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Captive Women in Paradise 1796–1826: The *Kapu* on Prostitution in Hawaiian Historical Legal Context

Noelani Arista

The islands waited. Jesus died on a cross, and they waited. England was settled by mixed and powerful races, and the islands waited for their own settlers. Mighty kings ruled in India, and in China and in Japan, while the islands waited.

These beautiful islands, waiting in the sun and storm, how much they seemed like beautiful women waiting for their men to come home at dusk, waiting with open arms and warm bodies and consolation. All that would be accomplished in these islands, as in these women would be generated solely by the will and puissance of some man. I think the islands always knew this.

—James A. Michener, *Hawaii*

Ua olelo kakou aole e holo ka wahine hookamakama I ka moku.

We have said, female prostitutes would not be allowed to go to ships.

—Hoapili to Ka'ahumanu, October 24, 1827

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A HISTORY'S FICTION

The sweep of James Michener's historical synthesis *Hawaii* reaches back to Polynesian origins of islands and peoples and culminates in the fulfillment of the islands' destiny as the fiftieth state of the American Union.¹ The novel *Hawaii* (1959) holds an important place in Michener's oeuvre, as perhaps the earliest and most well-remembered of his manifest destiny series of novels that were to include *Texas* (1985) and *Alaska* (1988). The novels charted the transformation of former "wild" lands devoid of people, which were later inhabited by Natives but inevitably subsumed as part of the United States through American ingenuity. Trade, transportation, commerce, law, democracy, the spread of disease, and war were all present in his epics, but, above all, the novels told of the inexorable westward movement of American people and the mixing of races that followed in their wake. Hawaii's own journey from beautiful exotic woman waiting, as narrated by Michener on the cusp of Hawaii's becoming a state in 1959, has made such an impression on American memory as to stand in place of history for the last fifty years. It did not matter that Hawaiian shores had been coveted by Americans for more than a hundred years prior to the appearance of this novel; what mattered was recent history, the desire for a union (and a narrative to naturalize it) on the part of the United States, which longed to own the *ʻāina* (land) that it had claimed before the world as its *casus belli* on December 8, 1941.

This article begins the arduous work of undermining the firmly entrenched image of the wanton *wahine*, starting with stories about Hawaiian women resisting the amorous advances of foreign ship captains who assumed that women should be made available to them if they offered material or monetary remuneration. What emerges is a picture of how women often had to fight against the power of this emergent stereotype as it took shape during their own lives. Hawaiian women and girls were not simply waiting for foreign ship captains and sailors to become their lovers, though it was true that many women engaged in the sex trade for money, material, or social gain. As increasing numbers of whalers arrived at the islands, sexual encounters between Hawaiian women and foreign men would bring the *ali'i* (chiefs), foreign sailors, ship captains, merchants, and American missionaries into serious conflict beginning in 1825, resulting in the pronouncement of legal restrictions by the *ali'i* that sought to regulate foreigners' access to Hawaiian women. The second half of this article moves away from the historiographic emphasis on male actors by investigating how Hawaiian *ali'i wahine* (chiefesses) like the Kuhina Nui (prime minister) Ka'ahumanu primarily enforced the pronouncement of the 1825 *kapu* (prohibition) on prostitution. The *kapu* as innovation afforded the *ali'i wahine* a novel opportunity to deliberate, judge,

and mete out punishment publicly to women who violated the *kapu*, thereby exercising authority in ways that they did not have prior to the casting down of the *'ai kapu* in 1819. Finally this article concludes by situating and evaluating the *kapu* in Hawaiian legal-historical context in order to argue that the *kapu* on women, although innovative, was not an entirely new moral law inspired or imposed by the Sandwich Islands Mission. Furthermore, placing the *kapu* in this context helps illustrate a richer approach to the interpretation of Hawaiian history and the lives of women particularly.

THE ISLANDS WAITED

Michener's haunting refrain "the islands waited" interpolates the favorite motto of the Sandwich Islands Mission, "the isles shall wait for his law," from the early nineteenth century into the prehistory of the islands before settlement. The phrase resounded in the ears of the first missionaries as they boarded their ship at Boston's Long Wharf in the chill of October 23, 1819. Of immense spiritual significance to the missionaries, the words marked Christianity's emergence in the islands as the title and the subject of the first Sabbath sermon Reverend Hiram Bingham would preach before Hawaiian *ali'i*, declaimed from the deck of the ship *Thames* as it sailed from Kawaihae to Kona, Hawai'i.² It would be a standard celebrated and passed down through triumphant mission histories until this day, histories that tout victory: the islands wait no more!³ Michener's interpolation of the refrain in his fictional recounting of the islands' prehistory places the mission at the islands' origin, introducing along with it a surreptitious claim of indigeneity, which predates the arrival of the Hawaiians' Polynesian ancestors, trumping claims of first settlement and replacing them with the *mana* of a new Christian Genesis.⁴

This intertextuality between the mission's history and Michener's fiction shapes the trajectory of the story's arrow of destiny toward its teleological bull's-eye: statehood. The islands' narrative from birth is shaped by the contours of the New England mission's imaginary, and from there by Michener's own American post-World War II sense of mission in the world. In this fictional juxtaposition, Hawaiians and the islands they belonged to can have no language of their own with which to tell their story, no way of reckoning a *mo'olelo* (history) of their own, no sense of self or affiliations of belonging that can stand outside of or withstand this forceful shaping.

