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# A Plantation upon a Hill; Or, Sugar without Rum: Hawai'i's Missionaries and the Founding of the Sugarcane Plantation System

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*When American Congregationalist missionaries arrived in Hawai'i in 1820, many initially opposed sugarcane planting for its worldliness and for the negative effects they perceived it as having on the Hawaiians they sought to convert. Foremost among missionaries' complaints against sugarcane planting was its connection with distilling rum, a crucial source of revenue for cane planters throughout the world. However, missionary ideology proved to be flexible; and economic, environmental, and social factors all contributed to changes in missionaries' positions toward sugar. Though resolute in their opposition to distilling rum, missionaries came to embrace sugarcane planting by the middle of the nineteenth century. Missionary support was instrumental to the rise of a distinct Hawaiian plantation system which upheld only certain missionary ideals.*

**Key words:** *Hawai'i, missionaries, sugarcane, agriculture, plantations, temperance, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Sandwich Islands Mission*

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*As well might you expect an oak to arrive at its imposing maturity, in a year, or two or three. It is impossible. It requires centuries to perfect it.—And the nature of things renders it absolutely necessary that it should have all that time, in which to grow, and knit its fibres together.*

*And perfectly analogous to this, is the condition of a degraded nation, in its attempts to rise. The influences required to produce the result, are manifold; and few, very few of them are indigenous. Almost all of them must be introduced as exotics,—and undergo the slow acclimating process.*

—Edwin O. Hall, missionary to Hawai'i (1848)<sup>1</sup>

In 1851, at the first annual meeting of the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society (RHAS) in Honolulu, a heated debate occupied the society's members for the better part of two days. One member proposed a resolution that the society petition the Hawaiian Legislature to repeal an 1840 law banning the manufacture of alcohol and allowing Hawaiian sugarcane planters to distill rum "to aid them in carrying on their plantations." The response to this proposal was fierce. RHAS founding president William Little Lee said he would "sooner sink his interest, or burn it, before he would distil [*sic*]." Lee, a native of Sandy Hill, New York and a Harvard Law School alumnus, was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Hawai'i, Speaker of the Hawaiian House of Representatives, and a partner in the newly founded Lihue Plantation Company on the island of Kaua'i. The proposed resolution failed by a wide margin.<sup>2</sup>

Rum—essentially a lucrative by-product of sugar—had historically been a significant revenue stream for sugarcane planters throughout the Greater Caribbean, where most plantations had their own

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1. Robert Crichton Wyllie, *Answers to Questions Proposed by His Excellency, R. C. Wyllie, His Hawaiian Majesty's Minister of Foreign Relations, and Addressed to All the Missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands, May, 1846* (Honolulu, 1848), 94.

2. Stephen Reynolds, *Journal*, TS, 14 and 15 August 1851, Hawaiian Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, Mānoa. The "Law Prohibiting the Manufacture and Use of Intoxicating Drinks" was enacted October 1, 1840; Kingdom of Hawai'i, *Translation of the Constitution of the Hawaiian Islands, Established in the Reign of Kamehameha III* (Lāhaināluna, 1842), 161–62. The historian Ralph Kuykendall ascribes the first ban on distilling to sometime about the summer of 1838; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1778–1854: Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1947), 163. The official minutes of the meeting praised those who debated the resolution for the "courteous... calm and deliberate manner" of the debate; *Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society Transactions* 1, no. 2 (1851), 18–20. The *Honolulu Polynesian*, the city's leading newspaper, discussed the debate over rum distilling at length August 30, September 6, September 13, and October 4, 1851.

distilleries.<sup>3</sup> Rum might have provided Lee and other Hawaiian planters with similar advantages without much trouble. Opportunities abounded to make money through making liquor. Hundreds of whaling and merchant ships with thousands of thirsty sailors stopped at Hawaiian ports annually, offering a ready market for alcohol. The costs of importing foreign liquor were high, and domestic producers might have easily competed for this trade.<sup>4</sup> Lee's vehement

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3. Sidney Mintz notes the ubiquity of distilleries in the British Caribbean. Frederick H. Smith notes that "rum making became increasingly important to Caribbean sugar planters in the nineteenth century. As Richard Dunn notes, the precise importance of alcohol to the bottom lines of the world's sugarcane planters is somewhat unclear because the colonial powers governing sugar colonies often heavily taxed or otherwise regulated alcohol in order to favor metropolitan distilleries, and planters distilled spirits for local markets rather than, or in addition to, export. Alcohol was nevertheless an important product for planters. Barbados first began to export rum in the seventeenth century while other islands of the British Caribbean entered the market in the eighteenth century, until, writes Dunn, "nearly every planter had a still house." As Michelle Harrison notes, small Jamaican plantations were exporting rum as well as sugar in the mid-eighteenth century. As Stuart Schwartz writes, in the late eighteenth century some Brazilian cane regions specialized in producing alcohol (rum, *cachaça*, and *aguardente*), but even the regions that did not specialize in distilling found that "sugar allowed them to break even, *cachaça* provided the profit." Manuel Moreno Fraginals explains that Cuban sugar producers began distilling rum for export by the end of the eighteenth century. According to Dale Tomich, in the early nineteenth century, many large plantations in Martinique used the by-product of sugar production to produce rum for export and, more often, cheaper and lower-quality tafia for local consumption. Unlike in Hawai'i, wood was scarce in Martinique, and some Martiniquais found alcohol production unprofitable in part because of the need for timber to fuel distilleries. Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), 35, 44, 49; Frederick H. Smith, *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005), 194; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 196; Michelle Harrison, *King Sugar: Jamaica, the Caribbean, and the World Sugar Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 13; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550–1835* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 214, 121, 162–63; Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba, 1760–1860*, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 122; Dale W. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830–1848* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 184–85.

4. Richard A. Greer discusses the Hawaiian liquor trade and the various attempts of the Hawaiian government to control the production and sale of alcohol. It is possible that some sugarcane growers or mill operators produced illicit rum, but demand for and the importation of alcohol remained high, suggesting rogue domestic distilling did not have a significant presence in the market. For example, Judge Lorrin Andrews, who came to Hawai'i as an American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) missionary in 1828, observed that merchants diluted their alcohol in order to cover the costs of business, making it difficult for visiting sailors to imbibe to the point of drunkenness. The success of domestic beer producers, as documented in the *Polyesian*, suggests that sugarcane planters could have sold rum on advantageous terms. Richard A. Greer, "Grog

opposition to distilling rum is all the more striking in the context of the Hawaiian environment and economy. In 1850–51, Lihue Plantation was afflicted by drought and a severe downturn in the market for sugar.<sup>5</sup> In October 1851, one of Lee’s partners at Lihue bemoaned the “awfully hard times for planters and all other agriculturalists just now.”<sup>6</sup> Lee himself acknowledged in March 1852, “My operations in the farming line have as yet brought me no income.”<sup>7</sup> It would seem that Hawaiian sugarcane planters such as Lee could have embraced rum production and the profits that flowed from it in order to support their fledgling sugar enterprises. Why, then, did Lee and his fellow planters eschew their own economic interests and produce sugar but no rum?<sup>8</sup>

The short answer is that many of Hawai‘i’s influential early sugarcane planters were temperance advocates. Honolulu supported a robust community of *haole* (lit. “stranger,” “foreigner;” later, “white”) teetotalers who sought to limit the havoc drunken sailors periodically visited upon Hawai‘i’s port towns and to mitigate the depredations alcohol caused among *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians).<sup>9</sup>

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Shops and Hotels: Bending the Elbow in Old Honolulu,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 28 (1994): 35–67; “Judge Andrews’ Address,” *Friend*, January 1, 1848; *Honolulu Polynesian*, February 19, 1848.

5. William Little Lee to Joel Turrill, 24 March 1852, TS, Joel Turrill Letters, Hawaiian Collection, Hamilton Library (hereafter Turrill Letters); William Little Lee to Mrs. Stephen Lee (mother), 26 July 1852, Frederick B. Richards Collection, Crandall Public Library’s Center for Folklife, History and Cultural Programs, Glens Falls, N.Y.

6. Charles Reed Bishop to Joel Turrill, Honolulu, 9 October 1851, TS, Turrill Letters.

7. William Little Lee to Turrill, 24 March 1852, TS, Turrill Letters.

8. Sugarcane planters in the Greater Caribbean faced their own economic obstacles in the mid-nineteenth century in the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. One important distinction between these cases is that in the Atlantic, metropolitan governments imposed abolition upon colonial planters, while in Hawai‘i planters themselves imposed restrictions. As Alan Adamson argues, the political power of Guianese planters enabled them to maintain control in the face of abolition. Likewise in Hawai‘i, the political power of sugarcane planters enabled them to build a plantation system that conformed to their cultural ideals. Alan H. Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838–1904* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972).

9. Honolulu and Lāhainā, Maui, the archipelago’s two main ports, were the sites of several riots and near-riots related to intoxicated sailors and sexual access to Hawaiian women in the 1820s and 1830s. Riots also occurred occasionally in the 1840s and early 1850s. Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands; or the Civil, Religious, and Political History of Those Islands: Comprising a Particular View of the Missionary Operations Connected with the Introduction and Progress of Christianity and Civilization among the Hawaiian People*, 3rd ed. (Canandigua, N.Y.: H. D. Goodwin, 1855; repr. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 274, 286, 313, 408; *Honolulu Polynesian*, November 21, 1846; Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1778–1854*, 122–23, 231, 311–12.

