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Introduction by David Iglar

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Introduction by David Igler, University of California, Irvine

American Protestant missionaries on the frontlines of the Second Great Awakening exhibited a sharply bifurcated worldview. People were either sinners or properly repentant sinners. They either accepted the true word of Jesus Christ and lived by the teachings of the scriptures, or they dwelt outside the Christian community in an earthly world destined for damnation. Time itself reflected this bifurcated world: born into one life, Christians had to be born again and properly awakened to their new relationship with Jesus Christ. Missionaries brought this temporal chasm with them as they ventured abroad and confronted indigenous—and therefore heathen—populations in places like the Hawaiian Islands, where representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) landed in 1820. Prior to the time of the mission’s arrival, Hawaiians lived in a netherworld of idolatry and libidinous sin, according to the newcomers’ evangelical mindset. But a new world now beckoned due to the ABCFM’s presence and teachings, a Christian world of redemption and patriarchal leadership ushered in through divine providence. The ABCFM missionaries and their dutiful wives were in for quite a shock.

This, in part, is the backdrop to Jennifer Thigpen’s compelling new study *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai‘i’s Pacific World*. She demonstrates how male and female representatives of the ABCFM confronted the Hawaiians’ “ambivalence” toward the mission as well as the “unfamiliar gender hierarchy they encountered in Hawaii” (54). The hierarchy included the ruling *ali‘i* (royalty), among whom were the powerful wives of the recently deceased King Kamehameha I. Thigpen shows how these Hawaiian women of rank forged a “cycle of exchange” (or reciprocal gifting) with the missionary women, often to the exclusion of the male missionaries. Such gifting between women, Thigpen argues, produced “social relationships, even between disparate social groups,” and constituted nothing less than “the kinds of important diplomatic and political relationships critical to the islands’ political future” (66). Therefore, while the male missionaries came to the islands with a self-declared mandate to convert the natives, the powerful *ali‘i* women sought something different and possibly more significant from the missionary women whom they viewed as their true counterparts.

Thigpen’s interventions are self-evident and, if not entirely original, certainly establish her as an important historian of the Hawaiian Islands and the gendered experiences of American missionaries. *Island Queens and Mission Wives* builds on the work of notable scholars Jocelyn Linnekin and Patricia Grimshaw, both of whom began examining the interactions between *ali‘i* women and foreigners more than two decades ago.¹ Thigpen views the gendered relations and intercultural exchanges as diplomatic relations, encouraging us to understand chiefly women as actors on a colonial and imperial stage. Thigpen shows this prominent role did not result simply from the ABCFM’s arrival; instead, three decades of sustained contact and commerce with maritime traders and explorers equipped Hawaiian women with nuanced diplomatic skills. Many of them, including Ka’ahumanu, acquired a high level of literacy for both spiritual and political ends. Others, such as Kapi’olani, made dramatic proclamations of Christian faith while never revealing her true objectives to the American missionaries.

¹ Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

To understand the powerful roles of these women and also the importance of *Island Queens and Mission Wives*, this H-Diplo Roundtable includes commentary by four leading scholars of Hawai'i, gender relations, and missionary activities. Joy Schulz's review focuses on the crucial issues of what might be called performance and conversion. What, exactly, did Hawaiian elite women *mean* when they announced their conversion to Christianity or when they entered into a cycle of exchange with missionary women? The extant source material—largely penned by missionary men and women—only sheds partial light on these questions, and that light emanates from a worldview structured by distinct binaries attached to race, gender, and Christianity. Thigpen reads these sources with care and nuance, taking them about as far as they can go, while her most compelling readings are of social situations and the symbols employed by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. Schulz rightly pushes Thigpen further on the meaning of *ali'i* conversion: did they truly accept Christianity and allow the new teachings to influence their decisions as leaders? This question is significant for spiritual reasons, but also for political agendas because the ABCFM was hardly the only game in town. As Schulz correctly observes, the Hawaiian Islands were a thriving maritime entrepôt by the 1820s, and most of these foreigners strongly disliked the persnickety missionaries. Like all political leaders, *ali'i* women possessed a strong level of self-interest in preserving their power, and perhaps the fragile alliance they struck with missionary men and women may have seemed like the best choice among shrinking options.

Emily Conroy-Krutz appreciates the long temporal frame provided by Thigpen's study. Going back to the late eighteenth century, Hawaiian elites bartered and forged diplomatic relations with traders and quasi-governmental representatives who visited the islands from many nations. If most research has focused on King Kamehameha's diplomacy, which he used to extend his powerful rule over the islands, we also know that his wives and other *ali'i* women during this earlier period were hardly idle bystanders to international negotiations. Conroy-Krutz expertly synthesizes the political roles that *ali'i* women played in the 1820s and encourages Thigpen to think even more critically about their thoughts and motivations, especially in terms of such matters as the crafting of the 1825 legal code, which parroted the Ten Commandments. Like Schulz, Conroy-Krutz poses very significant questions about the meaning of conversion, the toppling of Hawaiian idols, and the local politics in which *ali'i* women engaged. Her questions ultimately circle back to the source material itself: Missionary sources can provide partial answers at best, and we can only hope that Hawaiian-language archives—still being processed and translated, but slowly being brought to light by Hawaiian scholars—will offer much better answers.

Those better answers will address not only the intentions of *ali'i* women, but as Emily J. Manktelow anticipates in her review, the much larger history of “Hawaiian-mission contact.” Manktelow primarily refers to the dual diplomacy of Hawaiian women *and* men, in that both *ali'i* groups carried on political relations with their mission counterparts and both sets of relations were inherently gendered. Suffice to say that Thigpen's study tells us far more about the women than the men, which in itself represents an important revision of the dominant scholarship. But Manktelow seems to indicate that other strata of Hawaiian society also deserve much-needed attention, especially the population's large majority of *non-chiefly* men and women. This broader history of ‘contact’—a term fraught with problems, but one that can be used in this context—is vitally important if Hawaiian diplomacy during this period is to reflect anything beyond a top-down, elite-driven process. In short, it is fine and good for some *ali'i* women (and men) to renounce the idols, announce their new faith, and perform symbolic exchanges with missionaries, but what impact did such actions hold for commoners?

Finally, Jennifer Fish Kashay asks for not a broader history of contact, but a longer history of the mission work. Did the strategies of female missionaries change in the later decades? Did the early years of gifting

continue into the 1840s and did it amount to substantive diplomacy? These are important questions for Thigpen to consider in her ongoing research.

These four reviewers pose an interesting constellation of questions, some of which go to the heart of *Island Queens and Mission Wives*, while others offer fruitful avenues for future investigation. However, none of them mention the central dilemma for Hawaiian society during this period. To state it bluntly, the Hawaiian population had been rapidly declining in numbers since the late 1700s, due in large part to the introduction of infectious diseases which both killed people and radically diminished rates of natural reproduction. All efforts by *ali'i* and commoners to reproduce and halt the tragic death rate had come to naught.² This dilemma was certainly demographic and political in nature, but it was also profoundly cosmological and spiritual in the sense that neither Christianity nor the Hawaiian gods seemed to offer a suitable explanation, much less a remedy. Most missionaries likely viewed the death and depopulation through the lens of divine providence, and yet the ruling *ali'i* (who directly experienced it in their own lack of reproduction) must have heartily struggled for their own explanation. Could Christianity offer a refuge from the plague, and if so, did the *ali'i*'s selective conversion reflect this hope? We can only guess that *ali'i* women spoke to their mission counterparts about the declining health status of all Hawaiians, and some of those elite women must have moved beyond the missionaries' explanations of sin, prostitution, and debauchery. What did they say?

