

INTRODUCTION

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AT MIDNIGHT on January 7, 1895, Robert William Kalanihiapo Wilcox and a band of one hundred men quietly climbed the slopes of Lē‘ahi (Diamond Head) with their rifles in hand.¹ Positioned on the sides of the 760-foot crater, they waited out the night under the light of a nearly full moon. Two years earlier an oligarchy led by haole (white/foreign) elites had staged an illegal coup with hopes of US annexation. Wilcox’s group of royalists and loyalists was part of a larger force that had organized a counterrevolution, the 1895 Kaua Kūloko, in order to depose the haole-led oligarchy and reinstate Queen Lili‘uokalani.²

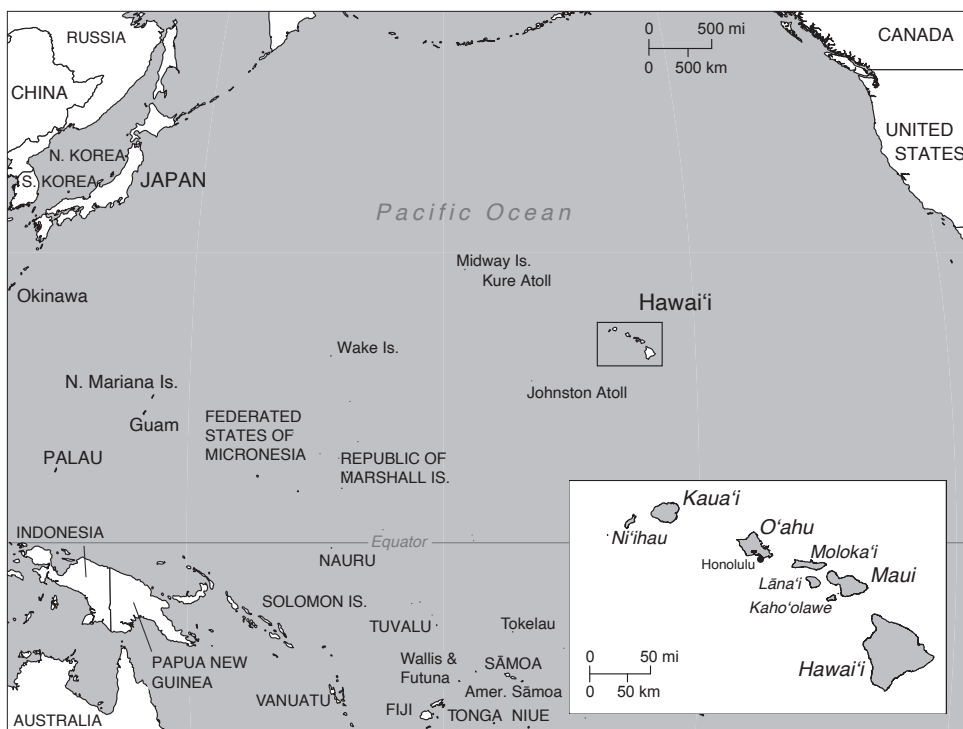
As the sun rose, Wilcox and his group spied a growing number of “republic” troops gathering a few miles away at Kapi‘olani Park. Several hours later Sanford Dole, president of the Republic of Hawai‘i, the coup government, declared martial law over the archipelago. By three o’clock that afternoon the tugboat *Eleu*, outfitted with one of the republic’s

three cannons and several snipers, was steaming along Lē‘ahi’s coastline firing grapeshot at royalist forces. Under constant fire and with the republic militia on their tail, Wilcox and his troop retreated through Palolo Valley and headed into the lush forests of Mānoa, Pauoa, and Nu‘uanu.³ On January 14, 1895, after a week of fighting, they surrendered to coup state forces in Kalihi Valley.

Roughly four hundred people were taken as prisoners for allegedly supporting the counterrevolution.⁴ While most of those arrested were Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian), the list of incarcerated also included those who came from Portugal, Macedonia, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, China, and Japan.⁵ The group’s makeup reflected just how cosmopolitan Hawai‘i’s population was. In fact, the haole elites who had staged the coup were a definite minority, working to remake the islands under a white supremacy that—as the counterrevolution makes clear—was not a foregone conclusion.