But planters' rejection of alcohol stemmed from more than a desire for law and order. Most Hawaiian sugarcane planters of the 1840s and 1850s rejected alcohol production because their religious and cultural roots lay in the Protestant revivals of early nineteenth-century New England and western New York.<sup>10</sup> Opposition to the production and sale of liquor was one expression of the religious moral identity that subsumed their identity as planters. For these Protestant planters, growing sugarcane was much more than agriculture; it was an act invested with cultural and political meaning.<sup>11</sup>

The religious ideology that moved Lee and other planters to oppose distilling first arrived at Hawai'i in 1820, when the first company of the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established the Sandwich Islands Mission. The Hawaiian government's proscription on distilling supports the argument that resident Protestant missionaries left a lasting mark on much of Hawaiian history, including the rise of the Hawaiian sugarcane plantation system.<sup>12</sup> During the years when members and

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10. The relationship between alcohol and early nineteenth-century Protestantism has been documented by Paul E. Johnson and W. J. Rorabaugh, among others. Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); W. J. Rorabaugh *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

11. Mintz's *Sweetness and Power*, remains the standard work to discuss the cultural meaning of sugar. While Mintz examined changes in the meaning of British consumption of sugar, Richard S. Dunn, Philip D. Curtin, and Thomas D. Rogers have examined cultural meanings of sugar production. A "planter class," as the phrase suggests, requires some form of group identity and consciousness. Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Thomas D. Rogers, *The Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

12. On the rise of missionary persuasive influence and the heterarchy of power in early nineteenth-century Hawai'i, see Peter R. Mills. The anthropologist Carol MacLennan recently argued that missionary ideologies of property and free labor "established an important course of action that bred the foundation for plantation capitalism." For discussions of the role of missionary ideology in mid-nineteenth-century Hawai'i, see also Gavan Daws, Sally Engle Merry, Paul Burlin, and Jennifer Fish Kashay. Many scholars—including Adamson, J. R. McNeill, Mintz, and Rogers—have used the term "plantation system" with varying definitions. This essay uses the term to mean a culture, economy, and government policy directed toward the widespread use of land and natural resources for producing a monoculture export commodity. Mintz noted the agro-industrial nature of the plantation system: "neither mill nor field could be separately (independently) productive." As such, it demanded discipline, organization of the labor force into interchangeable units, strict scheduling in order to process perishable crops, the separation of production and consumption, and the separation of the worker from the worker's

former members of the Sandwich Islands Mission were prominent in the Hawaiian government—roughly the second quarter of the nineteenth century—their ideas and ideals about agriculture, trade, and social development influenced the formation of the plantation system. Though sugar production was erratic at this time, Hawaiian sugar exports increased from four tons in 1836 to 375 tons in 1850.<sup>13</sup> Hawai'i did not become a major exporter of sugar until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when two reciprocity treaties (1876 and 1887) and then annexation (1898) gave Hawaiian sugarcane planters duty-free access to U.S. markets. Yet it was during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century—from the mid-1820s to mid-1850s, a time characterized by many failed and undercapitalized sugar ventures—that attitudes and policies promoting sugarcane planting took hold in Hawai'i.

The ban on distilling notwithstanding, the Hawaiian plantation system was not a simple product of a unitary missionary ideology transplanted from New England.<sup>14</sup> Hawai'i marks a spot where two

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equipment. Adamson posited five components to the plantation system: relatively large size, agricultural production directed toward sale and export, the use of laborers from outside the family owner, the use of authority to organize collective action, and the investment of great capital in production processes. McNeill stressed the ecological changes resultant in the appropriation of lands by the plantation system, particularly deforestation, increased vulnerability to diseases, and soil exhaustion. Arthur McEvoy's and Donald Worster's models of agriculture in society and culture are also useful to my definition. Peter R. Mills, "Folk Housing in the Middle of the Pacific: Architectural Lime, Creolized Ideologies, and Expressions of Power in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii," in *The Materiality of Individuality: Archaeological Studies of Individual Lives*, ed. Carolyn L. White (New York: Springer, 2009), 75–91; Carol A. MacLennan, *Sovereign Sugar: Industry and Environment in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 2; Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968); Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Paul T. Burlin, *Imperial Maine and Hawai'i: Interpretive Essays in the History of Nineteenth-Century American Expansion*, (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); Jennifer Fish Kashay, "Agents of Imperialism: Missionaries and Merchants in Early-Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i," *New England Quarterly*, 80 (2007): 280–98; Adamson, *Sugar without Slaves*, 9–10; John R. McNeill, "Envisioning an Ecological Atlantic, 1500–1800," *Nova Acta Leopoldina* 114, no. 390 (2013): 21–33; Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 51–52; Rogers, *The Deepest Wounds*; Arthur F. McEvoy, "Toward an Interactive Theory of Nature and Culture: Ecology, Production, and Cognition in the California Fishing Industry," *Environmental History Review* 11, no. 4 (1987): 289–305; Donald Worster, "Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (1990): 1087–1106.

13. Robert C. Schmitt, *Historical Statistics of Hawaii* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), 418.

14. Scholars have come to question the idea of American cultural hegemony, and more often see cultural change as a combination of localized agents and influences. Petra

historical and geographic trajectories of sugarcane converged: one that took the plant in the canoes of Pacific Islanders from its likely point of origin in New Guinea to islands throughout Oceania, and another that wound through Asia, India, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Southern Europe, and the Atlantic World.<sup>15</sup> Along each of these routes, people developed different methods of cultivation, use, and signification of sugarcane. What it meant to plant sugarcane in Hawai'i in the mid-nineteenth century—and therefore what Hawai'i's sugar industry looked like—was the product of cultural encounters, adaptations, and negotiations; conscious decisions to turn to sugarcane planting for strategic purposes; and responses to ecological conditions dating back to the late eighteenth century.

The members of the Sandwich Islands Mission at first expressed antipathy toward cane planting. This antipathy contributed to social and political conflict between missionaries and those who wanted to develop commercial agricultural enterprises, including white, Chinese, and Hawaiian entrepreneurs. Hawai'i's missionaries initially supported policies to develop a society of small farmers, whose independence and industry would lead, they hoped, to Christian virtue. Gradually, however, missionaries and their allies came to embrace large-scale cane planting. The plantation system they sought was something similar to John Winthrop's invocation to the Massachusetts Bay Colony: a "City upon a hill," which placed religious morality and social commitment above the pursuit of personal gain. Missionaries sought to constrain sugarcane cultivation and use it to further a Yankee Protestant cultural agenda. The missionaries hoped to develop plantations that would conform to their religious ideals, such as sobriety. Yet the ABCFM's imported ideology underwent a process of creolization, and as challenges arose, missionary attitudes toward plantation agriculture shifted. By the early 1850s, missionaries with influential positions in government and persuasive power in Hawaiian society lent crucial support to the development of

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Goedde, "The Globalization of American Culture," in *A Companion to American Cultural History*, ed. Karen Halttunen (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008), 246–62; Arif Dirlik, "Performing the World: Reality and Representation in the Making of World Histor(ies)," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 4 (December 2005): 391–410.

15. J. H. Galloway describes the historical geography of sugar. J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).



a mode of agriculture they had previously opposed. What began as an effort to use sugarcane as a means of supporting the Sandwich Islands Mission, inducing cultural and social change among Hawaiians and promoting Hawaiian interests as the missionaries perceived them, transformed into a system of directing Hawaiian policy to promote the interests of sugarcane planters. By midcentury, political and popular opposition to distilling rum was one of the few remnants of the Sandwich Islands Mission's plantation upon a hill.

The sugarcane plantation systems of the Greater Caribbean, South America, and southern North America, had no sugarcane before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. In Hawai'i, by contrast, Hawaiians had been cultivating cane since their Polynesian ancestors brought the plant to the archipelago, sometime around 1000 CE. From possibly a few distinct imported cane cuttings, Hawaiians developed over twenty named varieties of cane, each with different properties and uses. Though pre-contact Hawaiians did not produce sugar, sugarcane played a significant role in Hawaiian diets, culture, and ecology.<sup>16</sup> The nineteenth-century Hawaiian scholar Samuel Kamakau noted that in pre-contact Hawai'i, sugarcane was an important source of sustenance during times of famine and a highly prized snack in times of plenty.<sup>17</sup> People chewed raw cane and used its juice as a food sweetener, cane juice was an ingredient in some medicines, and the juices of several different varieties of cane were used in traditional love potions. Cane stalks were fashioned into spears and burned to make a dye, the leaves served as a wall covering, and the tassels were used as mulch. The tops of cane also served as articles of amusement; Hawaiians crafted them into darts and used them to line hillside sled courses to reduce friction.<sup>18</sup>

16. S. Schenck, et al., "Genetic Diversity and Relationships in Native Hawaiian *Saccharum officinarum* Sugarcane," *Journal of Heredity* 95 (2004): 327–31.

17. Samuel M. Kamakau, *The Works of the People of Old: Na Hana a ka Po'e Kahiko*, trans. Mary Kawena Pukui, ed. Dorothy B. Barrère (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1976), 39.