When reaching for a metaphor to describe the islands before settlement, Michener didn't delve deep. He needed only to skim the surface of the Pacific paradise myth of lascivious women, whose insistent demands for sex with foreigners were built upon voyagers' and visitors' fantastic accounts that were

published and reprinted widely in newspapers, encyclopedias, and books during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵ For Michener, beautiful islands were passive like women—both waiting for the will and force of “some man” to engender something within them. The proximity of masculine force and “as in these women” conjured the specter of rape of the female body vulnerable in its openness, disturbingly close to an image of women as motherly, with open arms and warm bodies offering consolation.⁶

Taken together the paragraphs provide a unified image—the isles have waited as civilizations rose and fell; islands wait; women wait. Although the islands that Michener visualized are without question the Sandwich Islands, who are the women that he imagined? It is clear that Michener has in mind a particular group of women, as the phrase “as in *these* women” suggests.⁷ Here is a snag in the seamless poetry of the writer. Michener gets ahead of himself, revealing part of the novel’s later story as well as his narrative conviction that the lives of Hawaiian women could only be actualized by the actions of men from Polynesia, Boston, China, Japan, and the Philippines. However, the women would be most radically changed by the arrival of missionary teachers and other Euro-Americans whose coming would bring about a generation of *hapa* children.⁸ Finally, it is the islands that have knowledge of their fate, where men and women fall completely out of the equation.

Wide acceptance of the idea that Hawaiian women, like other Pacific Island women, were lascivious or that they docilely submitted to foreign lovers may have helped to retard the writing of more complex histories about women, sex, and power that occurred during the decade after the first group of Euro-American settlers, missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in 1820. Coincidentally, that same year the first whale ship arrived in the islands, exponentially increasing the traffic of transient foreign men on the prowl for sexual partners throughout the coming decades.⁹

The Trials of Purchasing a Hawaiian Woman

On April 28, 1825, ABCFM missionary and printer Elisha Loomis wrote in his journal that a “Capt. B.,” commander of an English whale ship, had “for some time been making strenuous efforts to induce a certain female to accompany him on a cruise, promising to return her again, and furnish her well with clothing &c.”¹⁰ Loomis was writing from the Honolulu Mission station that had been his home since the first missionaries arrived at the islands in May 1820. The woman in question was Polly Holmes, daughter of Oliver Holmes, a Massachusetts sailor who had taken up residence in the islands and lived with a Hawaiian woman for more than a decade. Holmes had a house

full of daughters who were keenly sought after by merchant agents and ship captains for companionship, and it was alleged that their father was prostituting them.¹¹ Polly, however, having refused the captain's advances and "fearing she would be taken on board by force," fled to the High Chief Kalaimoku for protection.¹² Though the captain, who was not named by the missionaries, offered Kalaimoku money to compel the woman to accompany him, the chief refused, saying "she shall not go without her own consent."¹³ The captain also tried to offer large sums of money to other *ali'i*, who also refused to send Polly onboard. The captain, in desperation, approached Reverend Bingham twice in one day to ask for his assistance. When the captain had failed in his remonstrances, he then reproached the minister saying, "If it had been any other person than a clergyman" who had frustrated his wishes "he would have kicked him down the street."¹⁴ Failing utterly to "persuade" Polly to accompany him on his voyage, the elusive Capt. B. visited the home of a "Mr. J. (An American resident who has several children by a native wife)" and "endeavored to get possession of H. his eldest daughter." He offered the family eight hundred dollars to take the girl, but the family refused, her mother exclaiming, "Do you think we will sell our daughter like a hog?"¹⁵

In writing about this exchange, Loomis did not comment on the attempt of the ship captain to purchase Hawaiian women; the more serious crime in his mind was adultery because the ship captain "has a wife and several children in England."¹⁶ Only the words of the unnamed girls' mother point out how this Hawaiian woman was struck by the vulgarity of the English captain's proposal, that a beloved daughter should be sold like a pig, like a piece of meat, to sate the captain's appetite in a transaction that mirrored other ubiquitous exchanges for supplies and provisions that occurred daily in Hawaiian port towns.

Some thirty-two years previous, in 1793, British Captain George Vancouver also wrote about an audacious story that had been circulating about the kidnapping of two Hawaiian women by an English ship bound for the Northwest Coast. Captain Baker, of the *Jenny*, had reportedly sailed from the islands with the women still onboard. It was said that he intended to sell them to the Indians for furs in order to turn an additional profit from the pleasures he had already experienced as his ship plowed its way across the North Pacific. What alarmed Vancouver was that this tantalizing piece of gossip had been "industrially circulated at Nootka by citizens of the United States, to the prejudice and dishonor of the British subjects on the Coast of Northwest America." Vancouver was concerned that the scandalous story was gaining in strength and that it reflected badly upon all of the British doing business in that part of the world. Once on the coast, Vancouver was relieved to discover that when the *Jenny* sailed into Nootka the Hawaiian women were still aboard. Although Vancouver defended the captain's reputation, believing him to be