Jennifer Thigpen has helped us to understand what *ali'i* women said in many contexts, and furthermore, how their exchanges with missionaries represented diplomatic relations. We can only hope that similarly rigorous studies of indigenous islanders' interactions with foreign missionaries soon join Thigpen's fine book at the intersection of gender, colonial, and diplomatic history.

Participants:

Jennifer Thigpen is Associate Professor of History at Washington State University. She earned her Ph.D. degree in 2007 from the University of California, Irvine. She is author of *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawaii's Pacific World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Her articles include "Desperately Seeking Mary: Materializing Mary Richardson Walker, Missionary," *The Public Historian* Vol. 34, No. 3 (Fall 2012): 68-81; and "'You Have Been Very Thoughtful Today: The Significance of Gratitude and Reciprocity in Missionary-Hawaiian Gift Exchange'" *Pacific Historical Review* 79, No. 4 (November 2010): 545-572. She is currently at work on a book-length project entitled "Going Out to the World: The American Foreign Mission Movement in the Global West."

David Iglar is Chair and Professor of History at University of California, Irvine. His research areas include Pacific, environmental, and American West history. He is the author of *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Emily Conroy-Krutz is an assistant professor in the history department at Michigan State University. Her book, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic*, will be released by Cornell University Press in 2015. She is also author of "Engaged in the Same Glorious Cause: Anglo-American

² For the brilliant study of introduced disease and mortality in Hawai'i, see Seth Archer, "Sharks upon the Land: Disease, Colonialism, and Culture in Hawaii, 1778-1865," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 2015.

Connections in the American Missionary Entrance into India, 1790-1815” (*Journal of the Early Republic*; Spring 2014), and an associate editor for *America in the World, 1776 to the Present: A Supplement to the Dictionary of American History*.

Jennifer Fish Kashay is an Associate Professor of History at Colorado State University. She is a scholar of Hawaiian history who has published articles in the *Pacific Historical Review*, the *New England Quarterly*, the *Hawaiian Journal of History*, and in other scholarly journals and an edited volume focusing on the missionaries of the ABCFM.

Emily J. Manktelow is Lecturer in British Imperial History at the University of Kent. She is interested in the social, cultural and familial history of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, and has published on missionary families in particular. Her monograph *Missionary Families: race, gender and generation on the spiritual frontier* was published by Manchester University Press in 2013.

Joy Schulz has published articles on American missionary children living in the Hawaiian Islands in *Diplomatic History* (2014) and the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* (2013). Her essay entitled “Punahou School: Teaching Anglo-Civic Duty in the Hawaiian Islands, 1841-1853,” will appear in *Creating Religious Childhoods: Children, Young People and Christianity in Anglo-World and British Colonial Contexts, 1800-1950* (Ashgate Press) in 2015. Schulz is a fulltime history instructor at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska and participant in the American Historical Association’s “Bridging Cultures at Community Colleges Initiative: American History, Atlantic and Pacific Project” (2013-2015).

Review by Emily Conroy-Krutz, Michigan State University

In 1829, the American missionaries in Hawaii were delighted to be building a new thatched church. They were able to do so in large part thanks to the support the mission received from Ka'ahumanu, the most powerful woman on Hawaii at the time. She had been baptized in 1825 and was an important ally to the missionaries. And so it was with some discomfort that the mission wives realized that they might have to refuse a gift that she had offered them for the dedication of the new church building. Ka'ahumanu had requested that matching dresses be made for the missionary wives and her to wear to the dedication, and sent a brightly colored expensive satin fabric for the women to sew into the garments. From the missionaries' perspective, the fabric was inappropriate and would not demonstrate the modesty they needed to project. But refusing the fabric ran the risk of offending Ka'ahumanu and alienating the mission from its most important political ally. With extreme care, the missionary women told her that they needed to wear something more simple. Ka'ahumanu replaced it with black silk and reiterated her desire for matching garments, which the mission wives happily made. This, Jennifer Thigpen argues, is an example of the moments where gifts of clothing "served as a show of diplomacy" and where women, both American and Hawaiian, were central players (83).

In *Island Queens and Mission Wives*, Thigpen has given us a wonderful text, perfectly packaged for classroom adoption, that tells the story of the gendered exchanges between missionaries and elite Hawaiian women in the early nineteenth century. That women mattered to the American foreign mission movement is not news. What Thigpen is able to do here, though, is to help us understand how gender mattered to both sides of that exchange. She highlights the ways that Hawaiian women were incredibly important to the success of the mission, and the ways that their unexpected power forced the American mission to shift its methods and provide American women with more opportunities. In five chapters, she covers the worldviews of both the Hawaiians and the New England missionaries in the years before the American Board's mission to Hawaii began in 1820, the missionary arrival in 1820 and the attempts of both groups to understand each other, and in the final two chapters, the gendered diplomacy of the Hawaiian mission and the roles of those "island queens and mission wives" of the title.

She makes several important contributions to the study of American missions. Most importantly, she tells the story of American missionaries' arrival in Hawaii partly from the perspective of Hawaiians. Related to this, she examines the importance of elite Hawaiian women to missionary encounters as well as the importance of the work of missionary wives. In Thigpen's telling, it was Hawaiian women who had much of the control over missionary dynamics. Through establishing and maintaining gift exchanges with missionaries (particularly missionary women), they were able to "compel mission wives to engage in what became an ongoing cycle of giving" (2). This ongoing cycle in turn led to a reexamination of mission women's roles. If they were initially expected to be mainly supportive of the work of male missionaries, the relationships they developed with prominent Hawaiian women demanded more active roles.

Opening the book with Hawaii in the late-eighteenth century was an excellent choice. Her intention was to center our thinking on the Hawaiian context, and she is very successful in this. By the time that the missionaries arrived in 1820, foreigners were a regular sight on the islands. British, French, and others had visited Honolulu and the other islands from the 1780s as an important stop on the China route. These visitors traded, and explored, and some had "more explicitly expansionist political and economic designs" on Hawaii (11). Thigpen pays particular attention to the ways that the Hawaiian elite were able to be equal players in these encounters. Hawaiians responded to these visitors from a position of power and authority.

Over the course of these same years, King Kamehameha secured his kingdom over the entire archipelago and emerged as a shrewd diplomat in his dealings with his western visitors. Part of the ways that he came to power involved strategic marriages, including to Keopuolani and Ka'ahumanu, both of whom figure as important figures later in Thigpen's study. Part of it also involved strategic trading and gift exchanges with westerners, a practice that continued to be incredibly important through the years of the American mission. The argument here is that Hawaii was already engaged in relations with multiple foreign groups before the missionaries arrived, and that the ali'i (elite) accordingly had a variety of diplomatic practices from which to draw in these encounters.

