

and humble, for that is proper. Yet in my humility I respect myself."

(Adapted from Pukui et al. 1972)

2. Once you have been assigned a role, imagine you are that person and describe to another person, a foreigner who has just arrived in Hawai'i, how the overthrow of the *kapu* system affected you. In your essay be sure you include these items:
  - a. your age
  - b. your gender
  - c. your rights and responsibilities under the old system
  - d. your limitations and restrictions under the old system
  - e. changes in your life after 1819
  - f. your feelings as you saw the *kapu* system, a crucial part of your culture, gradually change and disappear.
3. When you finish your essay, join two to four others assigned the same role and share your responses.
4. Choose the best essay in your group. Someone in each group will be called on to read it to the class.
5. Take notes as students read the chosen essays so you will be able to explain how the overthrow of the *kapu* system affected people of different ranks in Hawaiian society.

## 2 The Coming of the Missionaries

*A few months after the kapu system was formally abolished in 1819, a new group of foreigners arrived in Hawai'i. These were American Protestant missionaries who had come to convert the Hawaiian people to Christianity. Over the next decades the American missionaries would have a profound impact on Island life.*

### Strangers from New England

It must be a law of nature that a void is soon filled. Less than a year after the formal overthrow of the *kapu* system, the void left by its demise was filled by a new group of foreigners in Hawai'i. They came aboard the brig *Thaddeus* from Boston, a voyage of 18,000 miles around South America's Cape Horn. Their 5-month journey ended when they sighted the coast of the island of Hawai'i on March 30, 1820. A few days later they came ashore at Kailua and presented themselves to the king, Kamehameha II.

The newcomers were American Protestant missionaries sent to Hawai'i by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a group that sponsored missionary activity

throughout the world in the nineteenth century. **Protestantism** is a Christian religion that began in the 1500s as a protest against Roman Catholicism. Martin Luther and his followers split from the Roman Church over certain beliefs and practices as well as a desire for independence. The missionaries who arrived in Hawai'i were part of a religious movement called the Great Awakening that was sweeping across the settled parts of the American mainland in the early 1800s. The movement's aim was to convert the whole world to Christianity, and the Sandwich Islands were a part of that world.

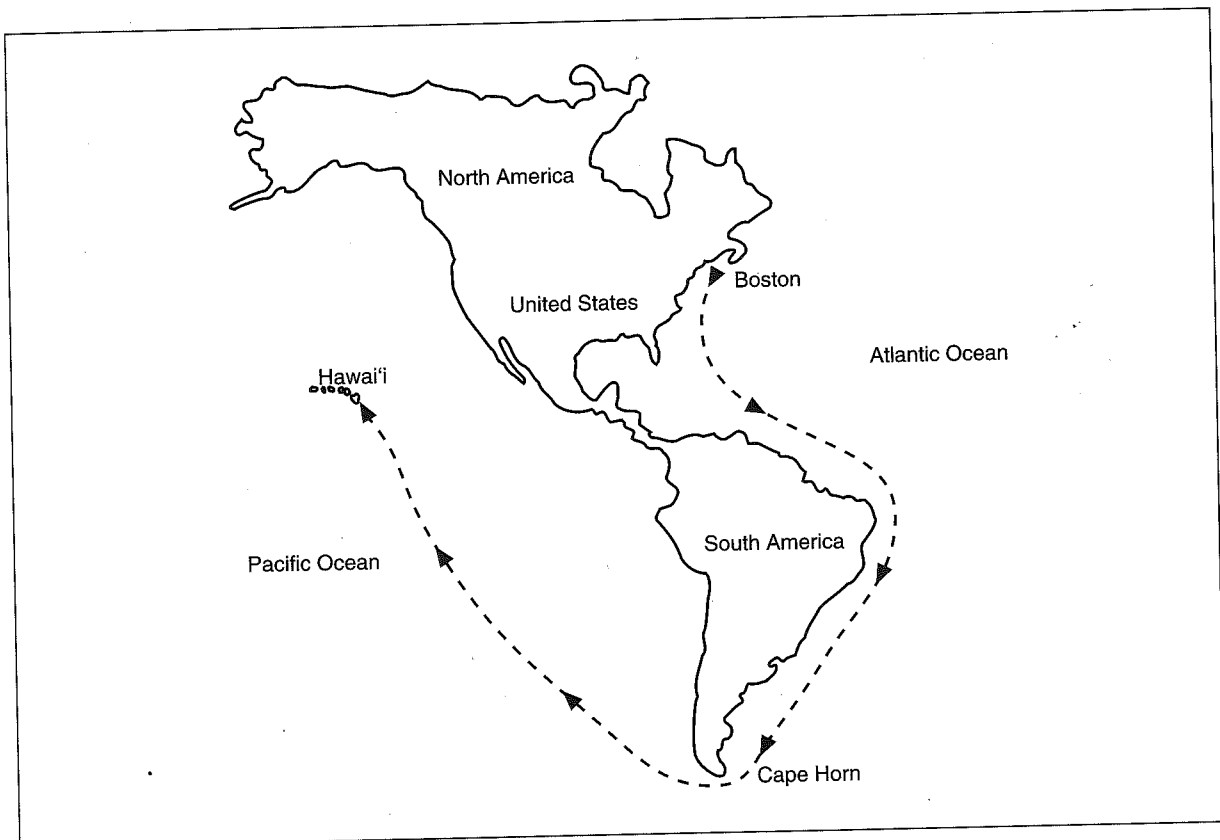
The original group of missionaries to Hawai'i included two ministers, a doctor, two schoolteachers, a farmer, and a printer. All were

