‘we will get even with you,’ meaning the Hawaiians.”

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

prayer.”¹⁵¹ Her proposed changes included adding official heirs to the throne, restoring the Queen’s right to appoint nobles, increasing elected representatives, and limiting supreme court appointments temporally.¹⁵² Her cabinet disagreed, however, and ultimately prevailed upon her that proclaiming a constitution was not in the interests of the country.¹⁵³ Apparently persuaded by the unanimous opinion of her cabinet, Queen Lili’uokalani abandoned the idea, making a public announcement to that effect on the same day, January 14, 1893.¹⁵⁴ In response, one delegate from Lahaina provided that, “while the people regretted the Queen’s inability to grant the wishes of the people, they would accept the assurances of the Queen and await the proper time, which...[may be] the meeting of the Legislature in 1894.”¹⁵⁵ These remarks were later reported in foreign-run newspapers as being “incendiary and threatening.”¹⁵⁶ But according to parties present in the palace, the people dispersed quietly and were generally accepting of the Queen’s decision.¹⁵⁷

On January 16, the Queen again issued a proclamation to the people confirming that she would not make any further attempt to change the Bayonet Constitution, and she sent a message to Minister Stevens and other foreign representatives to that effect. However, her assurances did not slow the ambitions of the Annexationists, who had already begun organizing a plan to dethrone her.

¹⁵¹ Blount’s Report, 499; Statement from the *Hui Kalaiaina* (Hawaiian Political Association) (Part I: No. 6), 484. (“On the 14th of January, 1893, at the time of the prorogation of the Legislature . . . this political association came and petitioned her Majesty Lili’uokalani to issue a new constitution for the people, to which she consented, with the intention of listening to the desires of her people, but her cabinet refused.”).

¹⁵² Draft of Constitution of January 14, 1893, (Part IV: No. 2), 1055-056.

¹⁵³ Statement from Colburn, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 498.

¹⁵⁴ Statement from Cornwell, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 5), 494.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

1. *The Citizens' Committee of Safety*

Women and children passed to and fro through the streets, seemingly unconscious of any impending danger, and yet there were secret conferences held by a small body of men. [On] the 14th of January, they took up the subject of dethroning the Queen and proclaiming a new Government with a view of annexation to the United States.¹⁵⁸

Members of the Queen's cabinet had been in communication with Reform Party leaders throughout the process of the potential constitutional reform—and in so doing, had unintentionally set into motion the formation of a group imminently intending to overthrow the Queen. John Francis Colburn, the Queen's Interior Minister, "felt as though [the new Cabinet] should place [themselves] in the right light before the foreign element of the community," in light of the hostility following the dissolution of the Wilcox Cabinet and the potential for the new constitution to upset their interests further.¹⁵⁹ Ironically, Colburn sought to prevent the type of insurrectionist movement that ultimately ensued as a result of his actions. Blount concludes that learning of the Queen's proclamation gave the politically impaired Reform Party an opportunity to carry forward with revolutionary plans for which the replacement of the Wilcox Cabinet formed the foundation.¹⁶⁰

As a clear political minority who "fear[ed] arrest and imprisonment," if they acted on their annexationist intent, the Reformers sought physical force and a legal basis to support their revolutionary actions.¹⁶¹ "The first and most momentous question with them was to devise some plan to have the United States troops landed."¹⁶² First, the Reformers

¹⁵⁸ Blount's Report, 583.

¹⁵⁹ Statement from Colburn, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 498.

¹⁶⁰ Blount's Report, 581.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 587.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 583.

attempted to persuade the cabinet members to turn against the Queen and call for support of U.S. troops.¹⁶³ Concerned about the consequences of the overthrow, the reformers believed the action “should appear to be done by a part of her own cabinet or a portion of the government.”¹⁶⁴ After the Queen’s Minister Colburn disclosed the Queen’s plans to alter the Constitution to the Reformers, he was furnished with an official request to land troops from the U.S.S. *Boston* (an American Navy ship) and “render support,” asked to sign it as if he wrote it himself, and told that the document would only be delivered in case the Queen jailed him.¹⁶⁵ Colburn declined, assuring the reformers that it was not necessary, because the Queen had abandoned the idea of a new constitution.¹⁶⁶ Undeterred, the Reformers tried again the next day to convince Colburn and another cabinet member to depose the Queen, declare a provisional government, and sign a request to Minister Stevens to land the troops of the *Boston*—this time, with the vague threat that if they did not comply, they “could not receive aid and support from them in the future” if it was needed.¹⁶⁷ Still, the cabinet members declined.