18. Works by E.S. Handy, E.G. Handy, and Mary Kawena Pukui, and by Beatrice Krauss document these uses of cane. Archibald Menzies is the only source that notes the use of cane trash as mulch. According to the missionary William Richards, dry sledding was a favorite pastime of Hawaiian chiefs. E. S. Handy, E. G. Handy, and Mary Kawena Pukui, *Native Planters in Old Hawaii: Their Life, Lore, and Environment* (Bishop Museum Press, 1972), 187; Beatrice H. Krauss, *Plants in Hawaiian Culture* (Honolulu: University of

Hawaiians grew cane in dedicated fields and small home gardens, on the fringes of irrigated taro pondfields, and on the embankments surrounding dryland plots. Sugarcane thus played an important role in the Hawaiian agricultural complex by supporting the cultivation of Hawai'i's staple crops. Lining pondfields, cane acted as a windbreak and absorbed taro paddies' seepage. In dryland field systems, Hawaiian farmers used sugarcane to create a micro-orographic effect: rows of cane planted between fields and perpendicular to the trade winds pulled moisture from the air and onto the upwind sides of their fields, effectively irrigating taro and sweet potatoes planted amid the cane.<sup>19</sup>

Hawaiian cultivation of sugarcane took on new relevance in 1778, when Captain James Cook first arrived at Hawai'i. At the time of first contact between Europeans and Hawaiians, European sugar consumption was increasing and European explorers expressed interest in the development of potential sources of sugar production. The world sugar economy was a dominant force driving tropical colonialism. In 1776, Adam Smith noted that the profits of sugarcane cultivation were "generally much greater than those of any other cultivation that is known either in Europe or America."<sup>20</sup> Demand for and production of sugar rose throughout the eighteenth century. The 1791 revolution in Saint-Domingue crippled sugar production in one of the most important Atlantic sugar colonies, raising prices as well as concerns over the stability of plantation systems based upon slave labor. Though distance would have precluded any significant shift away from Atlantic sugar producers, interest in promoting sugarcane cultivation in other regions—such as the British East India Company's efforts in Bengal—grew.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning with Captain Cook, haole visitors to Hawai'i expressed interest in the islands as a potential source of sugar and made particular

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Hawai'i Press, 1993), 68, 89, 95; Archibald Menzies, *Hawaii Nei 128 Years Ago*, ed. William Frederick Wilson (Honolulu, 1920), 76; William Richards to Charles Wilkes, March 15, 1841, in Marshall Sahlins and Dorothy Barrère, eds., "William Richards on Hawaiian Culture and Political Conditions of the Islands in 1841," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 7 (1973): 18–40.

19. T.N. Ladefoged et al., "Agricultural Potential and Actualized Development in Hawai'i: An Airborne LiDAR Survey of the Leeward Kohala Field System (Hawai'i Island)," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 38 (2011): 3607.

20. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, vol. 2 (New York, P. F. Collier & Son, 1902), 82.

21. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry*, 198–201.

note of cane growing in both cultivated and wild settings.<sup>22</sup> Archibald Menzies, surgeon and naturalist for George Vancouver's 1792–94 expeditions, reflected in his journal, "In short it might be well worth the attention of Government to make the experiment and settle these islands by planters from the West Indies, men of humanity, industry and experienced abilities in the exercise of their art would ere in a short time be enabled to manufacture sugar and rum from luxuriant fields of cane equal if not superior to the produce of our West India plantations."<sup>23</sup> The Russian explorer Urey Lisiansky similarly, though more succinctly, observed that the production of sugar and rum could "yield a tolerable revenue."<sup>24</sup> These men envisioned Hawai'i as a colonial sugar and rum producer in a mercantilist system, cultivating cane not as a fringe crop in the Polynesian agricultural complex but as a commodity to supply distant markets.

Growing sugarcane and making sugar are two very different things. While Hawaiians had a great deal of experience with the former they had no knowledge of the latter. Turning sugarcane into sugar demands disciplined labor, equipment, and expertise. In the early nineteenth century, sugar production was an arduous process that, as the anthropologist Sidney Mintz argues, wedded the field to the factory and brute labor to artisanal expertise.<sup>25</sup> Mature Hawaiian cane is about fifteen to twenty feet tall, with narrow, serrated-edge leaves between five and six feet long projecting from the cane. It was necessary to cut the cane's tough stalk close to the ground, where the sugar content is highest. And, because the sucrose in cane degrades soon after cutting, it was also important to mill the cane within twenty-four hours of harvesting. Once the cane was pressed, sugar boilers heated the extracted juice in a series of cauldrons in which water was evaporated and impurities removed. A sugar master watched the boiling liquid closely to determine when the liquid had reached the point at which sucrose crystals could form. Mill hands then moved this muddy-looking substance to large cases where it cooled and formed crystalline sugar and molasses. Once the mixture

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22. Menzies, *Hawaii Nei 128 Years Ago*, 75, 77; Levi Chamberlain, Journal, TS, vol. 9, 18 July 1828, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library, Honolulu (hereafter HMCS).

23. Menzies, *Hawaii Nei 128 Years Ago*, 79.

24. Urey Lisiansky, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1803, 4, 5, & 6 . . .* (London: John Booth and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1814), 128.

25. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 46–52.

was cool, workers transferred it to vessels that drained the molasses from the sugar, a process that took weeks. After draining, the sugar was ready to be packaged for storage, shipment, and sale.

Sugarcane is also the primary component of rum. Rum may be distilled either from the skimmings and molasses that are by-products of sugar manufacturing or from the less-processed juice of the sugarcane.<sup>26</sup> Cane juice rum, which requires less specialized equipment or technical expertise than sugar production, was the first step away from the Hawaiian system of sugarcane cultivation and use. Hawaiians produced other fermented beverages, but there is no record of using sugarcane to make alcohol until the advent of European distilling knowledge and metal containers.<sup>27</sup> The voyager John Turnbull, who sailed throughout the Pacific from the year 1800 to 1804, observed that in Hawai'i, King Kamehameha I employed "Europeans settled in his dominions to extract spirits from the sugar canes, which grow there of an excellent quality."<sup>28</sup>

Similar enterprises followed in which foreign entrepreneurs collaborated with *ali'i* (members of the Hawaiian chiefly class) who could control land and labor. From about 1812 to 1825, Don Francisco de Paula Marín, a Spaniard with knowledge of horticulture, winemaking, and distilling, operated a sugar mill in Honolulu, possibly in partnership with the King.<sup>29</sup> According to an 1875 essay by Thomas Thrum, a publisher and antiquarian based in Honolulu, sugar and molasses production, "doubtless with the view of rum making," were extensive in early nineteenth-century Hawai'i.<sup>30</sup> However, these cases of sugar and rum production were limited to small

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26. There is little regulation of the term "rum," and it has been applied to alcohol from a number of different sources. The French made separate designations for cane-juice rum (*rhum agricole*) and molasses rum (*rhum industriel*).

27. Distilling technology was not applied only to sugarcane. The use of rudimentary stills to distill the root of the ti plant was common among *ali'i*. Archibald Campbell, *A Voyage Round the World, from 1806 to 1812*. . . 2d Amer. ed. (New York: Broderick and Ritter, 1819), 133.

28. John Turnbull, *A Voyage Round the World: In the Years 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804*. . . vol. 2 (London: Printed for Richard Phillips by T. Gillet, 1805), 66.

29. Robert L. Cushing, "Beginnings of Sugar Production in Hawai'i," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 19 (1985): 17–34.

30. Before he turned to publishing, Thomas Thrum spent five years in the 1860s working in the sugar industry. Thomas G. Thrum, "Notes on the History of the Sugar Industry of the Hawaiian Islands," *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1875* (Honolulu, 1876), 35.

geographic areas, started and stopped at the whims of the chiefs, and were directed toward local consumption or small trade.

When the first ABCFM missionaries arrived at Hawai'i in 1820, they found these small sugar and rum-making operations, as well as other enterprises directed toward supplying visiting whalers. Missionaries also observed the intensive extraction of Hawaiian sandalwood, which was highly valued in China. The Sandwich Islands Mission soon developed an adversarial relationship with resident haole merchants, who accused the missionaries of stifling business through their efforts to direct Hawaiians' attention to religious rather than worldly matters. However, Hawai'i's missionaries were a more ideologically diverse and flexible lot than their detractors often acknowledged. Significant differences in theology and degree of commitment, as well as more mundane generational differences, characterized the missionaries, who arrived in the islands as twelve separate companies over the course of twenty-eight years.<sup>31</sup> Geography also kept the missionaries apart: most worked in their own isolated mission stations across the archipelago and only convened as a group in Honolulu every year or so for the annual meeting of the Sandwich Islands Mission. The ABCFM itself was also changing in ideology and practice throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Similar cases of English Protestant settler societies turning to sugarcane planting occurred in the Greater Caribbean. Karen Ordahl Kupperman describes the English Puritans who established the short-lived Providence Island colony in 1630. Anglican missionaries with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), originally in Barbados to convert slaves, became planters and slave owners themselves. As a result, argues Travis Glasson, the SPG's ideology concerning slavery softened to the point that it damaged the organization's credibility. Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

32. Most ABCFM missionaries were Congregationalists while others were Presbyterians. Daws wrote that the ABCFM and Sandwich Islands Mission were more concerned with saving souls than with any particular doctrinal affiliation. For an account of early missionary theology, see Sandra E. Wagner. Paul William Harris offers an informative account of both ideological diversity within Sandwich Islands Mission and changes within the ABCFM. The motivations and attitudes of early nineteenth-century American missionaries were often complex and varied, according to Andrew C. Isenberg and others. Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 62; Sandra E. Wagner, "Mission and Motivation: The Theology of the Early American Mission in Hawai'i," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 19 (1985): 62–70; Paul William Harris, *Nothing but Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Andrew C. Isenberg, "'To See Inside of an Indian': Missionaries and Dakotas in the Minnesota Borderlands," in *Conversion: Old World and*