One of the political prisoners taken in the aftermath of the 1895 Kaua Kūloko was Portuguese subject Manoel Gil dos Reis, known in Hawai‘i as Manuel Reis. He was the licensed owner and driver of a carriage for hire in Honolulu. After spending five weeks in Oahu Prison, Reis was freed on February 13, 1895, never having been charged with a crime.⁶ Following his release, Portugal filed an indemnity claim on Reis’s behalf, which the coup state refused to meet. As a result of this political impasse, the Portuguese monarchy decided to halt all emigration to Hawai‘i beginning in 1896. Following their failed 1893 attempt at US annexation, the coup government had hoped to recruit more Portuguese laborers to boost the islands’ white population, but they were not willing to cede to the demands of the waning Portuguese empire. Without that labor supply, the oligarchs turned to other methods to shore up their own settler colonial power, and, they hoped, secure annexation by the United States.

How did the imprisonment of one carriage driver lead to the cessation of all emigration from the Portuguese empire to Hawai‘i? This



Map 1. Asia, the Pacific, and North America. Map by Michael Pesses.

question articulates the methodology driving the following historical study. By pairing the intimate and epic together in critical juxtaposition, *Pacific Confluence: Fighting over the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i* reveals the unstable nature of both the coup state and US empire itself. The period between the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and US annexation (1893–98) is often framed as an inevitable step of American expansion—but it was never a foregone conclusion. Kānaka Maoli support for restoration of the monarchy combined with their tactical use of international law, for example, exposed the haoles-led oligarchy as an embodiment of countersovereignty and threw US annexation into question.⁷ Rethinking Hawai'i's relevance to late nineteenth-century imperial formations demonstrates that US empire in the Pacific is not a history of unmitigated expansion. Rather, episodes

such as Reis's call for indemnity and the counterrevolution constitute historical flashpoints that illuminate the fragility of the haole-led republic and the unresolved nature of the US imperial project.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Hawai'i lay at the crowded intersection between powers that sought control over the Pacific. Centering Hawai'i in the study of imperial formations positions the United States as just one of the political actors vying for control over an already global Oceania. This "decontinentalized" shift in perspective, in which the "island becomes that which is main," emphasizes the fact that empire making was not a unilateral process of domination from metropole to periphery, but was shaped by a multitude of factors, including settler colonial ideology, Hawaiian modes of relationship, and interimperial dynamics.⁸ To this end, each of the following five chapters analyzes events that are simultaneously local and global in their origins and ramifications.

The stories of O'ahu-based constituencies from Portugal, Japan, and the United States show how the intersections between transpacific imperial formations and local politics of jurisdiction revealed the nation-state to be a category of contingent and contentious practice. When Kānaka Maoli and racialized workers on the boundaries of the body politic sought to mitigate their own exploitation by the structures of colonialism and capitalism, their actions became entangled with the processes of nation-state formation and gave rise to questions that both challenged and informed ideas of state-based rights and jurisdiction. Their struggles became legible in the colonial archive as diplomatic concerns, and as such, much of the impact of their acts of dissent was erased.

Although the global significance of the Hawaiian archipelago to nineteenth-century political formations had been obscured by the ongoing US occupation, that is beginning to change thanks to the work of practitioners who are able to incorporate the large volume of historical material in 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language).⁹ This book builds

on their work, recovering episodes from colonial records while foregrounding Hawai‘i-based events and communities, thereby bringing the realities of the archipelago’s simultaneous colonial, interimperial, and sovereign existence into the same frame. The result is a study that extends beyond recounting world powers’ actions in Hawai‘i, to consider imperialism from the other direction. This island-based perspective illustrates not just the role that Hawai‘i played in the political imaginary of Japan, Portugal, and the United States, but also emphasizes how Hawaiian articulations of political independence impacted the making of the modern Pacific world.¹⁰

The strategies and structures of late nineteenth-century empire making in Hawai‘i, embodied in the reactive form of the coup government, were not exceptional. But pausing on each episode covered here illuminates how settler colonialism works broadly, while also emphasizing the ways it might fail. For although the calls for indemnity by a single Portuguese carriage driver may not have been deemed noteworthy by the haole-led oligarchy, reading to connect individual maneuvers with their chain of global repercussions reframes this action as a flashpoint that revealed the fiction of the coup state. Despite their attempt to create a nation-state that was recognized the world over, haole oligarchs were never able to quell the realities of Hawaiian political independence and relationship with place, or eliminate alternative rhetorics of nationhood.