Unsuccessful in leveraging the legitimacy this faction of the existing government, the reformers formed a thirteen-person “Citizens’ Committee of Safety” with the stated purpose of “protecting life and property.”¹⁶⁸ On January 16, 1893—only two days after the prorogation and Queen Lili’uokalani’s constitutional announcement—they called a mass meeting of Honolulu citizens to “authorize the committee to take steps to prevent a consummation of the Queen’s purposes and to have guarantees of public safety.”¹⁶⁹ There

¹⁶³ Statement from Colburn, (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 499.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Statement from Colburn (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 6), 499-500.

¹⁶⁸ Blount’s Report 583, 588.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 584.

was no disclosure of their intentions for either dethronement or annexation “for fear of proceedings against them by the government of the Queen.”¹⁷⁰ The committee then sent Stevens the following letter:

To His Excellency John L. STEVENS, *American Minister Resident*:

SIR: We, the undersigned, citizens and residents of Honolulu, respectfully represent that, in view of recent public events in this Kingdom, culminating in the revolutionary acts of Queen Lili’uokalani on Saturday last, *the public safety is menaced and lives and property are in peril, and we appeal to you and the United States forces at your command for assistance.*

The Queen, with the aid of armed force and accompanied by threats of violence and bloodshed from those with whom she was acting, attempted to proclaim a new constitution; and while prevented for the time from accomplishing her object, declared publicly that she would only defer her action.

This conduct and action was upon an occasion and under circumstances which have created general alarm and terror.

We are unable to protect ourselves without aid, and, therefore, *pray for the protection of the United States forces.*¹⁷¹

[* * *]
Citizen’s Committee of Safety.

Minister Stevens, despite living in Honolulu himself and therefore aware of the placid conditions among the community and the factual inaccuracies represented by the letter, consented to the Committee’s request. Indeed, Stevens has independent responsibility for the landing of the troops. Shortly after the mass meeting and sending of the letter, representatives from the Committee approached Stevens and requested a delay for the landing of the troops, deciding they were not ready, a request that “exposed the untruthfulness of their representations of present peril to life and property,” as President Cleveland later noted.¹⁷² Stevens responded: “Gentlemen, the troops of the *Boston* land this

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 583-84.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 584 (emphasis added). The letter was signed by: Henry E. Cooper, F.W. McChesney, W.C. Wilder, C. Bolte, A. Brown, William O. Smith, Henry Waterhouse, Theo. F. Lansing, Ed. Suhr, L.A. Thurston, John Emmeluth, WM. R. Castle, J.A. McCandless.

¹⁷² Report from Fredrick Wundenberg to Blount (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 4), 492; Cleveland’s Message to Congress, 452.

afternoon at 5 o'clock, whether you are ready or not."¹⁷³ The same day, U.S. troops landed in Honolulu and "a great surprise burst about the community," with only the Committee knowing of their purpose.¹⁷⁴ Without a *bona fide* purpose of protecting imperiled lives and property of U.S. citizens, the military demonstration was of itself, an "act of war."¹⁷⁵

The Committee's final meeting—at the home of Henry Waterhouse, neighbor of Minister Stevens—took place the night of January 16, the same day as the Committee's first mass meeting and the landing of the troops, and the morning before the official declaration of dethronement.¹⁷⁶ At that meeting, the group assigned various governmental roles to other members present, including Sanford Dole (cousin of the originator of Dole Pineapples) as President of the Provisional Government.¹⁷⁷ The designee for commander of the military force, Colonel John Soper (an American citizen), demurred multiple times at the suggestion that he should take that position, expressing concern that there would be no backing for the movement.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, Soper and others spoke to Minister Stevens directly, who assured them fully that "any proclamation of the [Provisional] Government put forward at the Government building . . . would receive his immediate recognition and the support of the *Boston's* men."¹⁷⁹ This sequence in itself demonstrates that, but for the support of Stevens, the actions of the Committee were far from certain to go forward.