The chapter on the New England missionary context outlines the gender-specific expectations of the mission movement. Men and women would perform different roles in the mission field, with women exclusively taking on supportive positions. These gender roles "were not merely incidental," Thigpen points out, but were central to the "basic structure and organization" of the mission movement (31). Thigpen is insightful in her analysis of the ways that mission work both allowed American women unique opportunities to fill powerful and influential roles while still celebrating and solidifying their subordinate roles within the Christian civilization that missionaries were supposed to both embody and create wherever they went. This was a situation that mission wives faced everywhere they went in the world. The very first missionary wives were in fact directed to do precisely this kind of work. They were to help their husbands, but also to take on particular work to help other women. They might teach or superintend schools for girls, for example, or establish prayer groups for women who were interested in baptism. Mission wives frequently had to walk the delicate line between demonstrating an ideal, submissive Christian femininity while performing evangelistic work that put them in positions of leadership among other women.

What makes the Hawaii case particular, as Thigpen points out, is that missionaries encountered a society in which women had much more prominent political roles than the Americans had expected. In order to secure their ability to evangelize in Hawaii and to gain the approval of the Hawaiian elite, American missionaries came to realize the increasing importance of mission wives for their potential ability to reach Hawaiian women. The exchange of clothing, in particular, became an important activity with cultural, religious, and, Thigpen argues, *diplomatic* significance. Her major contribution is to examine these encounters through a lens that focuses on the cultural context for both groups of women and thus allow us to see the multiple meanings of the encounters between these women in Hawaii.

Gift exchange had long been an important way of creating and maintaining connections both with foreigners and between the elite and common people of Hawaii. The exchanges between elite women and missionary wives built upon this tradition, but with a twist. While diplomatic gift exchanges had traditionally been public, these exchanges occurred in more intimate spaces. Because the mission wives were frequently making clothing as gifts for the female ali'i, they required fittings in the women's personal dwelling space and multiple visits. Mission wives were accordingly excited to act as seamstresses: making western clothes for these Hawaiian women granted them unexpected access to evangelize. In addition to clothing production, mission wives could provide medical assistance that gave them similar access and intimacy.

The clothing itself was laden with meaning. For the missionaries, the Hawaiian adoption of Western dress was a sign of their acceptance of the values of Christian civilization. Bonnets, for example, could replace floral garlands as a head covering and signify a loss of vanity and pride, and the adoption of Christian meekness and modesty. Dresses could cover nakedness or half-nakedness and replace the traditional strips of cloth that missionaries called "tappers" (80-81). Missionary writings about the demand for these items thus suggest that

providing these clothes had spiritual meaning. Wearing these clothes signaled to them a transformation on the way to conversion. But Thigpen reminds us that the missionaries' gifts were rarely received and understood in the intended way. Western clothing, for example, was requested and valued, but often treated as exotic garments and not as the full-scale adoption of 'civilization' as the missionaries hoped. In addition, the traditional garments that missionaries bemoaned had a cultural meaning for its wearers of which the missionaries were unaware.

Thigpen uses English-language sources throughout the book, and is very clear about the limitations and risks of this approach. These sources are very good for getting at what missionaries thought, but can be very tricky for illuminating the other perspective. Given her interest in illuminating precisely the ways that Hawaiians perceived Americans, this is a difficult task, and one that she accomplishes through careful reading. Particularly in her chapter on the treatment in missionary memoirs of three 'Hawaiian heroines,' she writes about the necessity of reading between the lines and never taking the missionaries' depictions to be perfectly accurate narratives of what Hawaiians believed. As Thigpen discusses, it is a very delicate matter to try and discern the ideas and motivations of converts through the writings of missionaries. Writing here about Keōpūolani's decision to end her polygamous marriage to a second husband, for example, Thigpen explains that historians are reliant on the mission's telling of this story, and so "it is critical to treat her words and actions with caution" (88). Thigpen does so, providing us with suggestions for alternate explanations of Hawaiian women's thoughts and motivations in their encounters with the missionaries. This is wonderfully suggestive, and I found myself wishing for more.

For example, Thigpen provides a fascinating discussion of Ka'ahumanu's literacy. Her decision to learn to read was celebrated by the missionaries as an important transformation from heathenism to civilization and Christianity. In the missionary memoir by Laura Fish Judd, Ka'ahumanu literally casts aside her playing cards forever in favor of the spelling book that the missionaries bring her. Yet as Thigpen reminds us, there were many reasons why Ka'ahumanu might have wanted to learn how to read. From her long experience with other foreigners, she would have known the value of literacy for many reasons, including the ability to read and make contracts or to increase the efficiency of correspondence across the islands. Literacy, which the missionaries explained in terms of access to the Gospel, also gave her access to new diplomatic, economic, and political methods. This is an excellent point, and for me raised questions about another action of Ka'ahumanu that the missionaries celebrated: the alteration of Hawaii's legal code in 1825 to reflect the Ten Commandments.

This legal transformation stands out as a unique moment in which the missionaries saw their vision for a Christian civilization actually codified in local laws. It was unusual not just for Hawaii, but for the missionary experience on a global scale. Unsurprisingly, then, the Hawaiian missionaries depicted it as a demonstration of the coming of Christianity and civilization to Hawaii. As the missionaries told the story, Ka'ahumanu, who had become close to the missionaries after an illness in 1821 and was baptized in 1825, set about to make a series of changes to Hawaiian life in order to bring it into closer conformity with Christian requirements. First, she demanded the observance of the Christian Sabbath. She toured the islands in pursuit of any remaining idols that she could destroy. Then, after she had risen to even higher prominence and authority after the death of King Liholiho, she transformed the laws of Hawaii in conformity with the Ten Commandments. The missionaries celebrated this as a major accomplishment and it certainly does seem to have indicated their important influence not only in the spiritual lives of converts, but also in the legal realities of all Hawaiians (and foreign visitors). Ka'ahumanu's motivations for this transformation remain murky, however. Was this a matter of religious conviction, as the missionaries would have it? Was it an

example of the missionaries' cultural imperialism, as some historians suggest? Or was it a transformation that fit into the local political dynamics of Hawaii? Thigpen seems to suggest the latter, though how this worked is not clear. The subtitle of the book is "How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World," and while the book is superb on the former, I was left with some questions about what Thigpen thinks about the latter. Here, the book seems to suffer for its short length—clocking it at just 108 insightful pages, this text is perfect for the classroom but left me wanting to hear more from the author.

In all of her efforts to get us to think about these 'Hawaiian Heroines' as diplomatic and political figures, we are left with questions about their role as spiritual figures. Why would Ka'ahumanu change the laws and remove the idols? Why would Kapi'olani, another elite Hawaiian convert, challenge the goddess Pele at the volcano? These striking examples that the missionaries held up in their histories of the mission clearly need the kind of careful reading that Thigpen provides, and hopefully more scholars will take up where Thigpen has left off to examine these women's motivations for their actions. Indeed, Thigpen's conclusion is a generous call for further research that will develop her ideas and take it into new directions. In her conclusion, she points to new directions for future research and makes an appeal for more close studies of "the distinct relationships ali'i cultivated with the islands' foreign guests" in order to "clarify both the ongoing struggle for political authority in the islands and the diversity of opinion among ali'i regarding the benefit of foreign political, diplomatic, and trade relations" (105). Indeed, Thigpen's book provides a terrific beginning for such a discussion.