Missionary attitudes toward sugarcane cultivation and agriculture in general were ambivalent and laden with tension. On one hand, in the 1820s, the ABCFM altered its theoretical approach to missionary work by emphasizing “Christianizing” over “civilizing” the people they hoped to convert.<sup>33</sup> Missionaries were to maintain a narrow focus on preaching and promoting religious morality, and they were to avoid involvement in secular and political affairs. On the other hand, in the missionaries’ minds, Christianity and “civilization” often went hand in hand as two interrelated attributes of the same culture. This broader attitude toward missionary work found expression in the original mandate of the Sandwich Islands Mission. Reverend Hiram Bingham—a member of the first company of missionaries who also became influential among Hawai‘i’s ruling chiefs—wrote that the object of the Sandwich Islands Mission was not only to turn Hawaiians to “the service and enjoyment of the living God,” but also to “extend among them the more useful arts and usages of civilized and Christianized society, and to fill . . . those important islands with schools and churches, fruitful fields, and pleasant dwellings.”<sup>34</sup> Further supporting the mission’s interest in “fruitful fields,” Daniel Chamberlain, a farmer, accompanied the first company of missionaries as a non-ordained assistant missionary to help develop agriculture and trade among Hawaiians. However, Chamberlain’s supposed Hawaiian pupils knew more about tropical agriculture than he did and, “there not being a demand for his labor as a farmer,” Chamberlain left Hawai‘i.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever their internal differences and however they distinguished between Christianization and civilization, the ABCFM missionaries shared a common set of values that, as the anthropologist Sally Engle Merry notes, “prefigure the values of industrial capitalism”: industry, thrift, self-governance, self-restraint, and commitment to the enduring, property-owning family.<sup>36</sup> The tension between narrowly religious and broadly cultural goals of the missionaries became

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New, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 218–40.

33. Harris, *Nothing but Christ*.

34. Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands*, 60–61.

35. Rufus Anderson, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Hawaiian Islands*, vol. 2 (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1875), 380.

36. Harris discusses the false dichotomization of “Christianization” and “civilization.” Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 225–26; Harris, *Nothing but Christ*, 11.

more complicated as the missionaries established close relationships with Hawai'i's ruling chiefs. In 1825, missionaries had converted Ka'ahumanu, the *kuhina nui* (approximate equivalent of a regent or prime minister) of the kingdom and the head of a powerful elite Maui family group, along with other politically powerful ali'i. As a Christian, Ka'ahumanu implemented laws that conformed to her religious morality, especially concerning sexual behavior, Sabbath observance, and sobriety. Apart from a brief struggle for political power following Ka'ahumanu's death in 1832, ABCFM missionaries remained close to Hawai'i's rulers, first as informal teachers and advisors, and then in the 1830s and 1840s as formal government officials.<sup>37</sup>

Close personal relationships with Hawai'i's ruling ali'i were crucial for agricultural enterprise because those chiefs controlled Hawaiian lands and could exact labor from Hawaiian *maka'ainana* (commoners). Hawai'i's rulers distributed lands in units of administrative control based on descending social and political rank; the units ranged in area from entire islands (*mokupuni*) to progressively smaller regions (*moku*, *ahupua'a*, and *'ili*). Commoners resided on lands on the basis of family history and the fulfillment of obligations to chiefs in labor and goods. All lands remained under royal control; all subordinate land rights were revocable at a chief's or the monarch's will.<sup>38</sup> The cooperation of governing chiefs was therefore crucial to any business that needed secure access to land, natural resources, and a large labor force.

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37. The missionary William Richards left the mission in 1838 to become a government advisor and ambassador; Gerrit Judd, a missionary doctor became Minister of Finance in 1842; the missionary Lorrin Andrews became a judge in 1845; and the missionary Richard Armstrong became Minister of Public Instruction in 1848. Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i*, 40–50; Patrick V. Kirch and Marshall Sahlins, *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawai'i*, vol. 1, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1994), 120–22.

38. The Constitution of 1840 described all Hawaiian lands as historically held and managed by the monarch on behalf of the people. David Malo addresses Hawaiian land tenure, property rights, and labor. Marshall Sahlins notes that hierarchical power over land and labor was not absolute or uncontested. Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa noted that commoners had many rights and protections within the Hawaiian system and argued that social order was in many ways based on reciprocal relations. Nevertheless, ultimate power over land and labor rested with the monarchy and its allied chiefs. David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawai'i)*, trans. Nathaniel B. Emerson (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co., Ltd., 1903); Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*; Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992); Patrick V. Kirch, *How Chiefs Became Kings: Divine Kingship and the Rise of Archaic States in Ancient Hawai'i* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

In the 1820s, the Hawaiian economy, chiefly attention, and commoners' labor were primarily focused on the sandalwood trade. Sugar making in the 1820s was so rudimentary that missionaries and the government rarely gave much notice to the enterprise, and it continued as before with foreigners and individual chiefs partnering for small operations. In February 1826, John Wilkinson, a man who arrived in Hawai'i in 1825 with experience planting cane in the British West Indies, was in the process of erecting a watermill for a sugarcane plantation at Mānoa on the outskirts of Honolulu. Despite the setback of losing part of his mill's dam to a rain swell, Wilkinson told Levi Chamberlain (no relation to Daniel Chamberlain), the mission's secular agent, that in another six months he expected the approximately six-and-one-quarter-acres he had planted in cane to produce ten tons of sugar.<sup>39</sup> Chamberlain did not record how Wilkinson came up with his estimate for sugar production, but it seems like a highly optimistic one. Calculations for sugar production in Jamaica at the turn of the nineteenth century posited about one hundred and sixty tons of sugar per three hundred acres of cane for the average plantation on that island—just over one ton per two acres.<sup>40</sup> Conditions were significantly different on Jamaica and Hawai'i: On the one hand, Jamaica's soil and forests had been depleted. On the other hand, its plantations had greater economies of scale, more advanced milling equipment, more experienced mill operators, and a larger enslaved labor force. By the 1840s, other Hawaiian plantations with better mills than Wilkinson's were producing an average of one ton per acre.<sup>41</sup> Such optimistic predictions of early Hawaiian planters suggest just how out of touch they were with the ways of the sugar industry.

In Wilkinson's case, an over-optimistic view of planting gave way to a much more somber reality: he died that September, and

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39. Other sources, such as Thomas G. Thrum, indicate that John Wilkinson's plantation may have been as large as about one hundred acres. The discrepancy may be attributed to the area of land under his control and the area of cane under cultivation at that time. Chamberlain, *Journal*, February 24, 1826; Thrum, "Notes on the History of the Sugar Industry of the Hawaiian Islands," *Hawaiian Almanac*, 1875.

40. Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British West Indies*, vol. 2 (London: T. Miller, 1819), 287–90 cited in Noel Deer, *The History of Sugar*, vol. 2 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1949), 333–34.

41. *Honolulu Polynesian*, August 1, 1846, 42; J. B. De Fiennes, Report on Koloa Plantation, June 4, 1845, Appendix U, no. 4; *Report of the Proceedings and Evidence in the Arbitration between the King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands and Messrs. Ladd & Co.* (Honolulu: Government Press, 1846), Appendix 102.



management of the plantation transferred to Boki, the governor of O'ahu. Boki employed over one hundred Hawaiian laborers at a rate of two dollars per week at his plantation and was also able to have a good cart road built, yet he could not keep the mill working. Chamberlain visited again in November of 1826 and found that the mill was only able to boil enough sugarcane juice to make half a barrel of sugar.<sup>42</sup>

Boki, however, did not abandon the mill. He partnered with a group of haole Honolulu merchants, and the plantation soon had about one hundred acres in cane planted and a distillery built.<sup>43</sup> The distillery attracted particular missionary attention. In February 1827, Chamberlain recorded in his journal that "a hula or native dance has been performed this afternoon at the sugar plantation Manoa, attended by the King and others as spectators. The performers were we are told persons belonging to Honolulu—The amusement was connected with intemperance. Just at evening we saw a company returning on horse back [*sic*]—some of them apparently the worse for liquor. In the company were several foreigners."<sup>44</sup> Chamberlain and the missionaries of the ABCFM came from the same schools and religious backgrounds as those who fervently called for total abstinence from alcohol in the 1810s. These early temperance advocates saw alcohol as a civic, moral, and religious scourge.<sup>45</sup> The missionaries shared this view and also perceived in liquor a potent threat to Kānaka Maoli health, industry, and chances of acquiring Christian civilization.

In this instance, political divisions among the Hawaiian elite doomed Boki's operation and facilitated a temperance attitude toward sugar. Ka'ahumanu saw Boki as a political rival and sought to limit his wealth and influence; Ka'ahumanu's Christianity and close ties with the missionaries gave her the justification to take action against the plantation and distillery.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Reverend Bingham saw the distillery as a major threat to his mission. Bingham

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42. Chamberlain, Journal, 30 November 1826, HMCS.

43. Daws, "The High Chief Boki: A Biographical Study in Early Nineteenth Century Hawaiian History," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 75, no. 1 (1966): 79.

44. Chamberlain, Journal, 9 February 1827, HMCS.

45. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 191.

46. In addition to Kirch and Sahlins, see also Kashay. Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, vol. 1, 67–81; Kashay, "Native, Foreigner, Missionary, Priest: Western Imperialism and Religious Conflict in Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Hawai'i," *Cercles* 5 (2002): 3–10.

argued that “the culture of the cane, tobacco, and the poppy, is right, only where the probability is that the result will be *good*, and should not be encouraged where the probability is strong that the result will be evil.”<sup>47</sup> He encouraged Ka‘ahumanu to have Boki’s cane plantation ripped up and the distillery razed. Bingham’s argument subordinated the agricultural and economic development of the islands to the missionaries’ religious morality.