Thus, having the unconditional support of the U.S. military and Minister Stevens, the primary diplomat in Hawai'i, the Committee of Safety's plans to dethrone the Queen

¹⁷³ Report from Wundenberg (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 4), 492.

¹⁷⁴ Blount's Report, 584.

¹⁷⁵ Cleveland's Message, 452.

¹⁷⁶ Report from Wundenberg (Part I: No. 6: Inclosure 4), 492-93.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 493.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

and take over as Provisional Government were solidified, and annexation was for the first time clearly in view.

The annexationists' decision to portray themselves as the Committee of "Safety" was no accident, and plays directly into the typical formation of a settler colonial society. In order to function and be regarded as legitimate, settler societies "need to demonstrate, continuously, that humanity at large will benefit from accepting its social and political structures and internalizing its worldview."¹⁸⁰ The irony was contemporarily apparent, too, as shown through the Gulick History, furnished to Blount for his Report on May 8, 1893, which states: "The revolutionary annexationists, in justification of their action, raised the old cry of 1887, of the necessity of stable government, proper representation, honest administration, prevention of riot and bloodshed, maintenance of law and order, etc., when as a matter of fact there is not now, and *never has been, the least danger of disorder or opposition to law except at the hand of the revolutionists themselves.*"¹⁸¹

Moreover, Blount observes that "they claim to be a *citizens'* committee of safety" and not "simply applicants for the protection of the property and lives of American citizens."¹⁸² This decision has two overlapping explanations. On one (practical) hand, this identification builds a record in support of a later assertion that the dethronement of the Queen was the will of the people, providing legitimacy for their claim of self-defense. On another (ideological) hand, the Reformers were preparing for their envisioned not-so-distant future, where they ruled Hawai'i as sovereign leaders.

¹⁸⁰ Saito, "Racial Realism," 28.

¹⁸¹ Gulick History, 767 (emphasis added).

¹⁸² Blount's Report, 588 (emphasis added).

2. *Forming the Provisional Government*

The Committee of Safety, to use their own language, say: “We are unable to protect ourselves without aid, and therefore, pray for the protection of the United States forces. *In less than thirty hours*, [these] petitioners have overturned the throne, established a new government, and obtained the recognition of foreign power.¹⁸³

The promises of Minister Stevens and the backing of the U.S. military empowered the annexationists to transform from a mere Citizens’ Committee of Safety to the Provisional Government of Hawai’i. Which they did—on January 17th, only three days after Queen Lili’uokalani’s attempted promulgation. With the U.S. Marines strategically positioned,¹⁸⁴ the annexationists descended upon a mostly empty Government building and read a proclamation declaring that the monarchy was overthrown and that a Provisional Government would “exist until terms of union with the United States of America has been negotiated and agreed upon.”¹⁸⁵

“It was pressed upon [the Queen] . . . that it was useless for her to make any contest, because it was one with the United States.”¹⁸⁶ A meeting between the Queen, her cabinet, and the Provisional Government’s vice-president Samuel Damon (who was in good standing with the queen) took place shortly thereafter, wherein the Queen was advised that the provisional government had already been recognized by Minister Stevens and was backed by American troops.¹⁸⁷ The Queen was advised to yield under protest, and wrote addressed to Washington indicating her intent:

¹⁸³ Blount’s Report, 587 (emphasis added).

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, (quoting Admiral Skerrett saying that the American troops from the *Boston* were “well located if designed to promote the movement for the Provisional Government and very improperly located if only intended to protect American citizens in person and property.”).

¹⁸⁵ Correspondence from Gresham to Cleveland, October 18, 1893, 463.

¹⁸⁶ Blount’s Report, 586; Affidavit of Peterson and Colburn (members of the Queen’s cabinet present at the meeting) (Part I: No. 7: Inclosure 8), 524.

¹⁸⁷ Blount’s Report, 590.

Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do, under this protest, and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as they Government of the United States shall...undo the action of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁸⁸

Following the letter of protest, the Queen offered up the station-house and barracks, where the island's primary military force was held.¹⁸⁹

B. The Role of the United States: Legitimizing the Coup

'Legitimate,' like 'sanction,' is a Janus word, one that refers simultaneously to a concept and its opposite. To 'legitimate' means to bring power under the rule of law so that it is (sufficiently) just, impartial, or otherwise worthy of respect. But to 'legitimate' also means to apologize for or mystify the exercise of power so that it seems to be just, impartial and worthy of respect whether or not that is so.¹⁹⁰

The looming influence of the United States in all the decisions and events leading up to the overthrow is demonstrated throughout Blount's Report, and it shapes his conclusions. But for the promise of Minister Stevens to protect them from any danger from the government, the leaders of the Committee of Safety would not have undertaken the dethronement at this time.¹⁹¹ But for the Queen's conviction that the American minister and American troops were siding with the provisional government, and that the

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 586.