Review by Jennifer Fish Kashay, Colorado State University

In *Island Queens and Mission Wives*, Jennifer Thigpen argues that the Massachusetts-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) drastically underestimated the role that mission women would play in the Sandwich Islands (Hawai‘i). Rather than remaining simple ‘helpmeets,’ female missionaries engaged in diplomacy as they built reciprocal relationships of gift giving with the islands’ powerful female *ali‘i nui* (high chiefs). In so doing, Thigpen challenges an older historiography that argued that female missionaries in Hawai‘i felt disappointed in their inability to take part in meaningful missionary work.

In chapter one, Thigpen examines the reign of King Kamehameha I. During this time of increased foreign contact, Kamehameha used native and western culture (material and intellectual) to stave off challenges to his authority both from within and without. He employed Hawaiian and western weapons and tactics to aid in his conquest and unification of the islands. He also wore European clothing and utilized foreign furniture and dinnerware to portray himself as civilized to groups of foreign visitors. All the while, Kamehameha applied the *kapu* (taboo) system to monopolize foreign economic exchange for himself. Thigpen argues that Kamehameha did this not only to increase his own power, but to ensure the islands’ political viability for years to come.

In chapter two, Thigpen looks at the context for the missionary movement, especially the Second Great Awakening and the New Divinity. She asserts that gender ideologies and constructions of race were central to the missionary movement. The ABCFM and its missionaries had paternalistic ideas about inferior, child-like races and definite beliefs about the secondary roles and status that wives would have in the mission. Thus Thigpen chronicles the life of Ōpūkaha‘ia (Henry Obookiah), a Native Hawaiian who helped inspire the mission to the Sandwich Islands; the means by which men found wives to accompany them to the islands; and the passive role the ABCFM expected missionary wives to play.

In chapter three, Thigpen chronicles the challenges the missionaries faced once they arrived in the Sandwich Islands. While propaganda such as the *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*¹ suggested that the islanders longed for teachers of the Christian faith, upon their arrival in the islands the American missionaries found that the Hawaiian chiefs and commoners showed little interest in Christianity. Additionally, the evangelists had to compete with other groups of foreigners, including some individuals who had been on the islands for decades. Finally, Thigpen notes that the mission group encountered an unfamiliar gender hierarchy in the Sandwich Islands. While male missionaries had expected to meet with Kamehameha and other male chiefs, instead they discovered that the former had died, his politically weak alcoholic son had taken his place, and the formidable Ka‘ahumanu had proclaimed herself *kuhina nui* (co-ruler).

Chapter four serves as the heart of Thigpen’s overall argument. Here she shows how American missionary women became engaged in a cycle of exchange with female chiefs that allowed them to work diplomatically to further the cause of the mission. When the first and successive groups of missionaries arrived in the Sandwich Islands, the *ali‘i nui* showered them with gifts of fresh food. They also provided the missionaries with places to live. Thigpen argues that the chiefs did so as a means of demonstrating their power and beneficence to a group they viewed as inferior and childlike. Conversely, the missionaries interpreted this gift giving as the

¹ Edwin W. Dwight, *Memoirs of Henry Obookiah*, Honolulu: Women’s Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands, 2012.

chiefs' gratitude for their new Christian teachers. Despite this miscommunication, when the chiefs, especially the female *ali'i nui*, demanded that the mission women make them western-style clothing, the evangelists understood that they could not say no. Thus, an unending cycle of exchange developed between the missionary wives and the female chiefs. These associations born of economic desire and necessity allowed missionary women to establish relationships of trust with female chiefs that became venues for political diplomacy.

In chapter six, Thigpen focuses on the narratives of Hawaiian conversion produced by missionary authors during the nineteenth century. She notes that these stories both highlighted Hawaiian women's role in the Christianization of the islands and emphasized the important role for white women in the missionary movement—one not initially envisioned by the ABCFM. Thigpen also points out that the missionaries judged their converts not just by their piety, but also by the degree to which they adopted American culture and gender norms. Thigpen goes on to explore what adopting Christianity meant to Hawai'i's female *ali'i nui*, especially against the backdrop of increased foreign incursion and political unrest. Thigpen does not question whether these female chiefs were truly converted, but instead examines their personal and political ambitions within the context of their Christian conversion.

Island Queens and Mission Wives demonstrates Thigpen's familiarity with a variety of primary and secondary sources. Thigpen adroitly makes use of the published and unpublished writings of missionaries and American and European sailors, traders, and diplomats. She also utilizes sources from the ABCFM, its published journal *The Panoplist*, and other evangelical newspapers. For the Hawaiian perspective, she examines the writings of Hawaiians educated by the missionaries, as well as those of current Hawaiian scholars. Thigpen also shows her awareness of various historiographies related to the study of Hawaiian history even if she does not explicitly address those authors and their works in the text. Her thoroughness with regard to sources contributes to the soundness of her argument.

However, it is unfortunate that Thigpen does not push her argument further in time. Most of Thigpen's work focuses on the end of Kamehameha I's reign and the initial years of the American mission in Hawai'i. At most, it covers a decade or so from the 1810's through the early 1820s. Thus, while I do think that Thigpen proves her argument that missionary women's role in a cycle of gift giving with Hawaiian female chiefs allowed them to engage in diplomacy and further the cause of the mission, this does not overturn Patricia Grimshaw's assertion, in her ground-breaking 1989 monograph, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*², that these same women expressed their disappointment in not being able to engage more in missionary work. Grimshaw examines the lives of female missionaries in the time before their departures to the islands through the 1840s and 1850s. For scholars like myself who have spent a lifetime studying Hawaiian history, it would have been interesting if Thigpen had pushed her analysis to include the later years of the mission. I wonder if she would have found the same kind of female missionary engagement in diplomacy as she does for the early years of the mission.

Despite my desires for a larger work, Thigpen's book is a well-written, well-argued monograph that will especially serve students and their instructors. This book is appropriate for Advanced Placement (AP) world

² Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.

history or American history courses, as well as upper-division and graduate college courses. Those interested in understanding the beginnings of western imperialism in Hawai'i will learn much from this book.

Review by Emily J. Manktelow, University of Kent

Missionaries are known for their triumphalist writing, which more often than not paints non-western peoples as only significantly brought into being as human agents with the arrival of Christianity. Their pre-Christian lives and identities are positioned as timeless, and rendered meaningful in mission literature only as a ‘time before’ with which converted peoples can be beneficently compared. Such writings suited the purposes of missionaries invested in their own cultural and spiritual power, but did not of course accurately portray the reality of early mission encounters in which missionaries relied most typically upon the kindness and generosity of peoples intrigued or moved to pity by usually well-worn and sea-weary travellers.