“totally incapable of such an act of barbarity and injustice,” he also did not seek to “vindicate the propriety of Mr. Baker’s conduct in taking these girls from their native country.” Vancouver was “decidedly of the opinion [that] it was highly improper; and if the young women are to be credited, their seduction and detention on board Mr. Baker’s vessel was inexcusable.” The women, Taheepiah and Tymarow, were from the island of Ni’ihau. Taheepiah, according to Vancouver, was fifteen years old and “of some consequence,” while Tymarow, who was related to Taheepiah, was four or five years her elder.¹⁷ Vancouver had based his opinion on the information that the women provided. When asked how they came to be aboard the ship, they told him that they had come onboard with several other women. Although the others returned to shore, they were confined below deck until the vessel had sailed and were released only when the ship was at some distance from Onehow (Ni’ihau). In the end, Vancouver agreed to provide the women with safe passage back to the islands, though he did not elaborate on their employment or the treatment they received on their return voyage home.¹⁸

How many degrees of difference lie between Vancouver’s judgment of the captain’s actions toward the women as seduction and detention rather than barbarous and unjust? If the story had been that the women were simply taken captive from their home and not sold to Indians, would Vancouver have bothered to write about it and his eventual part in its resolution? Or would this have been another story about Hawaiian women who exchanged sex for money and received more than they bargained for?

Only a fraction of these “sought after” women who were flattered and seduced with promises of gifts of fabric, clothing, and houses of their own had their names and stories reach the written record through the pen or the mission press. On rare occasions, a particular story might circulate throughout the Euro-American world, as a colorful anecdote in the latest scientific voyage of discovery. More often than not, however, the experiences of these women would be left not on the page but on the pillow. Nonetheless, it is clear from Polly’s reaction to Capt. B., as well as from the testimony of the two women taken captive aboard the *Jenny*, that Hawaiian women could be compelled by force into sexual slavery lasting six to eight months (the duration of a whaling voyage); however, the number of women who endured such trials will never be known.

The Hawaiian Islands have long endured the burdensome name of “Paradise,” this *moemoea* (mirage) of idyllic shore sun-kissed and touched by ever-temperate breezes may have been an inescapable association for Euro-Americans. Hawai’i was not home for them but rather an oasis in the middle of the Pacific “waste” of ocean, a long sought-after landfall for New Englanders and Britons engaged in trade with China and laboring in the whaling industry.

Hawaiian women were essential actresses in the Euro-American imaginary of the islands as paradise. If God could not see what sailors did once their ships had sailed around Cape Horn, the illusion that English and American men could go to the islands and do as they pleased in a place where the laws of God and King and country were unknown—or at the very least unpublished and unenforced by any colonial administration—added to the heady pleasures of which paradise allowed them to partake.

Sometime between March and October 1825, at the same time that Capt. B. was trying to purchase Polly and other women, a *kapu* on prostitution was proclaimed by the *ali'i* that forbade women from traveling to foreign ships in order to engage in the sex trade. Although the chiefs had considered the possibility of such a ban in their conversations with American missionaries—who were agitating for an end to such vices in the islands—the *kapu* was not formally proclaimed until Leoiki, a *kahu* of Wahinepi'ō, the Governess of Maui, had been sold by her *ali'i* to British whale ship captain William Buckle. Wahinepi'ō set the terms of the agreement, extracting a promise from Buckle that he would return Leoiki to the islands at the voyage's end, approximately eight months after his departure in March 1825.

The *kapu* was proclaimed as a way to censure Wahinepi'ō for her ill-treatment toward Leoiki, and, although it targeted prostitutes, the ban may also have signified that chiefs were attempting to protect women from the increasing demands that ship captains were making on chiefs, women, and their families to provide women for sex on voyages lasting several months. For a brief span of three years (1825–27) the chiefs in the *'aha 'ōlelo* (chiefly council) that included the chiefly governors of all the islands experimented with the *kapu* by extending it to cover all women as a class, thus prohibiting them from visiting ships for the purpose of prostitution.¹⁹ This *kapu* as innovation, a formal recognition of Christian moral law, in practice was also the continued extension of a *kapu* that for hundreds of years regulated the relations between Akua (god[s]), *ali'i*, and *maka'ainānā* (people). By 1827, after this period of political strife between foreigners on the islands over the *kapu*, which was marked by armed attacks against mission stations by visiting sailors, the orally pronounced *kapu* on prostitution would be transformed as *kānāwai*, a law that was published and that recognized prostitution for the first time as a crime punishable by a fine. The transformation of Hawaiian women's bodies from subjects of chiefly rule—which could be placed under *kapu*—into an instrument that could be used willfully in the commission of a crime (albeit a newly defined one) would revolutionize the relationship between commoner and *ali'i*, thus portending the greater transformations of law and jurisdiction that would occur in the coming decades after the first Hawaiian constitution

was adopted in 1840, formalizing the unified chiefdom of Kamehameha into a nation.