¹⁸⁹ Blount's Report, 591. (Dispute over timing of the offering up of the station-house and barracks was discussed at length in the Blount Report. It was of some import to determine whether Stevens recognized the provisional government after the Queen had abdicated under protest and offered up her military forces in defeat, or before. The provisional government and committee members appeared to know the import of this as well, and many of them provided elusive and contradictory statements to Blount. However, the matter was considered resolved by Blount when Stevens himself said "he knew the barracks and station-house had not been delivered up when he recognized the Provisional Government; that he did not care anything about that." See Blount's Report at 592).

¹⁹⁰ Jack M. Balkin, "Critical Legal Theory Today," *On Philosophy in American Law*, (2008): 1.

¹⁹¹ Blount's Report, 594.

appeal to the U.S. government was the only possibility to render justice to her, she would not have surrendered.

Even with the support of Minister Stevens and the *Boston's* Marines, why would the story of Hawai'i's sovereignty end with act of the overthrow? In his final letter from Honolulu to Secretary of State Gresham, Blount observes: "The present government can only rest on the use of military force, possessed of most of the arms on the islands, with a small white population to draw from to strengthen it. Ultimately it will fall without fail."¹⁹² Alone, the Provisional Government would likely have lost traction and eventually have fallen out of power, leaving the settler framework to crumble—Trask characterizes the 1893 events as a "prelude to the extinguishment of Hawaiian sovereignty," rather than an act of extinguishment in itself.¹⁹³ An outright rejection of the provisional government by America would have resulted in the restoration of Queen Lili'uokalani's rightful power. Viewed in the context of President Cleveland's condemnation on the overthrow before Congress, his own espoused anti-imperialist beliefs, and the conclusions set forth in the Blount Report, one might reasonably suggest that restoring Hawai'i's sovereignty and the Queen's power was the likely outcome.¹⁹⁴ Still today, President Cleveland is often viewed favorably by Hawaiian sovereignty advocates, as not a true imperialist, but having intention to restore Lili'uokalani's power, unfortunately unable to do so for political reasons.¹⁹⁵ To

¹⁹² Blount to Gresham, July 31, 1893 (Part I: No. 17), 630.

¹⁹³ Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 49.

¹⁹⁴ E.g. Grover Cleveland: American Interests in the Cuban Revolution, U.S. Dept. of State: *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs*, 1896 "Whatever circumstances may arise, our policy and interests would constrain us to object to the acquisition of the island or an interference with its control by any other power."

¹⁹⁵ Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 15. ("Unfortunately, Cleveland left office after only four years...Final annexation in 1898 had to wait for a real imperialist, William McKinley.')

view Cleveland as so helpless misrepresents his presidential power, and denies his true culpability in sanctioning and legitimating the settler state.

Instead of directly rejecting the power of the provisional government, Cleveland first conditioned further action on the Queen's "unqualified agreement" to "grant full amnesty" to all those who acted to set up or support the provisional government.¹⁹⁶ By constraining Queen Lili'uokalani's punishment of the insurrectionists, Cleveland overtly undermined the sovereignty that he "deem[ed] it his duty to endeavor to restore."¹⁹⁷ Surely an action by a small group of foreigners to threaten the executive power in the United States would not be met with such charitable amnesty.

At the same time, Cleveland obfuscated the scope of his executive power and left it to the same Republican-controlled Congress that supported annexation in the first place. In his address prefacing the Blount Report, he states: "In commending this subject to the extended powers and wide discretion of Congress, I desire to add the assurance that I shall be much gratified to cooperate in any legislative plan which may be devised for the solution of the problem before us which is consistent with American honor, integrity, and morality."¹⁹⁸ Even though Cleveland rejected President Harrison's initial treaty for annexation, by shifting the ultimate prerogative to Congress, and in the meantime validating the existence of the provisional government, he essentially guaranteed that the foreign government would endure. Meanwhile, in Hawai'i, "[a]ll minds were quietly and anxiously looking to see what action the Government of the United States would take."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Correspondence from Gresham to Willis (U.S. Minister of Hawai'i following the removal of Stevens), December 3, 1893, 465.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Cleveland's Message to Congress, 458.