Thus, when New England missionaries arrived on the island of Hawaii in 1820 they did not find a passively compliant population ready to be brought into existence by Christian evangelicalism and western ideas of teleological periodization. In other words, to call the 1820s-1850s the ‘missionary era’ in Hawaiian history is to rely far too heavily or uncritically on the missionary mind-set, and missionary sources which prioritise western individualism as the only mode of existence. In fact, when the missionaries arrived in 1820 they walked into a complex political situation, and an island and community that had been dealing with western contact and trade for nearly half a century. Local elites (the *aliʻi*) had long developed political and diplomatic strategies for encountering these demanding foreigners – something the missionaries blundered into with their usual aplomb. Jennifer Thigpen’s new book *Island Queens* seeks to tell this history of encounter and exchange from a new perspective, one that not only de-centres the missionaries and re-centres the Hawaiians, but one which also pays significant attention to the women of the story: powerful island queens and savvy mission wives. After all, “nineteenth-century gender ideologies were not merely incidental to the American mission to Hawaiʻi and the larger foreign-mission movement out of which it grew; they were central to it” (31).

When the missionaries arrived in 1820 they attributed the recent ‘overthrow of idolatry’, and the permission they received to establish a (temporary) mission, to divine providence. This narration suited the evangelical worldview, but as Thigpen shows, the missionaries were in fact subject to the very “real politics of mortal intervention” (54). Their arrival coincided with the death of one *aliʻi* (Kamehameha) and the accession of another (Liholiho), events with complex and evolving political legacies. Troublingly, for missionaries raised on the patriarchal precepts of New England Protestantism, the new King seemed very much subject to the *kahuna nui* (chief counsellor), his father’s favoured wife Kaʻhumanu. As such, the missionaries “had to grapple not only with Hawaiians’ ambivalent orientation toward the mission but with the unfamiliar gendered hierarchy they encountered in Hawaiʻi” (54). Diplomacy was crucial to the survival of this early mission, and it transpired that the missionary women would be crucial to its success.

The interactions between Hawaii’s elite women and the mission wives were central to this period of Hawaii’s history, and were established right from the start when Kalākua (one of Kamehameha’s widows) visited the missionary women on board the mission ship. The interactions that developed were mediated by complex rounds of gift exchange, that is, the creation of reciprocal and enduring social, political, and diplomatic bonds through the mutual obligations involved in gift-giving and receiving. These acts established the political authority of the elite Hawaiian women who were navigating a new political landscape at the same time as they positioned the missionaries as lower in social and political rank – something Thigpen argues the mission wives realised and appreciated far more than their (sometimes triumphalist) husbands. The mission women’s tactful and diplomatic role in these relationships maintained the strong emerging links between the mission and the Hawaiian *aliʻi*. In short, Thigpen argues, women did much to mediate the encounter between these ‘colliding

cultures,' speaking to their importance in both the Hawaiian political landscape and the evangelical world of Christian mission.

Thigpen here offers an in-depth critical analysis of the gendered nature of diplomacy in this period in Hawaiian history. She makes a convincing argument for the importance of both mission wives and elite Hawaiian women in these early encounters, but could have done more to situate it in the broader history of Hawaiian-mission contact. How did female diplomacy interact with, or supersede, that of the relevant men? And how was *their* work also gendered in specific or meaningful ways? At the same time, Thigpen could have usefully highlighted more completely what this book, and its understanding of women in this context, adds to our understanding of Hawaiian history, mission history, or indeed the history of contact, encounter and exchange. This is a slim volume, and it could only have bolstered its intriguing arguments to have situated them more completely in the already existing literature.

Island Queens and Mission Wives is an intriguing and well-researched contribution to the history of Christian mission that has much to add to our understanding of gender and diplomacy in the colonial and pre-colonial world.

Review by Joy Schulz, Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, Nebraska

Jennifer Thigpen's *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai'i's Pacific World* upends traditional American histories of nineteenth-century Hawai'i by "recenter[ing]" Hawaiian women within the larger historical narrative of the Pacific world (2). By focusing on the cultural meanings of Polynesian gift giving, Thigpen argues that Hawaiian female *ali'i* (royalty) utilized a 'cycle of exchange' in their encounters with American missionaries and appropriated reciprocal gift giving for their own political purposes. In the process Hawaiian female elites challenged New England gender roles and pulled American missionary wives "into continued and sustained contact" with the Hawaiian monarchy, giving missionary wives greater status in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' (ABCFM) Hawaiian project. This cycle, Thigpen states, "established the kinds of important diplomatic and political relationships critical to the islands' political future" (66).

Thigpen contextualizes her thesis by focusing on three high-ranking Hawaiian women: Ka'ahumanu, King Kamehameha I's favorite wife and regent to Kings Kamehameha II and III; Keōpūolani, Kamehameha's highest-ranking wife and mother of Kamehameha II and III; and, Kapi'olani, an *ali'i* who defied Pele, goddess of the volcano, by proclaiming her faith in the Christian Jehovah atop Kilauea, an active volcano. Thigpen extends her narrative to describe the complicated relationships these Hawaiian women had with missionary wives Sybil Bingham, Mercy Whitney, and Laura Judd.

Thigpen limits her analysis to the first two decades of American missionary activity in the Hawaiian Islands, which began in 1820. The strength of Thigpen's work is her critical approach to the male missionary sources, which were often used to describe these early American-Hawaiian encounters, and her attention to pre-missionary Hawaiian anthropology. By engaging foreigners in reciprocity, Hawaiian female elites continued a foreign policy begun by Kamehameha I, which restrained foreign influence by centering trade relationships on his sole political authority. While missionary men initially underestimated the political importance of Hawaiian female elites, missionary wives accepted the cycle of gift giving the women offered, ultimately solidifying Hawaiian acceptance of the mission's presence in the islands.

The result of Thigpen's efforts is a thoughtful gender analysis, building on earlier work by Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa, Jocelyn Linnekin and Patricia Grimshaw.¹ More importantly, Thigpen flips the missionary narrative by highlighting the importance of early female encounters to nearly thirty years of missionary occupation in the islands.

Thigpen's work is necessary for several reasons. By placing nineteenth-century foreign policy back into the hands of Hawai'i's ruling class, Thigpen reminds us that Hawaiian acceptance of American and European trade goods, as well as missionary settlement, were rooted in inter-island politics, as well as concerns for the maintenance of Hawaiian sovereignty. What missionaries viewed as providential, Hawaiian rulers viewed as negotiable. Thigpen also takes us into the daily, intimate island encounters among women that one might

¹ See Lilikalā Kame'elehiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), and Patricia Grimshaw *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

describe as domestic if not for Thigpen's adept ability to show their international importance. Missionary women who sewed western-styled clothing for Hawaiian elites paved the way for their husbands to transcribe the Hawaiian language and, ultimately, transform Hawaiian political and legal customs.