As a historical form, the nation-state has been and continues to be enmeshed with empire, emerging from and depending upon the conquest of new territories.¹¹ From the sandalwood trade of the 1800s, to the massive industrial plantations of the twentieth century, and the tourism and military industries that currently dominate Hawai‘i’s economy, capitalism has been a driving force behind the occupation of the archipelago. Yet in late nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, competing definitions of nation and state emerged in ways that were *incommensurate* with a capitalist nation-state. The episodes detailed in the following chapters complicate

the relationship between nation and empire: the actions of po'e aloha 'āina (Hawaiians working to maintain their political autonomy), Meiji officials, haole oligarchs, Portuguese diplomats, and Issei (first generation Japanese) settler laborers alike challenged emerging nation-states and their increasingly pronounced forms of capitalism and imperialism, with questions over who held the power of state-based jurisdiction in places beyond territorial borders and who was "worthy" of protection. Perhaps most importantly, the histories collected here push us to think beyond the confines of "nation building as empire building" to explore how various articulations of the nation, as embodied within a people and their connection to place, were and are being used as a political and oppositional strategy against imperial state encroachments.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

I begin with my positionality as a fourth-generation Japanese settler, born and raised in Mānoa, O'ahu, because it serves as a reminder that I must never lose sight of settler colonial conditions or the privileges I derive from them.¹² I also acknowledge the limits of *Pacific Confluence* due to my lack of command of the Hawaiian language, which means I rely primarily on translations and English-language sources. Through this work I endeavor to situate diasporic Asian and Indigenous histories in conversation with each other, and to contribute to current discussions around place-based decolonial nation-building by considering how an expansive understanding of sovereignty was, can be, and is being defined and imagined to include modalities outside of Westphalian state-based forms. For as Robert Allen Warrior so eloquently explains, if the "path of sovereignty is the path to freedom," then that freedom is not the "standard, western sort of freedom which can be immediately defined and lived. Rather, the challenge is to articulate what sort of freedom as it 'emerge[s] through the experience of the group to exercise the sovereignty which they recognize in themselves.'" ¹³

Like other recent scholarship located at the intersections of Indigenous and Asian American Studies, *Pacific Confluence* approaches the US nation-state as a product of settler colonialism.¹⁴ It starts from the premise that the theft of Indigenous land and attempt to obscure alternative worldviews is facilitated by the settler state's self-proclaimed right to govern collective life. Extending this analysis to Hawai'i is especially relevant given the continued forms of structural violence that Kānaka Maoli persist against today, including the desecration of their sacred sites, dispossession of their land, low life expectancy, and disproportionately high rates of incarceration.

This is a work of history grounded in the perspective of those living within the whirlwind of political, social, and cultural upheaval of late nineteenth-century Hawai'i. It maintains that the subjugation and oppression of Kānaka Maoli and Asians serves as the foundation of US colonialism in the archipelago.¹⁵ Although both communities suffered extensively under the structures of racial capitalism and white supremacy, Kānaka Maoli continue to endure the loss of the land and resources from which their very culture emanates. My intent here is not to minimize the exploitation that Asians in Hawai'i experienced or compare it to the consequences of occupation and imperialism that Kānaka Maoli persist against. Instead, I approach this history with the understanding that there is a significant difference when this violence occurs in one's homeland and that any conversation about thinking and moving together must begin with the recognition of the Kānaka Maoli right to land stewardship in Hawai'i.