The adoption of new moral laws did not simply signal a naive turn toward Christianity on the part of the *ali'i*. The *kapu* restricting women from visiting foreign ships and engaging in prostitution, although an expression of chiefly sanction for the laws of God, worked to highlight further the difference between Natives subject to chiefly oral pronouncements (*kapu*) and foreigners whose actions were neither regulated nor punishable by the *kapu* of the *ali'i*.²⁰ As increasing numbers of transient foreigners—sailors, captains, and merchant agents—began to arrive in the islands, the need to regulate the activities of these foreigners and their interaction with Hawaiians became more pronounced.

Most of the scholarship on the subject of Hawaiian women and prostitution during this period has focused solely on the reaction of foreigners to the *kapu*.²¹ In three different well-documented “outrages” that occurred from 1825 to 1827, the crews of two English whale ships and an American warship rioted. During these armed attacks on mission stations in Honolulu and the singular cannonading of Reverend William Richards’s home in Lahaina in 1827, missionaries bore the brunt of the sailors’ misplaced ire at not being able to obtain women for sex. That Euro-American sailors considered other foreigners as the source of “law” should not come as a surprise, considering that contemporary ideas of savage nobility applied to Hawaiians and other Native peoples excluded their ability to rule themselves in an orderly fashion.²² Nowhere was this misplaced conviction that the missionaries had unduly influenced Hawaiian politics more prominent than with the outrage of the USS *Dolphin*’s visit to the islands. Here, as in the previous outrage of 1825, women were the ground of dispute.

Outrage against the Kapu on Women

The *Dolphin*, the first US warship to touch at the Sandwich Islands, arrived on January 13, 1826. The ship had been dispatched to the Pacific in order to round up the murderous mutineers of the whale ship *Globe*. While purportedly on a mission to enforce the rule of law by bringing the mutineers to justice, members of the crew led a riot in Honolulu, threatening the lives of the American missionaries who were stationed there and attacking the personal residence of the High Chief Kalaimoku. That the sailors’ rage at the *kapu* compelled them to take up arms indicates that the chiefly *kapu* had effectively deterred women from going to ships as they had in the past. The rioters hoped that a proper beating and further threats of harm against the missionaries

would persuade them to ask the *ali'i* to lift the *kapu*. The attack purportedly had the tacit approval of their commander.

Lieutenant John Percival's official business in the Sandwich Islands was to pressure the chiefs to repay their debt of sandalwood owed to American merchants, the first time a US delegation participated in what would become a long history of European and American warships making claims against the Hawaiian government from the other side of a gun. In the days preceding the riot, an incensed Percival had returned to Honolulu after a quick trip with some fellow Americans to the "Pearl River area of O'ahu." Percival complained that he had received less than adequate treatment from the residents, and that he and his party could not obtain fish, although the area had large fishponds, and to their consternation they could find no Hawaiian willing to allow them to light a fire due to the chiefly pronouncement that all labor be avoided on the Sabbath. Furthermore, the Kuhina Nui Ka'ahumanu, having gotten wind of Percival's plans to visit the area, had sent orders ahead of time that "none of the females of that place should visit them for the purpose of criminal intercourse."²³ Ka'ahumanu's *ōlelo* was a timely pronouncement that targeted the residents of a particular place, Pearl River, and bolstered the general archipelago-wide *kapu* that had been proclaimed the year before with the full force of her chiefly status as the highest-ranking female chiefess in the islands.²⁴

Being unable to catch a fish, start a fire, or bed a woman sent Percival into a rage, with the froth of his anger directed at Ka'ahumanu, whom he accused of dispatching a "spy to watch over him."²⁵ Conflicts over prostitution and access to women became more pronounced over the coming months. While commanders like Percival blamed the mission for the *kapu*, female chiefs like Ka'ahumanu often oversaw its enforcement and the punishment that was meted out for its violation. The pronouncement of the prostitution *kapu* was one aspect of the transformation of Hawaiian society by chiefly rule, to control men's and women's sexual habits through the imposition of Christian marriage and its attendant proscription against adultery.

On February 1, a "great crowd of natives coming from the village" suddenly distracted Loomis, who had set about his work at the Honolulu Mission printing press for the day. According to Loomis, it "appeared that a female who had been on board one of the ships, venturing on shore was seized," and the crowd was now "carrying her to Kaahumanu." The description suggests that the enforcement of *kapu* was also dependent on the observation and participation of the general populace. In the wake of the crowd came the woman's foreign paramour, who "entreated earnestly" of Ka'ahumanu that the woman be permitted to live with him. Ka'ahumanu replied, "If you marry her you may, but otherwise you cannot have her." The man argued that although he knew what marriage was the woman did not, to which Ka'ahumanu replied, "If you

know what marriage is, take her, be married and treat her accordingly." As the man would not marry her, he was "forced to return without his dear."²⁶

On February 20, several "girls [who] were taken from white men" were set to "getting stones for the church," which was a very public punishment for prostitution.²⁷ That day, Percival paid a visit to Governor Boki of O'ahu, Kaikioewa, and other chiefs to tell them that this punishment was "not right," that it "ought not to be."²⁸ Loomis noted in his journal that during this meeting, Percival also inquired as to who gave orders to prevent females from visiting ships. He was told, "The King [Kauikeaouli Kamehameha III] and his guardian [Ka'ahumanu]." According to Loomis, Percival "declaimed with great violence against the missionaries," saying that they "trade upon Ka'ahumanu," but that "he would come and tear down their houses."²⁹