¹⁹⁹ Blount's Report, 568.

Within Congress, “a distinct polarity prevailed,” and many in favor of annexation critiqued Blount and his role as envoy to Hawai’i.²⁰⁰ First, Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts proposed a resolution questioning the constitutionality of Blount’s instructions, as well as his general conduct in Hawai’i.²⁰¹ Other senators espoused similar beliefs, arguing that the “paramountcy” with which Cleveland had vested Blount necessitated confirmation hearings that had not occurred.²⁰² Even more, Senator Shelby Cullom from Illinois accused Blount of being a spy, and described Blount’s lowering of the American flag in Honolulu as “treasonous,” invoking a comparison to a Confederate soldier removing the American flag in New Orleans who received death by hanging.²⁰³

In February 1894, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee sent Senator John Tyler Morgan to Hawai’i on “fact-finding” mission, that appeared to be for the express purpose of rebuking the findings in the Blount Report. The conclusions were in favor of annexation, and found that the only party at fault was Queen Lili’uokalani. Morgan reported:

Under [Queen Lili’uokalani’s] brief rule, it was kept alive by the care and forbearing tolerance of the conservative white people, who owned \$50,000,000 of the property in Hawaii, until they saw that the Queen and her party had determined to grasp absolute power and destroy the constitution and the rights of the white people. When they were compelled to act in self defense, the monarchy disappeared.²⁰⁴

Additional findings in favor for annexation included the assertion that dethronement had occurred peacefully prior to the landing of the *Boston*, and a moral necessity, described as “the release of [Hawai’i’s] people from the odious antirepublican regime which denies to

²⁰⁰ McWilliams, “Blount, the South, and Annexation,” 41.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁰⁴ “Morgan Report,” U.S. Congress, Hawaiian Islands. Fifty-third Congress, Second Session, February 26, 1894, 367.

the people the right to govern themselves, and subordinates them to the supposed divine right of a monarch.”²⁰⁵ All in all, the Morgan Report fully embraced principles of colonialism and settler colonialism underlying the American presence in Hawai‘i throughout the preceding century.

In May of 1894, a resolution opposing restoration of the Queen, opposing intrusion into the affairs of the Provisional Government, and opposing American action that would immediately lead to annexation—a solution for everyone, except, as Tennant McWilliams has pointed out, for the independent people of Hawai‘i.²⁰⁶ The resolution passed the Senate unanimously, by a vote of 55-0.²⁰⁷ Finally, during the presidency of William McKinley in 1898, a joint resolution for annexation of Hawai‘i as a territory of the United States was approved by Congress. Hawai‘i’s American statehood was passed in 1954.

Taken together, this sequence of events confirms that dispossession of land from Native peoples is inherent to America, irrespective of party, with little to do with party affiliation.²⁰⁸

By dismissing Blount’s findings and deferring to Congress (and subsequent administrations), President Cleveland sealed the fate of Queen Lili‘uokalani’s overthrow and establishment of the Provisional Government as an “unjust legality.”²⁰⁹ Ward Churchill explains that in America “‘law’ is presumed . . . always to prevail, despite the fact that law,

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 364.

²⁰⁶ McWilliams, “Blount, the South, and Annexation,” 45.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 4, (“Dispossession of Native peoples was the origin, and continues to be the core, of U.S. foreign policy. From the Indians of the Americas to Pacific Island Natives, to the indigenous peoples of Asia, the United States has an unbroken record of invasion, land theft, and genocide.”).