While we must never sidestep the fact that Asian settler communities have often served as the agents and "brokers" of empire, we can also cultivate dialogue around overlapping histories of imperial expansion and oppression.¹⁶ To that end, *Pacific Confluence* centers Hawai'i in the history of imperial rivalry for the "Pacific" in order to open up space to step beyond the structures of white supremacy and engage with the many intellectual and sociopolitical connections that Indigenous and

Asian communities shared. By placing these histories together in complex unity, I hope to engender opportunities for new lines of inquiry that allow, in Dean Itsuji Saranillio's formulation, different "historical and geopolitical forms of oppression to be understood as interdependent in ways that produce possibilities outside of the constrained logics of U.S. empire."¹⁷

In order to demonstrate that articulations of the nation-state were constructed relationally through the processes of colonization and the resultant questions of jurisdiction that arose in the imperial Pacific, I trace the global and local debates that surrounded the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom through three distinct framings. Each one highlights the tensions that developed around the shifting scope of state power for the Hawaiian Kingdom, the coup government, and the Meiji, Portuguese, and US empires. The first framing reveals how each of the multiple regimes of power negotiated with the others the boundaries of state jurisdiction in the islands. The second juxtaposes the debates occurring among Kanaka Maoli, Japanese, and Portuguese communities in Hawai'i as they contested imposed definitions of citizenship and state jurisdiction. The third connects Hawai'i-based debates over racially defined national belonging to ongoing conversations in the United States.

To better understand the complexity and contingency of this era, I read across multiple archives throughout Hawai'i and the continental United States. While the bulk of my research comes from the US National Archives and the Hawai'i State Archives, understanding these sources as the "supreme technology" of late nineteenth-century empire informs my methodology of reading them as a roadmap to anxieties of the state.¹⁸ The documents I examined reflect the ability, and lack thereof, of developing state mechanisms to monitor the boundaries of the nation. But I was more interested in how governments thought about those who challenged these imagined communities. What did it mean to the haole-led oligarchy, for example, to be called out for

violating international law by Kānaka Maoli? What did it mean to Meiji oligarchs to be called on for protection by a Hawai‘i-based Issei plantation laborer who would not have merited any consideration at home?

I am also interested in how those living under these conditions negotiated and navigated their lives. I turn to local and national newspaper collections, personal journals, and oral histories not merely to fill the gaps of the colonial archive, but to ascertain how these subjects understood the world and their place in it. Many of the people I track are visible for only a few moments before they slip back into illegibility. But the traces they left behind offer a glimpse of what nation-state-making looked like for those caught in the confluence of empires.

Following Epeli Hau‘ofa’s theoretical intervention of an interconnected Oceania, this book emphasizes Hawai‘i’s position as a site of confluence in order to underscore the voices of historically marginalized communities and reveal their role in shaping ideas of nation and state that circulated through networks made possible by the conditions of empire.¹⁹ “Confluence” is used as an organizing theme in order to accentuate the plurality of social relations that those living in Hawai‘i were embedded within, while also leaving room to intentionally highlight relationships that activated specific state reactions. Through the events covered here I question how competing imperial ambitions played out in the intimate scale of the body, and consider the ways in which communal ways of being in the world, such as ties to land, water, and kinship networks, were reduced to a state-based bureaucratic identity in order to be made legible and disciplined.

Within the last decade, historical scholarship has moved toward re-visioning Asian American, Pacific Islander, and US history within the context of a transpacific “oceanic turn.”²⁰ Such studies focus primarily on diasporic communities, and the choices individuals made to move above and between the confines of bounded nation-states. One of the main arguments laid out in the chapters that follow complicates this understanding of the “transpacific” by considering how people lived

within borders as well as across them, not just to evade the control of the state, but also to engage with it in order to remake it.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the regime of international law and diplomacy functioned to establish and reinforce a global order based on the sovereign nation-state. This was a structure that Kānaka Maoli understood well, as the monarchy had been engaging in acts of international relations for over a century.²¹ In the years following the coup, Queen Lili‘uokalani and po‘e aloha ‘āina repeatedly used the theater of international diplomacy to claim the right of state-based sovereignty as a tactic of “national defense” against those who wished to usurp the Hawaiian monarchy. Although this did not result in the immediate reinstatement of the queen, it continues to work to reveal the coup state as an act of countersovereignty, or the reactionary assertion of sovereignty by the settler state.²²