Later that evening, an *'aha 'olelo* that had been called to discuss chiefly debt with Percival took a turn to these matters, and Governor Boki, who was the brother of Kalaimoku, requested that "it was the desire of the chiefs to have their public business transacted in writing." To this request, Percival swore that he would not do so, that he would come and talk with the chiefs, and if they did not come to his measures and remove the prevailing restrictions on women going to ships, he would open fire upon them.³⁰ Percival's language and threats turned increasingly incendiary. According to Loomis, Percival had railed that although "his vessel was small, it was like fire." His rage seemed especially focused on particular American missionaries, for he claimed that if Bingham should appear at the *'aha*, Percival would "shoot him." If a Native should attempt to "take a native [woman] from one of his men, he would shoot him."³¹ In response to these threats, Boki suggested that Percival go and speak directly with Ka'ahumanu.

The next day Percival did as Boki suggested, meeting with Ka'ahumanu and speaking with Kalaimoku and Boki about Hawaiian "girls." According to merchant agent Stephen Reynolds, Prime Minister Kalaimoku, in a measure of tit-for-tat, told Percival, "It was good to burn the white men's houses and let them begin to fight, for he was tired of seeing them come in sight!"³² It seems that Percival's threatening words from the previous day had circulated among the chiefs, and they would return his threats to "tear down houses" with their own stern warnings of what might ensue.

Seven days after this exchange Percival's crew attacked the Honolulu Mission station and the home of the Chief Kalaimoku. After meeting with Percival and Reverend Bingham, the *ali'i* lifted the *kapu* on prostitution for the rest of the *Dolphin's* stay in the islands. The *kapu* was then reinstated when the *Dolphin* sailed from the islands on May 11, 1826.³³ A month after the *Dolphin* departed from Hawaiian waters, Ka'ahumanu made a public show of pronouncing judgment over two individuals who had broken *kapu*. On the

evening of June 12, an *‘aha ‘ōlelo* was convened in Lahaina in order to deliberate the punishment to be meted out for a thief and a notorious prostitute. The woman’s situation was very serious because she had “not only broken a law of the chiefs” but had also “both publicly and privately expressed her contempt of the law” and on too many occasions had been “counselled by Ka’āhumanu and [just] as frequently promised reform.”³⁴

Early on the morning following the *‘aha*, a crier was sent into the village inviting all of the people of Lahaina to be present. The people were assembled on the beach and the two prisoners brought before the council. According to the Lahaina Mission journal kept by Reverend Richards, “The chiefs then unanimously expressed their approbation of the sentence that had been passed upon them [the prisoners] by the chiefs at Oahu and expressed their determination to punish all who should be guilty of like crimes.”³⁵

The public pronouncement of punishment before the assembled residents of Lahaina by the chiefs was performed as a deterrent to warn people about what they risked if they broke the *kapu*: separation from homeland and family and exile to the inhospitable island of Kaho’olawe.

The chiefs then turned the prisoners over to the governor of Kaho’olawe, charging him to “keep them [the prisoners] safe” while warning him that “if they escaped from the island, he would be called to account for it.” The chiefs then turned to the people to be “witnesses of their determination to stop the former iniquitous practices of the islands,” assuring them that “they [the chiefs] shall persevere in the new course which they had adopted.”³⁶ The thief and the prostitute were then ordered to canoes in front of the people, after which the crowd was released.

THE 1825 *KAPU* ON WOMEN IN HAWAIIAN HISTORICAL-LEGAL CONTEXT

The earliest record of chiefly discussions regarding the *kapu* on Hawaiian women comes from November 10, 1824. Opi’ia, Ka’āhumanu’s sister, noted in conversation with Reverend Bingham that “when the chiefs generally agree to it, prostitution of females on board ships shall be prohibited.”³⁷ Although the mission had an interest in bringing an end to prostitution in the islands as part of their instruction in Christian behavior in keeping with God’s word, they had no authority or power to proclaim *kapu* or to introduce law in the islands. Reverend Richards wrote a detailed observation of how *kapu* worked in a letter to Corresponding Secretary Jeremiah Evarts of the ABCFM:

The power of laying tabus is vested in the chiefs. Any chief has power to lay tabu, and this tabu extends to all the people of that chief, who are more or less numerous

according to the rank and popularity of the chief. The tabu of the highest class of chiefs extend in a great degree to all the people of the islands. I have known frequent instances of punishment, where the tabus of one chief of one island have been broken by the people of a chief belonging to another island. The tabus of the king, and also the tabus of the Regent or Regents are according to my observation alike binding on all the people of all the islands.³⁸

According to Richards's account, *kapu* could be a local district or island-wide phenomenon or, when proclaimed by one of the Kuhina (regents) or the king, was applicable to all people in the archipelago. The *kapu* on prostitution proclaimed by the king and his Kuhina therefore applied to all women on all of the islands.