Finally, Thigpen's book is important to the history of nineteenth-century Christian missions. As late as 1970, descendants of the first American missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands categorized ABCFM missionary activity in the islands in gendered terms, with missionary wives being supplemental to the work of male missionaries. In fact, missionary wives such as Sybil Bingham daily taught school to hundreds of Hawaiian children, while raising their own children, and serving as their husbands' intermediaries to the Hawaiian throne. Thigpen's assertion that Hawaiian women elevated the status of American women is easily supported by her evidence, even if it has been unacknowledged by historians for more than a century.²

Thigpen also reminds us as that it was the ABCFM and missionary husbands who initially propagated such gendered narratives. Their resistance to the political and social importance of women continued through successive generations of white men living in the islands. In the 1850s, for example, missionary sons at Punahou argued that the Biblical curse precluded a woman from governing a man or "meddl[ing] in politics."³ Missionary children absorbed such messages, despite the fact Hawaiian women prominently sat in the House of Nobles. Eventually missionary sons would lead the 1893 political revolution and overthrow their female monarch. In contrast, Hawaiian women continued to resist nineteenth-century American gender norms. While Thigpen's narrative ends in the 1830s, her thesis could easily be picked up in the 1890s, as Queen Liliuokalani sought to maintain the sovereignty of her monarchy and kingdom in the midst of encroaching white settlers.

If I were to critique any part of Thigpen's analysis, it would be her decision to exclude a debate over the nature and veracity of religious conversion. Thigpen writes that her focus is on missionary conversion narratives, "not whether Hawai'i's high-ranking women became 'true' Christians" (85). Yet the contest between adherents of indigenous or foreign religions is at the heart of nineteenth-century Hawaiian history. While Thigpen asks us to accept that elite Hawaiian women utilized Christianity for their own political purposes, a more difficult question to answer is why the women allowed Christianity to influence their political decisions. Thigpen notes the "seeming embrace of Christianity" among early female converts but chooses only to deconstruct the gendered messages found in missionary texts, which elevated such women as Hawaiian "heroines" (85). Although referring to the "Western gender norms" that missionaries expected Hawaiian converts to display, Thigpen does not detail the exceptionally high threshold missionaries held for Christian conversion in the first place (84).

For example, ABCFM missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands required interested converts to submit to a five-month probationary period. Those who the missionaries who were ultimately accepted into the

² See *Missionary Album: Portraits and Biographical Sketches of the American Protestant Missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, 1969), 16. While the album describes the work missionary wives conducted in the islands, it lists only husbands as ABCFM missionaries. Lydia Bingham Coan, *Annual Report of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society*, 1887, (Honolulu: Government Press, (1853-1937).

³ Editorial, *Weekly Star*, February 25, 1852-February 16, 1853 (Box 1-3), Cooke Library Archives, Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Congregationalist fold could be excommunicated for smoking tobacco or wearing the garland wreaths which Thigpen describes as being so abhorrent to missionary wives. So restrictive were missionaries in their definition of a true convert that nearly twenty years into the missionary project, as one historian notes, “One out of every two Hawaiians attended church, but not one in a hundred had been granted the privilege of communion with Christ.”⁴ Acceptance of Christianity, therefore, came at great cultural cost to native Hawaiians.

Thigpen also is not fully convincing in her argument that political reasons were behind Ka’ahumanu’s alliance with the American missionaries. Ka’ahumanu, Thigpen writes, “acted strategically and deliberately in ways that she perceived to be beneficial to the Hawaiian people within the context of growing Hawaiian political uncertainty” (100). Certainly the missionaries stood behind Ka’ahumanu’s rejection of the gender-restrictive, religious *kapus* (taboos), yet a potential political alliance with the missionaries was fraught with risk. As numerous missionary and non-missionary sources from the period attest, virtually all foreigners living in the islands—including Americans—hated the missionaries for their stance on alcohol and prostitution. In 1826 a mob of sailors from the U.S. warship *Dolphin* attempted to murder Hiram Bingham for his attempts to curb prostitution. Ka’ahumanu’s efforts to conform Hawaiian cultural practice to the Ten Commandments was deeply unpopular among some native Hawaiians, as well as most American, French, and British merchants and sailors.⁵

It seems, then, that Ka’ahumanu’s views about the missionaries’ religion are as important as her efforts to appropriate American clothing to her own tastes and secure the missionary families’ dependence upon her political leadership. Similarly, the impact of Keōpūolani’s conversion should not be understated, for her son Kamehameha III, who became king in 1825, solidified the role Christianity and its missionaries would play in Hawaiian politics until his death in 1854. During his reign, Kamehameha III issued the kingdom’s first constitution, created its first legislature, and gave over his own crown lands to private ownership, a concept designed, in part, to keep missionary families in the islands. Significantly, Kamehameha III’s first constitution proclaimed that no Hawaiian law was to be contrary to the teachings of the Bible.⁶

Nevertheless, what Ka’ahumanu and Keōpūolani accomplished in elevating their own political status by ending the *kapus* and utilizing cultural traditions of reciprocity to exert their power over the missionary families is a powerful story requiring an appreciation of these women and the role they played in elevating their American sisters in the midst of turbulent political times. Jennifer Thigpen’s book has a prominent place on my shelf, and I admire the work she has done.

⁴ LaRue W. Piercy, *Hawaii’s Missionary Saga: Sacrifice and Godliness in Paradise* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1992), 113, 168; Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 74-75, 98.

⁵ Coan, *Annual Report*, 1881.

⁶ *Translation of the Constitution and Laws of the Hawaiian Islands, Established in the Reign of Kamehameha III*, translated by William L. Richards (Lahainaluna Press, 1842. Reprint, 1994).

Author's Response by Jennifer Thigpen, Washington State University

Let me begin by offering my sincere thanks to Professor Thomas Maddux for organizing this forum. I am also deeply grateful to the reviewers—Professors David Iglar, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Jennifer Fish Kashay, Emily Manktelow, and Joy Schulz—for their insights and commentary on my work. It is an honor to have my book at the center of discussion amongst a group of scholars whose research I respect and admire.

My book sits within a robust—though often fragmented—historiography. The nineteenth century, for example, produced distinct literatures, among them the ‘official’ mission histories written by men like the ABCFM’s Rufus Anderson and Hiram Bingham, and the *mo‘olelo* (histories) of Hawaiian historians such as David Malo, Samuel Kamakau, and John Papa ‘Ī‘ī.¹ While the former told concise, triumphalist stories (opening, for the most part with the start of the so-called ‘mission period’ in the islands and closing with its end) of the Protestant mission to the Hawaiian Islands, the latter offered more expansive narratives. These texts not only covered a longer temporal span, but they offered important anthropological insights into the important cultural changes taking place in Hawai‘i, particularly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though American missions and missionaries featured in these texts, they were never at their center. Thus, these histories illustrate that in the nineteenth century, the ‘triumph’ of the American mission in Hawai‘i was largely a construction of mission historians.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, scholars from across the disciplines grew interested in Hawai‘i and the Pacific Islands more broadly. A number of anthropologists and archeologists—among those them Marshall Sahlins, Patrick Kirch, and Joceyln Linnekin—turned their attention to Hawai‘i, writing, in some cases, quite prolifically about the cultural, religious, and political transformations occurring over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All of them sought to understand those historic alterations within their deeper cultural contexts and from the point of view of the people who experienced those changes first-hand. While these scholars made important contributions to their own fields of study, they also asked the kinds of questions that were both familiar and important to historians. They ultimately helped to provide an interdisciplinary framework that historians could use to study Hawai‘i in this period and to construct a method to help us transcend our sometimes over-reliance on written records.²

As Iglar notes in his introduction to this forum, in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of scholars focused on the “gendered experiences of female missionaries.” Joceyln Linnekin, though trained as an anthropologist, offered an

¹ For an example of American mission histories, see Rufus Anderson’s *The Hawaiian Islands: Their Progress and Condition under Missionary Labors* (Boston: Gold and Lincoln, 1864) and Anderson, *History of the Sandwich Islands Mission* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1872). See also Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One*

Years in the Sandwich Islands (Hartford, Conn: Hezekiah Huntington, 1947). Hawaiian histories include David Malo’s, *Hawaiian Antiquities* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1951) and Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau’s, *Ka Po‘e Kahiko: The People of Old* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1991) and *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, 1961). See also John Papa ‘Ī‘ī, *Fragments of Hawaiian History* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1959).