The desires, dreams, and actions of those based in ko Hawai‘i Pae ‘āina (the Hawaiian archipelago) played a crucial role in determining a modern transpacific order that produced and reproduced forms of racial difference adherent to competing state-based regimes. For those living in this space where no one polity reigned supreme, the world was in flux. While haole oligarchs fought to convince a country still reeling from the failure of Reconstruction that annexation of an archipelago with a majority nonwhite population was in their best interest, Lili‘uokalani publicly argued for political independence through the regime of international law. As part of its imperial ambitions, the Meiji government grew increasingly interested in its growing emigrant population, while the waning Portuguese empire tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the coup state on behalf of its subjects. The attempts to make sense out of this period of instability and rupture by those caught in the confluence of empires are often overlooked by scholars of US history and the Pacific world. Yet as the accounts explored here attest, Hawai‘i’s interimperial condition pushed nation-states, the United

States in particular, to define their boundaries in response to measures taken by communities residing on the margins.

This island-based perspective, which has yet to be fully utilized in the study of nation-state and empire making, challenges the teleological narrative of the “imperial Pacific.” Rather than approaching the archipelago as a simple crossover point for migrant labor, capital, and commodities, this book issues a call to pause and examine closely a particular moment in Hawai‘i’s history that holds a larger story about the precarious grounds on which the modern transpacific order was created.²³ As its title suggests, this is a book about confluence. But it is also about the insidiousness of US imperialism and its collaborator, white supremacy. For while the annexation of Hawai‘i was by no means a forgone conclusion in 1893–1898, *Pacific Confluence* analyzes how imperialism functioned, and continues to function, as a contingent and fluid process—one that responded, reacted, and adapted to the trials presented.

What lessons does this history hold for those currently engaged in anti-imperial struggle? Conducting research on events that occurred in a place and time where the sociopolitical future was so uncertain facilitates an engagement with the multitude of possibilities that existed and still endure today. The seeds of these alternative futures are planted throughout the era this work explores. The chapters that follow challenge us to see the nation-state as just one form of historical consciousness so that we might be free to envision nonstatist approaches to decolonization and a future that resides outside of the logics of empire.

CHANGING ARTICULATIONS OF NATION AND STATE

Navigating the intertwining histories of land loss and the path taken to access political power by white American and European elites underscores the importance of a Hawaiian concept of nationhood as grounded in the relationship between place and people.²⁴ Haole elite

attempted to break the Hawaiian mode of relationship to place by altering the land tenure system and implementing a structure of privatized land ownership. This in turn served as the requisite for suffrage in the coup state, ensuring that it functioned to bolster the interests of the minority, haole-led oligarchy.²⁵

The current academic analysis of colonization tends to privilege European and American definitions of sovereignty and the nation-state.²⁶ Writing from an island-centered perspective brings alternative formulations into focus. According to Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, for Kānaka Maoli, concepts of nation and state are rooted in social, cultural, and political understandings of order under the *aupuni* system, which require the maintenance of *pono* (righteous balance) between all things: Akua (gods), ali'i (chiefs), *maka'āinana* (commoners), and the 'āina (land) itself.²⁷ Osorio explains that the idea of the nation-state is complicated because of the "various ways that we might define the word . . . For the haole that word can mean country, its government, or the people it rules. But for Hawaiians, two words are necessary to convey the meaning of nationhood: *aupuni*, the government established by Kamehameha, and *lāhui*, which means gathering, community, tribe, and people."²⁸

By the late nineteenth century, Kānaka Maoli "understood how the state had come to symbolize their very survival as a people."²⁹ If, as Mae Ngai contends, the modern nation-state's "ultimate defense is sovereignty—the nation's self-proclaimed, absolute right to determine its own membership, a right believed to inhere in the nation-state's very existence," then, for Kānaka Maoli, in addition to kinship and genealogy, *ea* (political independence) is linked to the communal care of place.³⁰ Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua explains that as an expansive principle, *ea* confounds the arbitrary distinction between politics and culture to encompass both independence and interdependence. She writes, "Ea refers to political independence and is often translated as 'sovereignty' (but) it also carries the meanings of 'life' and 'breath' . . . Unlike Euro-American philosophical notions of sovereignty, *ea* is based

on the experiences of people on the land, relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places.”³¹