²⁰⁹ Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens*, 87.

as such, may be conspicuous solely on the basis of its absence. Whenever America's "government of laws" does or says something, whatever has been said or done *must* by virtue of its source be considered 'legal' . . . It is contended that the U.S., or more accurately, the state-corporate amalgam that has long since come to preside over it, is, in and of itself, "The Law."²¹⁰ Cleveland used the Report to his advantage, expressing his moral umbrage over the unsavory actions of the few in Hawai'i, while still ultimately legitimating the power they exercised over Native Hawaiian people. Though he openly characterized the overthrow as "unjust," deciding that it would be "proper and expedient" to refer the decision to Congress, Cleveland sanctioned the overthrow as "legal." This perfectly illustrates Ward Churchill's idea that 'law' functions as "a perfect instrument of subjugation."²¹¹

If settler colonization is, as Patrick Wolfe phrases it, "at base a winner-take-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement,"²¹² then the annexationists in Hawai'i were betting on themselves when decided to overthrow the Queen. And perhaps they were justified in doing so.²¹³ In March 1893, President Cleveland wrote to the head of the Provisional Government informing him of Blount's imminent arrival, and addressed him as "President Dole."²¹⁴ According to a biographer,

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.* (citing Antonio de Nebrija's fifteenth-century pronouncement on the relationship of language to empire).

²¹² Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnograph Event*, (New York: Lexington, 1999), 163.

²¹³ H.P. Jeffers, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, (HarperCollins: New York, 2000), 312. ("[R]egarding Hawai'i, Grover also inherited the policy of the Harrison presidency, but with a different attitude toward accepting and continuing it. In his view, the Hawaiian Islands were of far greater importance to the United States than Samoa, not merely because Hawai'i was closer to the American mainland, but because the islands were, in his word, 'in the highway of Oriental and Australasian traffic' and 'virtually an outpost of American commerce and a stepping-stone to the growing trade of the Pacific.'")

²¹⁴ Cleveland also addresses him as "my great and good friend." By contrast: when Minister Stevens first addressed the Queen's cabinet the day of the overthrow, he employed the opposite approach:

when Cleveland deferred to Congress on the matter, Dole lost no time in proclaiming the Republic of Hawai'i, which Cleveland also accepted. Sometime later, he greeted Dole as a "great and good friend" and offered best wishes for Dole's "personal prosperity."²¹⁵

V. Conclusion: The Significance of the Blount Report

The timeline of pre-overthrow actions documented by Blount (from 1820-1893) demonstrates the American colonizers in Hawai'i transforming from (1) missionaries and foreigners, to (2) quasi-political Missionary Party, to (3) the Reform Party, and finally (3) the "Citizens' Committee of Safety." This evolution of title reflects the evolution of a colonial framework to a settler colonial framework. In the first two stages, the missionaries wanted to impose their superiority on a racially different group, and the foreigners came mostly for economic opportunity via exploitation of the land, while maintaining allegiance to their home countries and largely intended to return home. The Reform Party, comprised of missionary-descendants and foreigners with longer-term economic focuses, seized political power and sought to leverage that control to create circumstances better for themselves and worse for Natives in Hawai'i. Both of these operate on the underlying reinforcement of difference between colonizer and colonized—more power to the latter, and disenfranchisement of the former. The missionaries and reformers manipulated the Crown to their advantage, but all the same, the monarchy was still recognized.

Eventually, the formation of the Citizens' Committee of Safety made clear the Reformers' distinctly settler intentions: land the U.S. troops in Honolulu, dethrone the Queen, and annex to the United States. No longer did Americans seek to civilize, exploit,

"I addressed a short note to Parker, Cornell, Colburn, and Peterson, no longer regarding them as ministers, informing them that I had recognized the Provisional Government."

²¹⁵ Jeffers, *An Honest President*, 312.

and return to America—instead, to “settle permanently, and as part of that process, to exercise sovereignty over the territory[y] they occupied.”²¹⁶

Lorenzo Veracini suggests that “settler colonialism is the most recognizable when it is the most imperfect.”²¹⁷ Today, America’s Hawai’i is a settler colonial state, and a relatively successful one, covering its tracks, for one, through the passage of Hawai’i’s official statehood in 1959. Americans generally would not recognize Hawai’i as a colony, but as a legitimate part of the United States. The Blount Report brings light to each step of colonization in Hawai’i—missionaries seeking to teach and civilize, the gradual implementation of American legal and property structures, and finally the Reform Party seeking to dethrone the Queen and annex to the United States. The Report’s terms and consequences implicate the United States and its role in legitimating a clearly illegal and unjust seizure of power. For these, the Blount Report is an unfortunate error to an otherwise well-designed settler colonial structure.

²¹⁶ Saito, “Racial Realism,” 22.

²¹⁷ Veracini, “Settler Colonial Studies,” 3.

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