Other missionaries were not quite so absolutist as Bingham and were willing to look upon sugarcane as more than just the precursor ingredient to rum. Some missionaries even took to growing cane and making sugar. These efforts were amateurish, geared toward local consumption rather than trade, and certainly not aimed at any market beyond Hawai‘i. In January 1829, Joseph Goodrich processed a crop of sugarcane and produced “probably more [sugar and molasses] than I shall need for my own family.” Goodrich’s mill was “one of my own construction consisting of 3 upright wooden cylinders about 14 inches in diameter . . . I suppose similar to sugar mills in general: mine however is turned by hand.”<sup>48</sup> Though probably well suited for Goodrich’s aims, this was a simple design for a mill. By the early nineteenth century, most sugar producers had replaced the vertical mill for a layout with three rollers arranged horizontally; water or draught animals provided the necessary force. Goodrich’s mill would have extracted only a fraction of the cane juice—and thus produced only a fraction of the sugar—that contemporary mills were capable of.

Crude though Goodrich’s mill may have been, his and similar projects were geared toward inculcating a New England Protestant ideal of virtuous industry among Kānaka Maoli, either through example or by enlisting their labor directly. In their mission station reports, missionaries throughout the archipelago recorded their efforts to teach American farming practices. Many Hawaiians were adept farmers, but missionaries complained that the work required to grow the staple taro was so slight, and that the Hawaiian environment was so fertile, that Hawaiians could easily subsist with hardly any physical effort.<sup>49</sup> The missionaries did not simply want Hawaiians

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47. Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands*, 340

48. Joseph Goodrich, Journal, TS, 9 January 1829, HMCS.

49. These arguments were clearly based on cultural constructions that dissociated natives with industry. Focusing on the ease with which taro grows ignores the labor involved. Agricultural labor was valorized in Hawaiian society. King Kamehameha I

to be agriculturalists (they already were); the missionaries wanted Hawaiians to grow marketable foods like sugarcane so that they might acquire the means to purchase the consumer goods that would help them meet missionary standards of clothing and furniture, and thereby be able to live in moral Christian fashion.

While the missionaries encouraged small farming, their views on commercial plantation agriculture were lukewarm. In the minutes of the 1835 annual meeting, the missionaries resolved, “As to the practicability of introducing improvements in agriculture, we believe that little can be done at present . . . we should avoid, as much as possible, becoming entangled with secular cares. . . . Nevertheless, we regard the subject of sufficient importance to warrant us to use at least an indirect influence in encouraging the growth of cotton, coffee, sugar cane, &c. &c. that the people may have more business on their hands, and increase their temporal comforts.”<sup>50</sup> The following year, the mission requested that the ABCFM send agricultural and industrial teachers so that the Hawaiians might take steps toward becoming small farmers. The mission leadership was wary of deviating far into secular matters yet also eager to improve material conditions of the Hawaiians, and at least tacitly recognized that agriculture was not a wholly secular affair.<sup>51</sup>

That same year, however, some missionaries seemed willing to move beyond indirect influence to promote sugarcane planting. The missionaries, allied with the Hawaiian government, arranged a fifty-year lease worth \$100,000 for plantation lands at Kōloa on the island of Kaua‘i, as well as the ability to hire *maka‘āinana*, to Peter Brinsmade and his firm Ladd & Co. Brinsmade, a Connecticut native and a graduate of Bowdoin College and Andover Seminary, advocated sugarcane planting as a means of promoting industry, morality, and temperance among Hawaiians.<sup>52</sup> Brinsmade’s religious background was crucial to his success—it helped convince the missionaries that Koloa Plantation would uplift, rather than oppress,

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famously joined the commoners in preparing taro pondfields. Campbell, *A Voyage Round the World, from 1806 to 1812*, 115.

50. *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Meeting of the Sandwich Islands’ Mission, Held at Honolulu, June and July, 1835* (Honolulu: Mission Press, 1835), 19.

51. Merze Tate, “Sandwich Island Missionaries: The First American Point Four Agents,” *Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society* (Honolulu, 1962): 7–23.

52. *Honolulu Polynesian*, April 17, 1847 and April 24, 1847.

its employees and Hawaiian society.<sup>53</sup> The missionaries considered Brinsmade “a pious merchant” and expected that “he will be a great benefit to the nation” through the employment of Hawaiians on Ladd & Co.’s plantation.<sup>54</sup>

One of the factors that lent Brinsmade and Ladd & Co. the aura of piety was their opposition to alcohol production. Ladd & Co.’s embrace of temperance carried great weight for the missionaries. The lease between the Hawaiian government and Ladd & Co. for the Koloa plantation stipulated that alcohol would neither be manufactured nor consumed on any of the lands for the life of the lease. Subsequent leases for sugarcane plantations continued to ban not only the production of alcohol but also its consumption, importation, and sale.<sup>55</sup>

That Ladd & Co. was willing to forego rum manufacture was no small sacrifice. In the Caribbean, rum was a crucial part of sugarcane planters’ livelihood, and distilleries were found on most plantations. Caribbean cane planters found that the production and sale of alcohol was smart business. Made from sugarcane syrup or low-grade molasses, rum did not interfere with or preclude sugar production. By weight and volume, rum was worth more than sugar, and it improved and increased in value with age, so shipping rum from sugar island distilleries to European and American markets was a profitable enterprise. Moreover, rum lasted longer in storage than sugar, so a planter had more freedom to wait for an advantageous time to sell his rum than he did with sugar.<sup>56</sup> A distiller in Hawai‘i, a bustling center of Pacific trade and whaling with hundreds of ships

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53. Alexander Simpson described the relationship between the Sandwich Islands Mission and Ladd & Co. Alexander Simpson, *The Sandwich Islands: Progress of Events Since Their Discovery by Captain Cook. Their Occupation by Lord George Paulet. Their Value and Importance*. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1843), 33.

54. Juliette Cooke to her sister, 20 August 1839, TS, Missionary Letters collection, HMCS.

55. “Lease of Koloa Plantation,” July 29, 1835, Appendix A, no. 3 in *Report of the Proceedings and Evidence in the Arbitration between the King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands and Messrs. Ladd & Co.* Appendix p. 15. See also *ibid.*, “Kamehameha III Lease of Land at Koloa to John Stetson,” January 1, 1841, Appendix A, no. 12, Appendix p. 25; “Contract for Grants and Leases of Land,” November 24, 1841, Appendix B, no. 1, Appendix p. 31.

56. Historians of sugarcane plantation systems—including Frederick H. Smith, Richard S. Dunn, and Stuart B. Schwartz—have all noted the importance of rum for sugarcane planters. Smith, *Caribbean Rum*; Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 196–97; Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 121, 163, 214.

and thousands of sailors visiting annually, would likely have been able to prosper by making rum.

If Ladd & Co. helped to convince some missionaries to embrace sugarcane planting, economics in the United States provided further motivation. A sharp downturn in the U.S. economy known as the Panic of 1837 withered charitable donations to the ABCFM, which in turn pressed its missionaries in Hawai'i into tighter budgets. Several missionaries reassessed the ABCFM's policy of supporting its missionaries through a common-stock system and determined to find ways to supplement their income. A few even left the mission over differences concerning funding.<sup>57</sup> Some others decided that sugarcane planting was not as bad as they had previously thought. Reverend Bingham, for example, who was one of the most vocal critics of cane planting, began to cultivate the crop in 1838. The missionary Amos Starr Cooke noted with some amusement that Bingham and his wife "made several inquiries . . . about the sugar cane as they had commenced planting."<sup>58</sup> With the example of Ladd & Co. and the threat of disappearing support from the ABCFM, the Bingham and their compatriots turned increasingly toward sugar.

Missionaries saw that raising sugarcane could provide an opportunity to become less reliant on the ABCFM. In an 1838 essay in the *Hawaiian Spectator*, a short-lived journal edited by Brinsmade and published by the mission press, Ladd counted twenty-two sugar mills in operation and noted that "it is a very common opinion that sugar will become a leading article of export."<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Reverend John Diell, chaplain of the Honolulu Mariner's Church, looking forward to improved transportation across the Central American isthmus, wrote for the *Spectator* that agricultural commerce would blossom in Hawai'i.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, missionaries with concerns for their continued support could observe the development of several sugar operations.

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57. Harris, *Nothing but Christ*, 59–69; Kashay, "Agents of Imperialism," 288–94.

58. Amos Starr Cooke, Journal, TS, 7 November 1838, HMCS.

59. Bob Dye examines how the *Hawaiian Spectator* and its partner organization, the Sandwich Island Institute, demonstrated a new, but fragile, degree of cooperation between *haole* entrepreneurs and missionaries in Hawai'i. William Ladd, "Remarks upon the Natural Resources of the Sandwich Islands: Read Before the Sandwich Islands Institute, January 30, 1838," *Hawaiian Spectator*, April 1838, 76; Bob Dye, "'A Memoria of What the People Were': The Sandwich Island Institute and *Hawaiian Spectator*," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 31 (1997): 53–69.

60. John Diell, "Sketch of Honolulu," *Hawaiian Spectator*, April 1838, 83–92.

Chinese sugar manufacturers partnered with Hawaiian ali'i to establish several mills, and the governors of Hawai'i Island and Maui both owned sugarcane plantations.<sup>61</sup> Hawaiian commoners were also early sugar entrepreneurs. Two of the three sugar mills operating in Lāhainā, Maui in 1837, for example, were owned by maka'āinana.<sup>62</sup> With Ladd & Co. joining these diverse sugar producers, missionaries saw the economic potential of sugarcane at a time when they needed to secure their finances.