The *kapu* that was placed by the chiefs upon women sometime between March and October 1825 prohibited them from visiting ships for the purpose of prostitution. Foreigners angry about not having access to women were not able to grasp the workings of Hawaiian governance that led to the proclamation of the *kapu* or the broader context of *kapu* on Hawaiian women to which this most recent *kapu* belonged. An example from the history of Kamehameha I that took place sometime during the late 1790s may cast light on this subject. The story begins with the careful negotiation between Kamehameha and Ke'eaumoku, one of his four chiefly advisers, regarding future threats to Kamehameha's rule.³⁹ The potential rebel in question was Ke'eaumoku's daughter and Kamehameha's wife—and future Kuhina Nui—Ka'ahumanu.

Ke'eaumoku was sick unto death. An epidemic was making its way through the ranks of Kamehameha's warriors, indiscriminately killing *ali'i* and *maka'ainana* alike. The epidemic carried off many of Kamehameha's important chiefly advisers (*nā Kuhina*). Kamehameha, hearing of Ke'eaumoku's feeble state, went to his side to obtain the aged chief's final counsel: "if perhaps you die," Kamehameha asked, "will my rule be conspired against?" Ke'eaumoku replied, "There is no chief who will rebel against your dominion; there is only one great threat within your government, your wife and if you take great pains, your rule will not be conspired against."⁴⁰

Heeding Ke'eaumoku's final counsel, Kamehameha placed a *kapu* on the body of his young wife Ka'ahumanu stating that any chief or common person having sexual relations with her would be killed. The regulation placed upon Ka'ahumanu was not simply about sex or gender oppression. If anything, the *kapu* on her person was Kamehameha's acknowledgment of Ka'ahumanu's *mana*—*mana* that Ke'eaumoku and Kamehameha recognized as stemming from her similar central position within the same web of chiefly liaisons. Ka'ahumanu, like Kamehameha, had the power of familial connections were she to seek her own rule. The *kapu* on her person sought to decrease the

possibility of any rivals seeking a political alliance with the chiefess, which would wrest the balance of power away from Kamehameha to Ka'ahumanu. Because she had no children, it cannot be assumed that the *kapu* was placed upon her body simply to prevent her from having offspring with other chiefs and elevating a rival lineage. The *kapu* was not about the potential of inherited *mana* transferred to the next generation, but about Ka'ahumanu's ability to be the maker of the next *ali'i nui* (high chief) in her generation. Because of her refined political intelligence, rank, and family ties, she was a powerful threat to Kamehameha's rule. Hence the *kapu* prevented rebellion and the usurpation of Kamehameha's rule by placing the most politically powerful woman of the times sexually beyond the reach of power seekers.⁴¹

Sex was not the only exchange transacted on the *moena* (mat) of the chiefess. Political machinations and discussions would be part of intimate liaisons. Ké'eaumoku's words were not simply a warning that rival male *ali'i* sought the kingdom of Kamehameha, but clearly identified Ka'ahumanu as the root of future struggles and intrigue. In 1825, as in Kamehameha's time, the *kapu* was a remedy sometimes used to contain and limit the ability of a chiefess to interfere politically in the overall chiefly governing structure. The 1825 *kapu* on Hawaiian women must be considered in relation to this previous application of *kapu* to the body of the Chiefess Ka'ahumanu. Doing so illustrates that the 1825 *kapu* was not an anomaly of foreign Christian origin or imposition.⁴²

For sailors and missionaries, missionary interference in politics was a taboo. Although certain missionaries had influence in their interactions with *ali'i*, the missionaries were not the arbiters of *kapu* or law in the islands. They had some power, limited personnel, and no authority to promulgate or enforce such *kapu*, nor did they have the ability to exact punishment against those who transgressed it, namely Hawaiian women. Those women who disregarded the *kapu* were punished by the *ali'i*, while the men who purchased their services were not, simply because they were neither the subject of the *kapu* nor were they subjects of the chiefs. Rather than simply a religious law promulgated through a reductive view of "missionary influence" over chiefs, it is important to consider the *kapu* as a measure of control meted out by the *ali'i* over their own subjects in order to deal with the problem of captive women and prostitution.⁴³

The heated clashes among sailors, missionaries, and *ali'i* over the *kapu* on Hawaiian women were precipitated by the frustrated desires of sailors accustomed to having access to Hawaiian women. Approaching this *kapu* in Hawaiian historical legal context, rather than as Christian-inspired moral law, provides a first look at transformations in Hawaiian governance that emphasize continuity with an already robust system of law (*kapu*) and rule. Although on the surface the *kapu* restricted the activities of women, it also sought to protect

them from exploitation by sailors and chiefs. Kāʻahumanu, once a subject of *kapu*, was largely responsible for its novel application to all women in 1825, and it is clear that the *kapu* also allowed her to exercise authority that she formerly may not have had. Additionally, I have sought to decenter the fiction of Hawaiian women as ever waiting and always available to the advances of foreign men, beginning with examples from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the very moment when the idea of Hawaiʻi-as-paradise was being fashioned. Although the myth of paradise persists, Hawaiian women have their own tales to tell; these and many stories of Hawaiʻi will remain protected in the shadow of paradise, hiding, if you will, in plain sight.