In order to strategically engage with the practices of the outside world, aliʻi often sought out knowledge of foreign nations.³² By the 1820s, they were using this knowledge to oversee an increasingly heterogeneous society that included not just makaʻāinana, but also foreign sailors, merchants, and missionaries.³³ Beginning in the 1840s, aliʻi began to selectively incorporate the Euro-American concept of state-based law in order to assert a kingdom that would enable Kānaka Maoli to be seen as rightful rulers by encroaching colonial powers and negotiate the demands of foreign communities residing in the archipelago.³⁴ It was not until this decade that ea became associated with state-based forms of sovereignty.³⁵

In 1842 Kauikeaouli (King Kamehameha III) sent diplomats to meet with representatives from the United States, France, and Britain in order to acquire their recognition as a sovereign state. The November 28, 1843 recognition of the Hawaiian Kingdom as an independent state by both Britain and France was declared a national holiday—Lā Kūʻokoʻa (Independence Day).³⁶ Through this agreement, Lorenz Gonschor writes, “Hawaiʻi became the first, and for many decades, only non-Western state to be recognized as a coequal member of the Family of Nations,” a status that would become even more important in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁷

Kauikeaouli also promulgated the nation’s first constitution during the 1840s, which “asserted a Christian nation to protect the common people” and officially defined the terms of citizenship and naturalization.³⁸ The naturalization procedure was opened to all Asians living in Hawaiʻi under the first two monarchical constitutions.³⁹ Under pressure from American and British business interests, in 1846 the monarchy implemented a statute that recognized the category of “denizen,” which allowed specially “favored aliens” to retain their foreign citizenship while also giving them access to the rights and privileges of Hawaiian citizen-subjects.

As white American and European elites increased their economic investment in Hawai‘i, they intensified their efforts for the privatization of land and further inclusion in the government with little legal accountability. Although Protestant Christian missionaries advocated for privatized land ownership through claims of cultivating a “disciplined work ethic” among the Indigenous population, many also saw the potential for economic profit in the islands. With the onset of the 1848 Māhele (land division), land was made available for large-scale private ownership to Hawaiian citizen-subjects.⁴⁰ By 1850 restrictions on citizenship and other rights for foreigners had all but collapsed. In July of that year, all foreigners who were not naturalized, including Asians, were granted the right to own and sell lands in fee.⁴¹ Just three weeks later the monarchy granted the right to vote to all men ages twenty and over who were subjects of the Hawaiian Kingdom, native-born and naturalized, as well as denizens—provided they had lived in the kingdom for at least a year, and were “neither insane nor unpardoned felons.”

While a number of scholars have identified the Māhele as a form of exploitation that led to the alienation of maka‘āinana from the land, societal breakdown, and later colonization, others have argued that the Hawaiian Kingdom implemented it with a different and more strategic goal: it was designed to empower Kānaka Maoli through facilitating the transition from the land tenure system to one that would allow for capitalist development. This work proceeds from the understanding that the Māhele enabled broad ownership of land and did not prevent the massive alienation of Kānaka Maoli.⁴² Following the passage of the 1864 Constitution, which placed stringent property and literacy requirements on the franchise, many Kānaka Maoli lost access to the ballot box.⁴³ Ultimately these changes to law and access to land altered the way nation and state functioned in Hawai‘i as a majority of Kānaka Maoli were stripped of their voting rights, and only a handful of the resident Chinese population met the property requirements necessary to command the right to vote.⁴⁴



Figure 1. King David Kalākaua. Courtesy of Hawai'i State Archives.

THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES

During his seventeen-year reign from 1874 to 1891, King David Kalākaua dedicated himself to his motto, “Ho’oulu Lāhui” (to grow/perpetuate the nation), by calling for a rise in Indigenous leadership and supporting the revitalization of traditional Hawaiian practices. As part of his strategy to assert and preserve the Hawaiian Kingdom’s political independence, he skillfully used well-established diplomatic methods, such as the exchange of orders with world leaders, to set up reciprocal and symbolic relationships throughout the global arena.⁴⁵ Thanks to his

intense diplomatic activity, by 1887 the Hawaiian Kingdom maintained 103 legations and consuls worldwide.⁴⁶ In 1881 Kalākaua became the first monarch to circumnavigate the world—a fact that made global headlines and brought him into contact with political leaders throughout Asia and Oceania. Using the connections he had formed on his travels, Kalākaua attempted to establish a pan-Oceanian and Asian polity as a way to harness the collective strength of the region and enhance the kingdom's global position.⁴⁷

Despite Kalākaua's efforts to fortify the Hawaiian Kingdom and calls by the Hawaiian community for leadership to remain in Indigenous hands, haole opposition to the monarchy's control grew. Haole elite agitated for the creation of a white settler state that would facilitate the installation of a new US-led transpacific order. On July 6, 1887, participants of the Hawaiian League, a group of men which included Lorrin Thurston, a third-generation American missionary descendant, and Sanford Dole, held the king at gunpoint and forced him to sign a new constitution.⁴⁸ This document, known as the "Bayonet Constitution," stripped the monarchy of its political power, solidified an oligarchy made up of a majority white American planters and businessmen, and gave control of the military to the haole-dominated legislature.⁴⁹ In essence, the 1887 Constitution solidified the connection between the development of the haole-led state and the production of racial difference adherent to competing state-based regimes.

Along with restrictive property, racial, language, and gender qualifications, the 1887 Constitution gave electoral rights to men who were residents, as opposed to citizen-subjects of the kingdom. This paved the way for US citizens to vote in Hawai'i's elections, while a large sector of the Indigenous electorate was excluded. Asians, who had formerly been included as citizen-subjects with the right to vote, were disenfranchised as "aliens."⁵⁰ In other words, after 1887, even if a Japanese or Chinese man previously had the franchise, owned property, was naturalized, or was born as a citizen-subject of the Hawaiian Kingdom,

he would not have voting rights. Justice Sanford Dole summarized the situation succinctly when he explained in his 1892 Hawai‘i Supreme Court opinion in the matter of *Ahlo v. Smith*, that the 1887 Constitution “substituted the race requirement for the old condition of citizenship.”⁵¹

When Kalākaua passed away in January 1891, the Crown transferred to his sister, Lili‘uokalani. Members of the Hawaiian Patriotic Leagues, which included Hui Aloha ‘Āina, sister organization Hui Aloha ‘Āina o Nā Wāhine, and Hui Kālai‘āina (Hawaiian Political Association), launched a massive petition drive to urge the queen to promulgate a new constitution and secured the signatures of sixty-five hundred registered voters—two-thirds of the electorate.⁵² In response, Lili‘uokalani attempted to instate a new constitution that would restore the monarchy’s power by limiting suffrage to men who had taken an oath of allegiance to the Hawaiian Kingdom. Leaders of the former Hawaiian League, now renamed the Committee of Thirteen, who included prominent American planters, merchants, and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) descendants, understood that if the queen were to regain political power their economic investments in the islands would be at risk.⁵³ With the kingdom’s sugar industry already suffering from the McKinley Tariff of 1891, this group decided to take matters into their own hands and instigated the coup.⁵⁴

On January 17, 1893, members of the Committee of Thirteen, with the aid of the Honolulu Rifles, US Marines, and US Minister to Hawai‘i, John L. Stevens, overthrew Lili‘uokalani and established a provisional coup government.⁵⁵ The next day, the “revolutionaries,” with the backing of the US troops, took over the capital. That afternoon they announced the abrogation of the monarchy and the establishment of a provisional government until annexation by the United States could be negotiated. Within an hour of the proclamation’s reading, US Minister Stevens recognized the government and extended official diplomatic recognition. Other nations, with the exception of Japan, did the same. Across the archipelago, po‘e aloha ‘āina immediately began organizing in protest.