married men accompanied by their wives. One couple had their five children with them. Several couples were newlyweds. Because missionary men were not allowed to come to Hawai'i alone, several had quickly sought brides in New England and married after short courtships. Many couples had known each other for only a few weeks before they sailed to Hawai'i to begin their life's work.

What was to be done with these newcomers? After the missionaries landed in Kailua, Liholiho debated several days before giving them permission to stay for a year on a probationary basis. He allowed some of the group to stay in Kailua; the rest proceeded to Honolulu. Mission stations were eventually established on all the islands as more missionaries arrived to join the original group. They were single-minded about their goal: to convert the Native Hawaiians to Christianity.



The Reverend and Mrs. Hiram Bingham were among the first group of missionaries who arrived in 1820. (Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery. Gift of Hon. Hiram Bingham, B.A., 1898)



### Missionary Beliefs

American Protestant Christianity was based on a belief in one God, a Supreme Being. Human beings, the religion taught, were born in sin; however, if they repented and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior, their souls could be saved and they could go to heaven after death. The missionary code about moral behavior was summed up in the Ten Commandments, which forbade such things as murder, stealing, lying, and sexual relations outside of marriage and required that one day a week, the Sabbath, be kept holy for worship.

Missionaries during this period also believed that Christianity and "civilization" were practically the same thing. To them "civilization" meant wearing clothes, working on a schedule, and eating and drinking at fixed times. "Civilization" also included such institutions as churches and schools; societies that did not have such institutions were not "civilized." The attitude can be summed up in the words the missionaries heard at their farewell service in the Park Street Church in Boston:

You are to aim at nothing short of covering those islands with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches; of raising up a whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization. (Kuykendall, vol. I, 1938)

Today such words sound patronizing. They ignore the complex culture that had existed in Hawai'i for hundreds of years. Yet it must be remembered that the missionaries and their sponsors were products of a time when such ideas prevailed. The missionaries sincerely wanted to help the Hawaiians, whom they saw as backward and "uncivilized."

Perhaps if Hawai'i had been a stable and isolated society, the missionaries would have had less success in winning converts. But when the missionaries arrived, foreign contact had already undermined the Hawaiian cultural system. Less than a year before, the *kapu* system had been abolished, *heiau* had been destroyed, and

images of the gods had been burned. When the missionaries landed in Hawai'i, nothing had yet replaced the *kapu* system. Consequently, their ideas were accepted more easily by the Hawaiians, who very likely felt lost without the old ways.

The missionaries soon realized they had to depend on the *ali'i* for their continued welcome in the Islands. Hence they concentrated most of their initial work on converting the *ali'i*, hoping that the common people would follow their chiefs' example.

At first the missionaries tried to teach the Hawaiians English, but this proved difficult. Instead, the missionaries learned Hawaiian. Some became very fluent. In 1826, with the help of William Ellis, a missionary from the Society Islands, the missionaries developed a way to write Hawaiian by matching its vowel and consonant sounds to the English alphabet. Once this was accomplished, the missionaries were able to translate the Bible and other works into Hawaiian, and the work of conversion became easier.

The missionaries found support among several powerful *ali'i* women who became devout Christians. One of these was the chiefess Kapi'olani. In 1824 Kapi'olani defied the fire goddess Pele by descending into the fire pit at Kīlauea volcano and eating 'ōhelo berries, which were sacred to Pele. Another ally was the *kuhina nui*, Ka'ahumanu. In 1824 she proclaimed a little code of laws based on Christian precepts. Many of the common people also converted to the new religion, but the missionaries always worried that the Hawaiians might return to their old ways—ways they considered heathen.

Converting to Christianity required changing the rules of everyday life. No longer could they gamble and drink the white man's alcohol. They must keep the Sabbath holy and not dance the *hula*. They were to follow a strict moral code quite different from the Hawaiian code. For example, to the missionaries marriage was a sacred bond between one man and one woman. But the Hawaiians sometimes practiced **polygamy**, that is, they sometimes had more than one husband or wife at a time. Giving up a beloved

second or third spouse for the sake of the new religion pained them.

Missionaries and Hawaiians also differed over who were acceptable marriage partners. Hawaiians believed that the highest *ali'i* resulted from a mating of brother and sister *ali'i*. The missionaries considered this incest—a very serious sin—and spoke against it often. But to the Hawaiians, *mana* was reinforced by this union and passed down to heirs and future rulers.