Koloa was one of the largest and—with the help of missionary and government allies—best-funded sugarcane plantations, but the predominant model for sugar production was smaller-scale. Missionary Richard Armstrong wrote that “the multitude . . . cultivate sugarcane,” under arrangement with mill owners.<sup>63</sup> Providing crucial instruction for those who might want to venture into sugar production, a letter to the *Spectator* described and diagramed a Chinese sugar mill formerly in operation on Waimea, Kaua'i. However, the letter writer maintained a collectivist view. The author lamented the failure “for the interest of all concerned”—that is, cultivators and mill operators alike—“to keep the mill in operation.”<sup>64</sup>

Some missions developed a reliance on sugarcane cultivation and simultaneously began to espouse qualified entry into the market through small-scale agriculture. Missionaries recognized that they needed commerce and that sugarcane cultivation using congregant labor presented an opportunity to advance their goals. In 1839 the congregation at Wai'oli, Kaua'i, for example, planted seven acres of sugarcane and directed the proceeds of the crop's sale toward building a meetinghouse.<sup>65</sup> In a second essay for the *Spectator*, Diell discussed the mixed nature of commerce generally, with explicit mention of the Hawaiian sugar trade: “The command is, ‘Go, disciple all nations.’ But how is the missionary to reach these nations? On the wings of the wind, by a miracle? or on the wings of commerce?”

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61. Peggy Kai, “Chinese Settlers in the Village of Hilo before 1852,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 8 (1974): 39–75.

62. Dwight Baldwin, “Report of Lahaina Station, 1837,” TS, Hawaiian Mission Station Reports, HMCS.

63. Richard Armstrong, “Journal of Mr. Armstrong on the Island of Maui,” *Missionary Herald*, vol. 34, July 1838, 249.

64. H., “Chinese Method of Manufacturing Sugar from the Cane,” *Hawaiian Spectator*, January 1839, 113–15.

65. “Sandwich Islands: Report of the Mission made at the General Meeting May, 1839,” *Missionary Herald*, vol. 36, June 1840, 224.

Yet Diell also decried the negative influences of commerce, particularly through the spread of liquor. “Commerce,” Diell continued, “while she continues to traffick in ardent spirits . . . will not bear the scrutiny of the great law of right.”<sup>66</sup> Commercial agriculture, when directed with piety—such as for the construction of a church—could be embraced by the missionaries.

The Kōloa mission station report for 1839 affirmed the initial faith in Ladd & Co. The mission happily reported that congregation members were improving their homes, paid greater attention to “decency in personal appearance,” and maintained a better “estimate of time” than they did in previous years. The station report attributed this change to the example and employment offered by the plantation proprietors and argued that if other prospective planters like Ladd & Co. would be allowed to establish themselves, “the fields of Koloa would be crowned with a rich & abundant harvest, the inhabitants be clad in decent & comfortable garments, lodged in commodious houses, fed on wholesome food, & merit the name of an industrious people.”<sup>67</sup> Koloa Plantation was becoming a crucial tool in the missionary project of, in their words, civilizing the Hawaiian people.

Koloa maintained a positive reputation among haole residents of Hawai‘i in the quality of sugar produced, treatment of laborers, and moral influence, yet the predominating sentiment among missionaries and government remained suspicious of large-scale planting. The missionaries “feared the introduction of many foreigners with great capital. They had no fear from the establishment at Koloa, but from similar ones in other hands they had fears.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, members of the Hawaiian ruling class prioritized small farming over planting as a means of uplift for common Hawaiians. King Kamehameha III (Kauikeaouli) established a mill at Wailuku, Maui in 1840 and contracted with Hawaiians to grow one-acre parcels of cane.<sup>69</sup> The Hawaiian crown also partnered with Ladd & Co. and other planters to encourage commoners to grow cane on shares, much

66. Diell, “Commerce,” *Hawaiian Spectator*, July 1838, 307, 314–15.

67. Koloa Station Report, May 1839, TS, HMCS (emphasis in the original).

68. Testimony of Richards, August 27, 1846, *Report of the Proceedings and Evidence in the Arbitration between the King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands and Messrs. Ladd & Co.*, 72.

69. “Agreement between the King and Those who Plant by the Acre in Wailuku” September 23, 1840, Interior-Misc., Hawai‘i State Archives, Honolulu.

like independent farmers. Leases obligated planters to cart and mill cane grown on nearby government lands and evenly split the proceeds of that sugar.<sup>70</sup> The goal of the missionaries, haole government advisers, and the monarchy—which had tight control over land and labor and thus could effectively block the development of plantations—was small cane farming and contracted agreements between farmers and mill owners.

Missionary-led sugar projects multiplied and improved: in 1840 at Hilo, Hawai'i Island, a cane plantation collective produced about 5,400 pounds of sugar and 400 gallons of molasses, and used its proceeds to support the mission's boarding school.<sup>71</sup> At 'Ewa, O'ahu, Reverend Artemas Bishop and O'ahu Governor Mataio Kekūanā'oa established a mill together. They agreed that locals who supplied the mill with cane would receive half of the mill's profits; the other half of the profits were to pay for milling expenses and the remaining profits were to be split between the owners and mill operator. Bishop wrote that the mill "has been undertaken not with a view to the emoluments of the business, which are altogether uncertain, but solely to encourage industry and enterprise among the people by affording them the opportunity to obtain the avails of their labors." Bishop was right not to go into the sugar business for profits: the plantation was far from a success. Bishop and Kekūanā'oa sought to sell the mill at a loss but could not find a buyer. They could not even retain a manager, and Bishop himself was forced to run the mill.<sup>72</sup>

Ladd & Co. failed as well and in sensational fashion. A labor strike in 1840 hurt Koloa's finances and undercut its image as a tool for Christianizing maka'āinana, and in 1841 Ladd & Co. overextended itself and could not repay its debts. Planters traded accusations and recriminations with the government and the Sandwich Islands Mission. Brinsmade, once close to those in power, established an opposition press and used it to vilify his former allies.

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70. "Contract for Grants and Leases of Land," November 24, 1841, Appendix B, no. 1 in *Report of the Proceedings and Evidence in the Arbitration between the King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands and Messrs. Ladd & Co.*, Appendix p. 31.

71. *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Meeting of Sandwich Islands Mission, Held at Honolulu, May and June, 1840* (O'ahu: Mission Press, 1840), 10.

72. Artemas Bishop, "Report for the Station at Ewa [Oahu], May 1839," TS, Hawaiian Mission Station Reports, HMCS; Chamberlain, *Journal*, 26 January 1841, HMCS.



A protracted episode of lawsuits and arbitration became a public spectacle.<sup>73</sup> The Ladd & Co. debacle may have scared missionaries away from involvement in planting, or at least from large-scale agribusiness. The missionaries might have justifiably wondered whether a Calvinist sugarcane plantation could succeed while maintaining its religious principles, and whether a group of seminarians from the northeastern United States was equipped to branch out into such a foreign business.

With the experiment of the “pious merchants” at Kōloa a failure, it was difficult for missionaries to directly involve themselves in constraining what others saw as Hawai‘i’s natural agricultural potential. Missionary allies in Honolulu’s business community began to advocate greater encouragement of foreign planters, demonstrating what the scholar of Hawaiian journalism Helen Chapin called “the closing gap between religious and secular American interests.”<sup>74</sup> James Jackson Jarves, a native Bostonian who in 1840 established the *Polynesian*, an English-language weekly newspaper with missionary support, ran regular editorials in favor of government policies to build up Hawai‘i’s sugar industry. The first series of the paper only lasted a year, but the *Polynesian* reemerged in 1844, now sponsored by the government as its official media organ. In the second issue of the new series, Jarves wrote that the mission of the *Polynesian* included the dissemination of agricultural information, “to develop [*sic*] the resources of soil or talent which are now lying to a great extent fallow.”<sup>75</sup> Jarves frequently ran pieces praising the missionaries and the cause of Calvinist morality, but he also argued for government support of planters. Celebrating Hawai‘i’s natural resources, Jarves wrote, “[N]othing but lack of energy will prevent us from becoming the West Indies of the North Pacific.”<sup>76</sup>

In the eyes of Jarves and many missionaries, Kānaka Maoli lacked the energy and industriousness necessary to succeed at

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73. Helen Geracimos Chapin describes Peter Brinsmade’s role and aim in founding *The Sandwich Island News*. Helen Geracimos Chapin, “Newspapers of Hawai‘i 1834 to 1903: From ‘He Liona’ to the Pacific Cable,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 18 (1984); *Honolulu Polynesian*, April 17, 1847 and April 24, 1847; *Report of the Proceedings and Evidence in the Arbitration between the King and Government of the Hawaiian Islands and Messrs. Ladd & Co.*

74. Chapin, *Shaping History: The Role of Newspapers in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), 23–28.

75. *Honolulu Polynesian*, June 1, 1844.

76. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1844.

sugarcane planting. This assessment reflected racist and ethnocentric attitudes. Although Hawaiians had been cultivating sugarcane for centuries, and their Polynesian forebears considered it an important enough plant to transport on their migration to Hawai'i, haole criticized Kānaka Maoli as poor planters who failed to properly manage their cane fields. At the McLane plantation on Maui, where the government contracted to have locals plant cane on shares, Jarves wrote that the Hawaiians' cane fields were "very indifferently cared for, choked with weeds and drying up, although fit for grinding. Another portion was in better order—but the native system of agriculture is careless in the extreme."<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in an 1846–47 survey of missionaries conducted by the Minister of Foreign Relations, the missionaries generally agreed that agriculture suffered from what they perceived as Hawaiian indolence.<sup>78</sup>

Yet the haole perception of Hawaiians as poor agriculturalists was tied to significant differences between Hawaiian and haole cultures of cane growing. Sugarcane was a part of what the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins called the "poi economy": a system that prioritized incremental harvesting and frequent trade among agricultural regions over highly concentrated harvests.<sup>79</sup> Because sugarcane degrades rapidly after cutting, and because cane served the important function of a windbreak for taro pondfields in addition to its use as a foodstuff, Hawaiians likely would have cut small amounts of sugarcane only as needed.<sup>80</sup> As Mintz and others have argued, however, sugar production was an early model of "agro-industry" in which field and mill depended upon each other to produce sugar; a crop of sugarcane had little value if it was not milled properly, and likewise a mill needed to process cane crops continually and efficiently in order to be profitable. This system necessitated a regimented labor force operating under the discipline of a set schedule, harvesting large areas of cane at once.<sup>81</sup> The foreign method of clear-cutting fields would have been novel to Hawaiians and also would have allowed weeds—of which many species were haole introductions—greater opportunities to establish themselves.

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77. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1846.

78. Robert Crichton Wyllie, *Answers to Questions Proposed by His Excellency*, 6–12.

79. Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, vol. 1, 28.

80. Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 272.

81. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 47–52.

Two major animal pests for cane planters, the black rat and cattle, were additional haole introductions to the islands that also disrupted Hawaiian forms of agriculture. Pre-contact farmers would not have needed to protect sugarcane from these animals. Several missionaries noted that Hawaiian commoners “have suffered and are now suffering great damage from the large herds of foreigners and chiefs.”<sup>82</sup> Roaming cattle were an expensive nuisance most Hawaiians could not afford to combat. In 1846, planter William McLane estimated that cattle caused \$1,000 worth of damages to his sugarcane and would have done much more had he not hired Hawaiians to guard his fields.<sup>83</sup> Local farmers with small plots of cane would not have had the resources to either keep cattle out of their fields or sustain the losses that roaming cattle caused.

The biological invasions of pests and differences in agricultural practices led many haole to conclude that foreigners were needed to lead large-scale sugarcane enterprises, but following the public controversy of Ladd & Co.’s demise, missionaries again struck a cautious, if equivocating, note. In 1847 Reverend Ephraim Clark acknowledged that “honest and industrious” foreigners with capital could promote the mission’s agenda among Kānaka Maoli. “But,” he wrote, “any great monopoly of plantations, and sudden influx of a promiscuous foreign population would prove disastrous to the native population . . . It would, almost inevitably lead to a disregard of native rights, to serious contentions, and to a system of subjection and servitude, which would soon end in the slavery or extinction of the native government and race.”<sup>84</sup> Though recognizing the importance of agricultural development, missionaries remained concerned that unrestrained plantation agriculture would damage Hawaiian society.

The specter of slavery was indeed a significant factor in how missionaries and other foreigners understood issues of labor and agriculture. Jarves noted that Hawai‘i was “clear from the evils of a slave population” and therefore in a position to build a plantation system based on wage labor.<sup>85</sup> The members of the Sandwich Islands

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82. John Ryan Fischer discusses the history of cattle in Hawai‘i. John Ryan Fischer, “Cattle in Hawai‘i: Biological and Cultural Exchange,” *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (August 2007): 347–72; Wyllie, *Answers to Questions Proposed by His Excellency*, 41.

83. *Honolulu Polynesian*, October 3, 1846.

84. Wyllie, *Answers to Questions*, 11.

85. *Honolulu Polynesian*, September 28, 1844.

Mission held strong abolitionist beliefs; some even resigned from the ABCFM because the organization accepted donations from southerners.<sup>86</sup> However, if Clark noted that foreign capitalists might import slavery, many missionaries soon came to see plantation labor as a way for common Hawaiians to escape what missionaries perceived as a slave-like relationship to the chiefs.

Missionaries increasingly characterized the relationship between Hawaiian chiefs and commoners as one of oppression, approaching slavery. Missionaries such as John Emerson, Jonathan Green, Titus Coan, and Richard Armstrong argued that the chiefs maintained an oppressive hold over the common people.<sup>87</sup> This argument was rooted in the Hawaiian land tenure and tax systems, which gave chiefs control over agricultural output for large regions and the ability to impose heavy taxes in kind and in labor. Echoing the missionaries, in April 1847, the *Polynesian*, still the government's official newspaper, editorialized that "with soil locked up by a selfish feudalism . . . this kingdom must continue in its comparative paralytic state." The newspaper continued throughout the year to criticize the chiefs for commanding labor from the commoners while simultaneously preventing agricultural development on fertile lands.<sup>88</sup>

Missionaries and haole in government expressed a desire to break the perceived hold of the chiefs over Hawaiian lands and build up an agrarian middle class. To that end, the government implemented a momentous reform of the Hawaiian land tenure system. Under the traditional system, the crown controlled all Hawaiian lands. The monarch distributed lands among chiefs, who divided their lands further and designated lesser chiefs and landlords as overseers. Commoners owed particular taxes to their landlords and chiefs, and in turn had recognized rights to live upon and use the land. William Little Lee, among his many other positions, became president of the Land Commission, which was responsible for awarding deeds under the *Māhele* (division).<sup>89</sup> Lee was a close ally of the Sandwich Islands Mission; he wrote that "their line of

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86. Harris, *Nothing but Christ*, 77–86.

87. Wyllie, *Answers to Questions Proposed by His Excellency*, 7, 47, 67–68, 92.

88. *Honolulu Polynesian*, April 3, September 4, 25, and October 9, 1847.

89. John J. Chinen, Edward D. Beechert, Kirch and Sahlins, and Merry examine land tenure and the *Māhele*. John J. Chinen, *The Great Mahele: Hawaii's Land Division of 1848* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1958); Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A*

conduct comes nearer the path marked out by the meek and lowly One than that of any other Christians I have had the fortune to know.” He was also a strong believer in the importance of land ownership for common Hawaiians and the Hawaiian nation.<sup>90</sup> Lee sent letters to many of the American missionaries scattered throughout the islands, imploring them in emphatic language to have the commoners in their districts submit land claims. He was explicit in his aims: “There must grow up a middle class, who shall be farmers, tillers of the soil, or there is no salvation for this nation.”<sup>91</sup>

What haoles saw as chiefly oppression may have been an artifact of demographic change initiated by European contact. Virgin soil epidemics including influenza, tuberculosis, and venereal disease caused horrific depopulation among the indigenous population. Hawaiians probably numbered about 400,000 on the eve of foreign contact; by 1832 Hawai‘i held a population of approximately 130,000, and by 1843 the Hawaiian population fell below 100,000.<sup>92</sup> Not only did this population loss destabilize social systems, it also somewhat paradoxically contributed to increased social stratification. The population of commoners decreased much more drastically than that of the chiefs for several reasons, but the result was that the burden of supporting the chiefly class through taxation fell on fewer people and was thus felt more acutely. Moreover, as chiefs became ever-greater participants in Hawai‘i’s new economy, consumption of foreign goods took on the signification of status, and chiefs relied upon their commoner communities to support this consumption.<sup>93</sup> With increasing expenses and a decreasing tax base, chiefly demands on Hawaiian commoners became more onerous.

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*Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985); Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu* vol. 1; Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*.

90. William Little Lee to Caroline Scott, September 28, 1849, in Barbara E. Dunn, “William Little Lee and Catherine Lee, Letters from Hawai‘i 1848–1855,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 38 (2004): 73.

91. In addition to this quote, see the many similar letters William Little Lee sent to other missionaries. William Little Lee to Rev. J. S. Green, 19 January 1848, TS, William Little Lee Letters, HMCS (emphasis in the original).

92. Pre-contact population estimates vary widely, from a high of about 800,000 to a low of about 250,000. Patrick Kirch argues that James Cook’s estimate of about 400,000 was close to accurate. Even assuming the lowest estimate of 250,000, a decrease by 60 percent in seventy years would cause drastic social change. Kirch, *How Chiefs Became Kings*; Schmitt, *Historical Statistics of Hawaii*, 9; David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 58.

93. Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, vol. 1.

The social system that haoles decried as so oppressive was therefore just as much a foreign product as the system they hoped to institute in its place.

The *Polynesian* continued to argue that chiefs' domination of commoners impeded economic growth and that earlier attitudes toward planting were inadequate half measures. With a slow whaling season in 1847, the newspaper predicted the end of that industry and exhorted the Hawaiian government to shift the base of its economy from provisioning whalers to exporting agricultural commodities. In 1848, the *Polynesian* editorialized, "Agriculture is the only sure reliance of the country. It will not be sufficient to *permit* after long and difficult negotiation certain individuals to obtain lands even at fair rates, but if a market is to be created for native labor and products, foreign capital must be *invited* hither."<sup>94</sup> The active pursuit of foreign capital was a significant shift from the position that prevailed during the 1830s.

The direction of government policy toward attracting foreign capital and establishing plantations had likewise reversed. In his 1847 address to the Legislative Council, King Kamehameha III declared, "what my native subjects are greatly in want of, to become farmers, is capital, with which to buy cattle, fence in the land and cultivate it properly. I recommend you to consider the best means of inducing foreigners to furnish capital for carrying on agricultural operations, that thus, the exports of the country may be increased."<sup>95</sup> The Legislature took up the King's directive, and in the legislative session of 1848 worked to promote and protect planters' interests. The Legislature discussed greater enforcement of an 1846 law to prevent stray cattle from roaming onto and damaging agricultural lands, and it passed an "Act to Confer Certain Privileges on the Owners of Plantations," which allowed planters with over one hundred acres to become licensed retailers, helping them to avoid the fees of some merchants and to profit from selling merchandise to their own laborers.<sup>96</sup>

These laws embraced plantations in a way that earlier attitudes did not. Large-scale agriculture was not something to be subordinated to religious ideology or to be seen as a danger; it was inherently good

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94. *Honolulu Polynesian*, January 1, 1848 (emphasis in the original).

95. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1847.

96. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1848 and June 24, 1848.

because it promoted industry among the people. The *Polynesian* editorialized that “Christianity has done much for the people, but she needs all the aid and support which thrift in temporal affairs can give. The mass of the people want more stimulus to industry. It is vain to expect them to be a virtuous people until they become industrious.”<sup>97</sup> This perspective gave planting greater priority than it had received a decade earlier. According to the *Polynesian*, rather than being one avenue toward virtue, industry was a prerequisite. Moreover, the most valuable type of agriculture, according to this reasoning, was not the sort of small farming that would support independent yeomen, but larger agriculture that could employ the greatest number of Hawaiians and render them industrious in haole eyes. While the missionaries had earlier feared an influx of the wrong kind of capitalist planters uncommitted to Christian values, the *Polynesian* suggested that planting was an inherently Christian act by virtue of how it encouraged industry among Hawaiians, regardless of the overt religiosity of planters.

When epidemics of measles and whooping cough killed ten thousand Hawaiians in the autumn and winter of 1848–49—about 10 percent of the native population—at the same time that a season of heavy rains struck many parts of islands, the need to attract foreign capital to develop an agricultural economy seemed all the more urgent. Reverend Coan observed that following the epidemics, “[S]ecular affairs [in Hilo, Hawai‘i Island] have received a shock from which they cannot soon recover.”<sup>98</sup> Seeing the devastation caused by disease, many haole who previously hoped to create a nation of yeoman farmers came to believe that Hawaiian bodies could not survive, let alone subdue, the natural world. William Little Lee, who only a year earlier wrote of building up a Native Hawaiian middle class, took on a much gloomier tone in his correspondence. According to Lee, sickness and death had “brought a cloud over us that well nigh shuts out the fond hopes we have indulged for the perpetuation and independence of this nation as a distinct race . . . I fear that in spite of all the efforts of the missionaries and others for their salvation, they are destined to give place to the White man.”<sup>99</sup>

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97. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1847.

98. Titus Coan, Pastoral and General Report for Hilo for the year ending March 1849, TS, Hawaiian Mission Station Reports, HMCS.

99. William Little Lee to Simon Greenleaf, Honolulu, March 3, 1849, William Little Lee Letters, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

With the Hawaiian population decimated, limiting the invasion of foreign capital and planters seemed moot. The epidemic reinforced the idea that if Hawai'i's agriculture was to be developed at all, independent small farmers would not be the ones to do it.

On the heels of these epidemics, the Sandwich Islands Mission received word from ABCFM headquarters in Boston that the ABCFM planned to discontinue its funding of the mission and instead have its missionaries rely on their local congregations for compensation. Reverend Dwight Baldwin lamented that after disease and rains afflicted his congregation and "no strength or courage were left to sustain themselves" he received from Boston "a general letter demanding that they not only sustain themselves, but sustain the Sandwich Islands Mission too."<sup>100</sup> By removing support, the ABCFM forced missionaries to rely on community contributions for their salaries but also freed them to acquire property. Some missionaries sought to acquire lands or enter business, while others remained in their pulpits. Whatever the case, missionaries now had a greater interest in building up Hawai'i's economy and the financial resources of Hawaiian citizens. Commercial agriculture and plantation wage labor provided the missionaries' congregants with the means to support their pastors.<sup>101</sup> With the ABCFM now requiring that its missionaries join Hawai'i's economy, missionaries' prior resistance to sugarcane planting faded.

At a meeting of the King's Privy Council on March 6, 1850, Lee presented an application from Reverend Emerson to purchase land on behalf of his son. Several objections were raised to such a grant according to the minutes of the Privy Council meeting, as Hawaiian law prohibited the alienation of land to non-naturalized foreigners. Yet the Scottish-born Foreign Minister Robert Crichton Wyllie argued that missionary children should be treated as native Hawaiian subjects, "by right of the services of their parents," and Emerson's application, as well as one from Reverend Daniel Dole, was granted.<sup>102</sup> That July, the Hawaiian Legislature continued its trend of state support for sugar planting with an act exempting agricultural implements, steam engines, and coffee and sugar mills from

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100. Dwight Baldwin, Report of Lahaina Station, 1849, TS, Hawaiian Mission Station Reports, HMCS.

101. Harris, *Nothing but Christ*, 112–22.

102. Kingdom of Hawai'i, Minutes of the Privy Council, March 6, 1850, TS, scan of the holdings of the Hawai'i State Archives.



any import duty. In one of its most controversial and contested decisions, the Hawaiian Legislature passed an act (proposed by William Little Lee) granting aliens the right to purchase lands in fee simple.<sup>103</sup> With missionaries no longer championing the restriction of agricultural development to small, independent farming, legal obstacles to the development of foreign-owned plantations receded as well.

The following month, Lee convened a meeting in Honolulu for the purposes of forming an agricultural society. Many of Honolulu's leading men, including missionaries, were in attendance, and thirty of the one-hundred and fourteen men who became annual members of the RHAS that year arrived in Hawai'i as part of the Sandwich Islands Mission.<sup>104</sup> The formation of the RHAS marked a moment when Hawaiian agricultural interests were large and developed enough that they were able to unite to share information and resources and to lobby the government. Just as in previous decades, the members of the RHAS maintained the missionary opposition to converting sugarcane into alcohol, yet they had substantially revised their position toward large plantations. Attracting the capital to fund a plantation system was now among their top priorities.

In his opening address to the RHAS, Lee lamented the "insignificant" and "unprofitable" pursuits of agriculture in Hawai'i, complaining that uncertain markets, ignorance of agricultural practices, and poor capitalization doomed most plantations. However, Lee celebrated the imminent dawning of a new agricultural age in Hawai'i. The extension of U.S. territory to the Pacific Ocean brought with it a large market as well as what many planters deemed civilization, which would lead to greater investment in plantations. "The native government," Lee said, "impelled by the irresistible influence and example of the Anglo Saxon energy and progress, which it sees in every direction, is relaxing its former tenacious grasp on the arable lands of the Islands, and even inviting and encouraging their cultivation by foreign skill and capital." Lee also claimed that plantations were places where Hawaiians could find health and vigor. Citing mortality statistics of plantations during the recent epidemics,

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103. William Little Lee proposed an act giving aliens the right to hold lands in fee simple to the Privy Council on June 17, 1850. Kingdom of Hawai'i, Privy Council Minutes, June 17, 1850, TS, Hawai'i State Archives; *Honolulu Polynesian*, July 13 and 27, 1850.

104. Stephen Reynolds, Journal, 29 April 1850, Hamilton Library; *Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society Transactions* 1, no. 1 (1850): 79–81.

Lee argued that on plantations Hawaiians were “less liable to sickness, and less apt to die when sick.”<sup>105</sup>

By midcentury, missionary advocacy helped establish sugarcane cultivation based on large-scale planting. Government policy and missionary rhetoric focused on large commercial agricultural enterprise, not small farming as they had in earlier decades. As Charles Reed Bishop, husband of Bernice Pauahi—one of the highest-ranked of Hawaiian ali‘i—and Lee’s partner in Lihue Plantation, wrote, “none but those who have considerable capital can commence and carry on a plantation profitably and pleasantly.”<sup>106</sup> Rather than place restrictions on foreign capital, the Hawaiian government sought to court it. Foreign Minister Wyllie argued before the RHAS that Hawaiians ought to emulate Barbados, the sugar capital of the British West Indies. Plantations, Wyllie wrote, “are public benefactors . . . [I]n granting them every possible encouragement, the government will only do its duty, and consult the best interests of the Hawaiian people.”<sup>107</sup> Missionaries, former missionaries, and allied haole of influence had altered the means to achieving their ends. No longer would common Hawaiians find Christian virtue through industry and independent farming but through joining the plantation wage labor force. Plantations organized by foreign capitalists were no longer a menace but a source of freedom—freedom from chiefly oppression and the ravages of disease. The only vestige of missionaries’ early opposition to cane planting was the persistence of the law against distilling rum, which remained in force until 1874.

It is impossible, of course, to answer the counterfactual question of what Hawai‘i’s sugar industry would have looked like had distilling been legal. But one might wonder how the quest to develop an agricultural system that conformed to missionary morality contributed to the rise of a planter class. Without rum, underfinanced sugar producers were less likely to succeed, and foreign capital was all the more necessary to establish secure operations. Moreover, without the ability to salvage through distilling the waste materials of sugar production, small plantations and inefficient mills were at a greater disadvantage than large plantations with better

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105. R. W. Wood also reported there were no deaths at Koloa Plantation during the 1848–49 epidemic. *Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society Transactions* 1, no. 1 (1850): 7, 31; *Honolulu Polynesian*, February 23, 1850.

106. Charles Reed Bishop to Turrill, 29 April 1851, TS, Turrill Letters.

107. *Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society Transactions* 1, no. 2 (1851): 116.

equipment. While well-capitalized planters such as Lee were able to afford the expense of their ideological commitment, others could not. Indeed, in the 1850s, many plantations fell into bankruptcy. Though rum was only one of many factors in the consolidation of Hawai'i's sugar industry, the religious ideology of Hawai'i's sugar pioneers helped to establish the kingdom's plantation system.