² See for example, Marshall Sahlins and Patrick Kirch, eds. *Historical Ethnography*. Vol. 1 of *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

important historiographical counterpoint in *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* to Patricia Grimshaw's *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*.³ Where Grimshaw's work focused on the limits imposed on missionary wives and their frustrations and disappointments in the mission field, Linnekin explored Hawaiian women's status pre- and post- 'contact' with the West. Increasingly over this period, historians began to inquire about American women's roles—particularly within the context of the American foreign mission movement—as 'agents of empire.'⁴ If women seemed—at times—to have limited formal avenues to gaining influence or to be insignificant to larger stories of colonization, historians like Ann Stoler prompted scholars to imagine more informal means of influence and to envision new sites for the transaction of that influence.⁵

Around this same period, scholars trained their attention in increasing ways on the development—in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—of a distinct and thriving Pacific world. David Iglar and Matt K. Matsuda sit near the center of this historiography, and conveyed the vastness of the Pacific, while also illustrating the way in which "The Great Ocean" connected people and economies.⁶ By the time of their writing, Gary Okihiro had already pushed back against an older historiography which argued that in the context of its relationship to the U.S., Hawai'i was only ever acted upon. His work sought to demonstrate the many ways in which Hawai'i "press[ed] against the continent, causing it to move." Okihiro pushed scholars to consider Hawai'i as "the center...that stirs and animates the United States."⁷ Finally, a growing cohort of Hawaiian studies scholars such as Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, Noenoe K. Silva, Haunani-Kay Trask, and Johnathan Osorio pushed scholars to take seriously the specific concerns and interests Hawaiians brought to their interactions with foreigners. Importantly, they have persistently reminded scholars (even—or especially—those studying histories of 'contact') of the obligation to consider Hawaiians on their own terms.⁸

³ Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) and Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989). See also Mary Zwiep, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

⁴ See, for example, Jane Hunter's *Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) and Ian Tyrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88 no 3 (2001)829-65. See also "Matters of Intimacy as Matters of State: A Response," *Journal of American History* 88, no 3 (2001), 893-897.

⁶ Matt K. Matsuda, *A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷ Okihiro, *Island World: A History of Hawai'i and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). See also Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

⁸ Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992); Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004); Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, *Dismembering*

From the outset, I sought to find ways to weave together these often discrete threads, with the goal of supplementing the work of scholars in the various fields and subfields noted above. First and foremost, I sought to tell a story that re-centered Hawaiians in what has often been told as missionary story. Second, and closely related to the first goal, the book set out to challenge the established periodization upon which historians have traditionally relied in attempting to understand the Hawaiian past. Though American missionaries—as I noted in my introduction—may have “viewed the period between 1820 and 1852 as Hawai‘i’s ‘mission period,’ the islands’ inhabitants almost certainly did not.”⁹ Moreover, if historians later wrote about Hawaiians as passive victims of Western colonialism, there is ample evidence that Hawaiians did not share such a view and, in fact, actively resisted both American and European aggression. A third, related goal was to better understand the ways in which Hawai‘i’s *ali‘i* (royalty) worked to shape their relationships with foreigners over a dramatic period of transformation beginning in the late eighteenth century. Lastly, I always sought to convey the increasingly significant role that women played in establishing and maintaining political and diplomatic relations among and between Hawaiians and American missionaries in the nineteenth century. If scholars sometimes treat gender and colonialism as separate categories, my book sought to connect ‘women’s work’ with both the political labor of colonization and its resistance.

Overall, these readers—along with reviewers elsewhere—agree on the strengths of my work and the historiographical contributions and intervention that it makes. Manktelow observes that the book “seeks to tell [a] story of encounter and exchange from a new perspective, one that not only de-centers the missionaries” but—importantly—“re-centres the Hawaiians,” a perspective Conroy-Krutz shares. This was a key objective, one informed and amply supported by the work of scholars not just in history, but in Hawaiian studies and anthropology. It’s important to note that this framing rested upon a recontextualization of Hawaiian-missionary interactions—one which placed them within the much larger context of an emergent Pacific world and illustrated the kinds of strategies Hawai‘i’s *ali‘i* developed and employed in an effort to deal with increasingly aggressive Pacific exploration. That is, to ‘recenter’ Hawaiians in this story meant also to illustrate their initial view of American missionaries as but another group of foreign visitors to the islands during period in which Hawai‘i became a hub of persistent Pacific travel, trade, and exploration.

The reviewers also concur that my work successfully “challenges an older historiography,” as Kashay writes—“one that “argued that female missionaries in Hawai‘i felt disappointed in their inability to take part in meaningful missionary work.” Schulz similarly notes that the book “flips the missionary narrative” entirely “by highlighting the importance of early female encounters.” If missionary historians insisted that the important work of conversion had been accomplished by male missionaries, the diaries of mission wives revealed a different story, one which implicated not just mission wives, but Hawai‘i’s highest-ranking women. Yet, Hawaiian women and missionary wives did not always share a common understanding of the purposes of their exchanges. As I demonstrate in the book, those purposes were shaped in powerful ways by the distinct concerns and motivations of each. Rather than resulting in confusion, these “creative

Labui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002); Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999).

⁹ Jennifer Thigpen, *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai‘i’s Pacific World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 3.

misunderstandings” (to use Richard White’s term), created important opportunities for diplomacy.¹⁰ Indeed, for Conroy-Krutz, a major contribution of my research is the way in which I examined “these encounters through a lens that focuses on the cultural context for both groups of women” to allow readers to “see the multiple meanings of the encounters between these women in Hawai‘i.”

Still, in places, the reviewers wished for more. In their comments, Conroy-Krutz and Schulz each express their wish that I had probed the matter of conversion more fully and explicitly. Did the female *ali‘i* who interacted most directly with American missionaries truly accept Christianity? Were they really Christianized (as the missionaries later insisted)? Or can we understand them as having been motivated by other factors—aside from spirituality—in becoming baptized and seeming to adopt the tenets of Christianity? Another reviewer—Seth Archer—has elsewhere noted that in relation to these questions, I appear “agnostic.”¹¹ It has also been suggested that my silence on the matter might relate in some ways to the source materials upon which the book relies— extant missionary sources. For some reviewers, Hawaiian-language sources appear more likely to offer clearer answers about the degree to which Hawaiians were “Christianized” in this period.