### Traditional Hawaiian Beliefs

The Hawaiians believed in more than one god. In fact, they had four main gods or *akua*: Lono, Kāne, Kanaloa, and Kū. Each was patron of an aspect of Hawaiian life: Kū was the god of war, Kāne was the god of life, Lono was the god of agriculture, and Kanaloa was the patron of the ocean. There were many other gods and goddesses, such as the fiery volcano goddess Pele and her sister, Hi'iaka.

Many families had household gods, *'aumakua*, who watched over *'ohana* members. These *'aumakua* were ancestral guardian spirits—family ancestors who had become personal gods. Families looked to their *'aumakua*, who might appear as sharks, birds, fish, or other creatures, for strength, guidance, warnings, assistance, and inspiration.

Hawaiians considered themselves part of the universe, part of the natural world. Nature—in the form of the wind, the rain, the volcanoes, the ocean, the mountains, the trees, and the flowers—they treated with respect because they believed the gods appeared in these forms. Thus there was Kāne the great wind and Kāne the water of life. There was Lono-of-the-harvest and Lono-of-the-Makahiki. There was Kanaloa-of-the-squid, and Kū, eater of the islands, a war god. Kāne appeared as taro, sugarcane, bamboo, and lightning. Kū took the form of rain clouds, sweet potatoes, hogs, and gourds.

Because they were attuned to nature, Hawaiians had a cyclical sense of time; that is, time was an ever-recurring cycle of day and night,

warm summers and mild Hawaiian winters, sun and rain. Whether one should fish or not, plant or not, travel or not, depended on the conditions in nature. Hawaiians depended on nature for their sustenance. Therefore nature had to be respected and cared for.

Think what a contrast the Hawaiians' view of nature was to the Americans' nineteenth-century view of it as an obstacle to "civilization." To many Americans, nature had to be conquered so that homesteaders, explorers, trappers, gold miners, and others could populate and profit from the North American continent. Nature, it was thought, existed to serve people, and people were superior to it.

For some Hawaiians the differences between their traditional belief system and Christianity were not a problem. Some wholeheartedly converted to the Christian God. Others continued to practice the religious rituals of an earlier time. And still others practiced what is called **syncretism**; that is, they integrated the two systems and practiced both at the same time. Some syncretism is still practiced in Hawai'i today. Have you ever placed crossed *ti* leaves at the beginning of a hiking trail? It is a practice known to many in Hawai'i. For some it indicates their traditional religion. For others it is a sign of respect for the land, a reminder to treat it with care. For still others this ritual combines both traditional religion and the particular Christian beliefs they hold. We do not know how much the missionaries knew about the melding of religious beliefs in their time, but their writings tell us they would not have approved, because they believed that Christianity was the only true religion.

Can you imagine any two peoples more different than the Hawaiians and the missionaries? Yet, unlike many other foreigners, the first missionaries who came to Hawai'i sincerely wanted to help the Hawaiians, although they did not think to ask if the Hawaiians wanted help. But unlike sailors and whalers, they did not drink, carouse, and spread disease among the Hawaiian population. They brought medical help against the diseases brought to the Islands by foreigners.

They opened schools on every island. They railed against alcohol and prostitution and, to the chagrin of other foreigners, they often became trusted advisers to the *ali'i*. Few trustworthy foreigners lived in Hawai'i, so missionary men often held influential positions with the ruling Hawaiian leaders. From these positions of leadership they influenced the development of many institutions in Hawai'i, including the educational system, the legal system, the government, and a unique land tenure system.

### Questions

1. What does the word *civilized* mean to you? What did it mean to the Protestant missionaries? Can a society without modern technology be considered civilized? Why or why not?
2. Give some examples of traditional Hawaiian beliefs and practices that many people in Hawai'i follow today, regardless of their religion.

### Activity: Comparing Religious Beliefs

The following chart lists aspects of the two religious belief systems discussed in the reading. Copy the chart on paper, and fill in each box.

Then compare the two belief systems. Would you say they were compatible? Explain.

	Traditional Hawaiian religion	Nineteenth-century American Protestantism
Number of gods		
Place of worship		
Leader of worship		
Extent to which religion permeated culture		

## 3 Education in Hawai'i: Hawaiian and American

*Before the Westerners came, the Hawaiian people had both formal and informal methods of teaching their children the skills necessary to being responsible members of society. In 1820 the American missionaries brought Western-style education to Hawai'i. Within 20 years of their arrival, the missionaries had established a school system. Originally the schools were attended by adults. In the 1830s, however, the missionaries turned their attention to schooling for Hawai'i's children. Although schools in the 1800s differed from schools of the present, some aspects of that school experience will sound familiar to students today.*

### Hawaiian and American Education

#### Hawaiian Education

Have you ever tried to memorize an entire book? Impossible, you say? Well, in effect, that is what the Hawaiians did when they passed on their knowledge to their children through chants, genealogies, legends, and stories. They did not have books, of course, but they learned both by

memorizing and by imitating. The early Hawaiians had a wide-ranging, informal educational system. Children learned by observing other family members and then trying to do the tasks themselves.

The kind of education a child received depended a good deal on birth status. The chiefs' children were taught differently from the commoners' children. *Ali'i* children were trained to