NOTES

1. Michener's refrain "the islands waited" is inspired by one of the central themes of "The Charge," the mission and Congregational clergy's injunction delivered to Reverend Hiram Bingham and Reverend Asa Thurston before an assembled congregation at Boston's Park Street Church one week before they departed for the Sandwich Islands on October 23, 1819. This was the first missionary company to be dispatched by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hereinafter referred to as ABCFM) from Boston to the Sandwich Islands. "The Charge" reminded the ministers of an important passage from Isaiah 42:4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law," which linked biblical prophecy of the spread of God's word to the farthest reaches of the earth, to their mission to the Sandwich Islands. Reverend David L. Perry, "The Charge," in Heman Humphrey, *The Promised Land, A Sermon, Delivered at Goshen at the Ordination of the Rev. Messrs Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston as Missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, September 29, 1819* (Boston: S. T. Armstrong, 1819), 33–37. James A. Michener, *Hawaii* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2002), para. 1: 15; para. 2: 15–16.

Hoapili to Kāʻahumanu, October 24, 1827, Non-Missionary Letters, 1820–1900, Hawaiian Children's Mission Society Library (hereinafter referred to as HCMSL), Mission Houses Museum, Honolulu.

2. Journal of the Sandwich Islands Mission, April 4, 1820, ABCFM Archives, 1819–1824 (ABC 19.1 Hawaiian Islands Mission [hereinafter referred to as ABC 19.1]), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Boston.

3. In my work I track the way that Hawaiian historiography has been built upon the repetition of key narrativizations of particular events. A popular technique I employ is to track striking words and phrases that appear in the description of a person, group, event, or encounter and see how often these are republished without being reformulated or rewritten. By observing and collecting information about how many times a particular news story, editorial, letter, or account is published and republished in American newspapers, journals, books, etc., it is possible to see how these stories and their variations became sedimented into history. It is also possible to study the circulation of information, how news travels, and at what point a particular version of history accrues status as "true."

4. *Mana* means spiritual gravity and power. Employing Hawaiian concepts as part of my methodology necessarily illustrates the impossibility of sufficiently interpreting the behavior and actions of Hawaiian historical actors without understanding important ideas of proper behavior, deportment, and right action in relation to Hawaiian narrations of the remote and immediate past. It is also a mode of interpretation that posits the necessity of evaluating historical events through multiple

cultural and linguistic lenses, Euro-American and Hawaiian. This method communicates a simple historical theory that Natives, in this case Hawaiians, thought of themselves. They reckoned their activities and culture in terms of their own collective and very local renderings of history and of their own interpretations of the past expressed through multiple oral historical genres—*mo'olelo* (history), *ka'ao* (legend and history), *mo'oku'auhau* (genealogy), *oli* (chants), *pule* (prayer), *wanana* (prophecy), *ko'ihonua* (genealogical chants of islands and chiefs), and *kanikau* (lament)—that were separate from Euro-American narrations of Native pasts and the logics that they frame and impose. However, I am not making a simplistic argument about cultural purity or authenticity. Hawai'i presents an important and interesting case for developing new approaches in the writing of indigenous histories because there was a robust public sphere with numerous Hawaiian writers contributing to narrations of the Hawaiian past (and their presents) amounting to 125,000 pages in Hawaiian-language newspapers alone from 1831 to 1942.

5. See George Gilbert, *The Death of Captain James Cook*, Hawaiian Historical Society Reprints, no. 5 (Honolulu: Paradise of the Pacific Press, 1926). Also see John Ledyard, *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage*, ed. James Kenneth Munford (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1963); George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World; in which the Coast of North-West America, Has Been Carefully Examined and Accurately Surveyed. Undertaken by His Majesty's Command, Principally With a View to Ascertain the Existence of any Navigable Communication Between the North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans; and Performed in the Years 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795, in the Discovery Sloop of War, and Armed Tender Chatham, Under the Command of Captain George Vancouver. In Three Volumes*, vol. III (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, 1798), 44–45; Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery*, vol. I, 171–72.

6. Michener, *Hawaii*, 16.

7. *Ibid.*, emphasis added by author.

8. *Hapa* means, literally, portion or part. In this case, it means of mixed ancestry or part Hawaiian.

9. I am in the process of investigating this phenomenon more fully across a broader spectrum of histories that address the subject of Hawaiian women and prostitution. For one glaring example of interpretive confusion, see James H. Ellis, *Mad Jack Percival: Legend of the Old Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002). “The carefree and unrestrained women of the islands had been a key attraction since the time of Captain Cook, and visiting mariners viewed the restrictions advocated by the mission as an infringement on a fundamental right.” Here Ellis is writing about the 1825 *kapu* that prohibited women from going to ships for the purpose of prostitution, arguing in his interpretation that sexual access to Hawaiian women was a right because the women were sexually promiscuous. He also seems to conflate 1825 with present-day ideas about Hawai'i as a resort destination, arguing that the women were an “attraction,” something that every mariner looked forward to experiencing much like Disneyland or whale watching.

10. Journal of Elisha Loomis, April 28, 1825, The Journal Collection, 1819–1900, HMCSL.

11. Loomis Journal, August 6, 1825, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

12. Loomis Journal, April 28, 1825, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Journal of Levi Chamberlain, April 28, 1825, ABC 19.1.

15. Loomis Journal, April 29, 1825, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery*, vol. II, 228.

18. *Ibid.*, 227–28.