It is true that English-language mission sources present a problem for getting at the genuineness of conversion, though perhaps not always in the ways one might suspect. Missionaries were well aware that their diaries and letters contributed to a public perception of the success or failure of the mission. The materials they sent home could be excerpted—in whole or in part—for publication in periodicals like the *Missionary Herald*. This was a point made clear to them by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), which cautioned them to choose their words wisely lest they embarrass themselves or the mission and imperil its larger project. Moreover, as an organization that relied on donor money—the same donors who read publications like the *Missionary Herald*—the ABCFM was careful to publicize stories of successful conversion rather than to reiterate missionary ‘failures’ in the field. Thus, I treated ostensibly ‘private’ correspondence as carefully as the official documents produced by missionaries since they were crafted with a particular, persuasive aim in mind.

I also approached the sources with the belief that it is nearly impossible to assess the veracity of another person’s faith. Historians can only know with certainty what their subjects *say*, rather than what they felt or believed. Missionaries, for example, routinely expressed doubts about their faith and about their worthiness for mission service. At the same time, these men and women made an incredible commitment to the task—marrying virtual strangers and sailing thousands of miles from home, often with the conviction that they would never see their families again. Their professions of uncertainty, then, are curious. Do they amount to genuine expressions of doubt, or are they merely tropes of missionary writing? Moreover, these same missionaries vacillated in their descriptions of their spiritual lives and their faithfulness. At times, they appeared certain and possessed of great self-assurance. At others, they confessed their unworthiness. These English-language sources offer little certainty to a historian who might hope to make confident assertions about the inner life of her subjects. The problem of assessing the conversion of Hawaiians is in some ways

¹⁰ Richard White, *Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xii.

¹¹ Seth Archer, review of *Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai‘i’s Pacific World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014) in *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 2 no. 1 (Spring 2015), 153-55.

compounded by the sources I relied on. Yet, with missionaries and Hawaiians alike, I have been far more interested more in how the subjects I study described their role as “believers”—and what they did as a result—than in the state of their souls or the degree to which they were believers in Christ.

The reviewers here hone in on an analysis that is admittedly largely implied in the book. That is, that Hawai‘i’s *ali‘i* and *maka‘āinana* (common people) had their own reasons for converting (or seeming to convert) to Christianity. From the beginning, missionaries were aware of the potential for strategic conversions and treated professions of faith with extreme caution, sometimes refusing to baptize those who professed their faith. They were well aware that some *ali‘i* had received Catholic baptisms and were harshly critical of the French for their seeming willingness to participate in such rituals, absent any ‘true’ sign of conversion.

Ultimately, however, the missionaries did baptize Hawaiians, ‘collecting’ a number of key converts and publicizing those ‘triumphs’ far and wide. Notable among those baptized, of course, was Ka‘ahumanu, the islands’ *kuhina nui* (or co-ruler). While Ka‘ahumanu may truly have accepted Christianity, it is also true that the missionaries had things to offer of benefit to the Hawaiians. In addition to the clothing the *ali‘i* clearly desired and which became so important to exchange among the groups. Hawaiians also demonstrated a keen interest in literacy. Ka‘ahumanu, for example, took instruction from the missionaries and ultimately supported the mission schools and their emphasis on literacy—often putting her political clout to work in this regard. Yet it is not clear that she did so solely as a means by which to extend the missionaries’ reach in the islands or as a demonstration of her faith. It is true that literacy facilitated that end, but it is also the case that Ka‘ahumanu also knew that the written word could expedite trade, and allow her and the other *ali‘i* to make and read contracts. It also promised to make communication among and between the ruling elite simpler and more reliable. So while missionaries understood the royal woman’s interest in literacy as a sign of her conversion, she was just as likely motivated by other—possibly more immediately pressing—factors as well.

Igler also points in important ways to the bigger political context of Ka‘ahumanu’s seeming conversion. “Like all political leaders,” he writes, “*ali‘i* women possessed a strong level of self-interest in preserving their power, and perhaps the fragile alliance they struck with missionary men and women may have seemed like the best choice among shrinking options.” The timing of Ka‘ahumanu’s seeming cooperation with American missionaries is significant. Though I do not expand in great length on these particular relationships, it should be noted here that the male *ali‘i* (King Liholiho and Boki in particular) had repeatedly demonstrated a much greater interest in creating political and diplomatic relations with the French and the British. Liholiho, in fact, signaled as much when he undertook an expedition 1823, aimed at creating a formal political alliance with the British. It is little coincidence then, (as I note in the book) that Ka‘ahumanu, who on many occasions treated both Liholiho and Boki political rivals, took the opportunity presented by Liholiho’s absence to firmly and unequivocally ally herself with the missionaries, both by admitting a second company to the islands, and, shortly thereafter, crafting a legal code that ultimately translated Protestant morality into Hawaiian law. When Liholiho died abroad, he left the throne to his much younger brother Kauikeaouli. Kaahumanu effectively became the ruler of the islands. While the missionaries viewed her as a critical convert to Christianity, it is likely that Ka‘ahumanu also viewed her relationship to the mission—and to Christianity—in strategic terms.

The reviewers offer insightful suggestions for expansion. Maktelow, for example, wonders about the ways in which female diplomacy might have “interact[ed] with, or supersede[d] that of relevant men.” In a like way, Kashay pondered whether my argument could have been pushed further into the nineteenth century, and if,

so, what we might learn about women's engagement in the mission and in the project of diplomacy over time. Both situate their critiques and suggestions in the context of the books' reactively short length, and both suggest that an extended analysis would have allowed me to tease out these questions. A longer book would have provided the opportunity to offer some comparative discussion of the roles that men and women played in the mission and, in some ways, to further problematize the mission literature which has long told the story of male missionaries' 'heroism' in the islands. While they were charged with the "official" work of the mission, most of the successful work of diplomacy arose out of the interaction that took place among and between women in spaces that missionaries had not accounted for—usually, the intimate spaces of the home. A fuller examination of mission literature—to include the materials left behind by male missionaries—could have underscored this point in important ways and could have interrogated more closely male missionaries' failure to emulate mission wives success in connecting with female *ali'i*.

A longer book would also have provided the opportunity to describe missionary men's growing economic and political power in the islands, as they benefitted from enhanced political relations with *ali'i*. As a result of such relationships, some missionary men benefitted from the *Māhele*, which articulated profound redistribution in land ownership and allowed foreigners to purchase land. The *Māhele* favored missionaries who made profitable land deals, arguably as result of the strong diplomatic relationships forged among Hawai'i's ruling women and the missionary wives beginning in the 1820s. Pursuing these threads would almost undoubtedly have strengthened the arguments I put forth regarding the significant influence women exerted in helping to shape Hawai'i's political and economic future in the nineteenth century and beyond. At the same time, in crafting this book, I was mindful always of its potential for classroom use and sound ways to "package" it (to use Conroy-Krutz's term) for adoption in college undergraduate and graduate courses.

Where I have left off, I hope that others will pick up. The archival material here is rich and seemingly endless, and many of the Hawaiian-language sources have not yet been processed.

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