19. Chiefly councils included those who were privy to particular events, contexts. It is not unusual to include the governors in matters, especially those that had to do with foreigners, but all *‘aha* were not dealing with problems that were archipelago-wide.

20. By 1822, the *ali‘i* had begun to publish rules notifying masters of vessels that sailors found “riotous or disturbing the peace in any manner” shall immediately be “secured in the fort,” where they would be detained until “thirty dollars is paid for the release of each offender.” “Notice,” Mission Press, O‘ahu, March 8, 1822, Broadside Collection, HMCSL.

21. Most historical treatments of the outrages focus on the anger of foreign sailors and ship captains against the mission. See Harold Whitman Bradley, *The American Frontier in Hawaii: The Pioneers 1789–1843* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1942); Gavan Daws, *Honolulu The First Century: The Story of the Town to 1876* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2006); and Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press). Also see Ralph Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1778–1854: Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1938).

22. One of many unfortunate consequences of this unexamined historical claim has been the production of historical analysis that views the arrival of the ABCFM in Hawai‘i as evidence of US colonialism as early as 1820. See Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 61–75, 291–92. Also Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961), 6–17, 43. Although Fuchs was writing a history of twentieth-century Hawai‘i, his characterization of the state of Hawaiians and their society during the nineteenth century is one of “decay” and “decline.” Missionary descendants were, in contrast, “born to rule.” See Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 117–26, for a more complex view of the adoption of law as part of a process of negotiation. See also Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 67–68, 242–43, on the subject of missionaries as law bringers. Also see Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 13; and Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). What is striking is that American historians and historians of Hawaiian history and postcolonial studies all agree in their assessment of missionary power and influence in the creation of law beginning with this period in 1825. In a somewhat different assessment, political scientist Juri Mykkänen describes the moment of the outrages over prostitution as the “beginning of politics” and the emergence of political discourse. He characterizes the response to the outrages as a fight between foreigners to extricate Christian law from civil law. Juri Mykkänen, *Inventing Politics: A New Political Anthropology of the Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 91–102.

23. Loomis Journal, January 27, 1826, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

24. *I ka ‘ōlelo nō ke ola, I ka ‘ōlelo nō ka make*, or “In speech there is life, in speech there is death.” This idiom is a statement descriptive of the power of chiefly utterance to decree life or death over persons who transgressed *kapu*.

25. Loomis Journal, January 27, 1826, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

26. Loomis Journal, February 1, 1826, Journal Collection, HMCSL. What was perhaps more shocking was the revelation later that day from a Hawaiian teacher who informed Loomis that “Capt. P. had applied to a girl” in Loomis’s school to “live with him.”

27. The stones were to be used for building purposes.

28. Journal of Stephen Reynolds, February 20, 1826. Pauline N. King, ed., *Journal of Stephen Reynolds* (Honolulu: Ku Pa‘a Inc., 1989), 124.

29. Loomis Journal, February 21, 1826, Journal Collection, HMCSL.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Reynolds Journal, February 21, 1826.
33. Chamberlain Journal, April 1, 1826, Journal Collection, HMCSL.
34. Journal kept at Lahaina, Maui, by William Richards, June 13, 1826, HMCSL.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Journal of the Sandwich Islands Mission, November 10, 1824, ABC 19.1.
38. Letters of the Sandwich Islands Mission, “Deposition of Mr. Richards,” William Richards to Jeremiah Evarts, August 14, 1829, Missionary Letters, 1820–1900, HMCSL. Although the ABCFM policy cautioned against missionary intervention into local politics, it did not prevent Reverend Richards from being a keen observer of political structures of chiefly governance and the ways that *kapu* was pronounced and observed.
39. Ke‘eāumoku was married to Namahana, daughter of Kekaulike, and their children Ka‘āhumanu and Kaheheimālie were two of several chiefly wives of Kamehameha.
40. Samuel Mānaiakalani Kamakau provides the words of Ke‘eāumoku’s final *kauoha*, “‘A‘ohe ali‘i e kipi i kō aupuni, ho‘okahi nō na‘e kipi nui o kō aupuni,‘o kō wahine nō (Ka‘āhumanu); a nui kō mālama,‘a‘ole e kipi ‘ia kō aupuni.” *Ke Kumu Aupuni: Ka Mo‘olelo Hawai‘i no Kamehameha Ka Na‘i Aupuni a me kāna aupuni I ho‘okumu ai* (Honolulu: ‘Ahaui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, 1996), 167.
41. As Marshall Sahlins notes, “usurpation is typically marked, either as means or consequence, by the appropriation of the ranking woman of the deposed line: to produce a child not only tabu by mother right but, as descendant at once of the usurper and the usurped, a child that synthesizes the contrasting qualities of rule, *mana* and tabu, in the highest form.” Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 12.
42. Even Ka‘āhumanu could not avoid the comparison between Kamehameha’s *kapu* of her person and the 1825 *kapu*. Her adviser David Malo made the comparison when he was called to give her advice about whether the chiefs should protect Reverend Richards from the British Consul’s charge of libel regarding the publication of his letter in American newspapers about the purchase of Leoiki by British captain William Buckle in 1825.
43. See Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 63–76. Merry considers the *kapu law* of 1820s as “religious law” and the “adoption of Anglo-American law” as one process.